

Summer Learning Program 2013 Quantitative and Qualitative Research Results

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Introduction: Background to the 2013 Report

This report summarizes the main quantitative and qualitative findings from the 2013 Summer Learning Programs. In previous years we found that English and French summer programs successfully recruited students who had, on average, greater academic challenges. We also found that the Literacy (SLLP), Numeracy (SNLP) and First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FMNI) summer programs slowed summer learning losses and, in some cases, closed achievement gaps between more and less advantaged students. The results from the Numeracy and French language programs have been particularly promising.

Interviews with teachers and parents, along with findings from site visits, suggest that summer programs also had a positive impact on student and parent engagement and teachers' professional development. Many programs build in parent and community partnerships, and provide healthy meals and recreation. The balance of a high-quality and fun learning environment has proven to be extremely popular with families and students, and demand for these programs remains high.

Below we outline the 2013 research protocol, quantitative and qualitative research findings and implications for next year.

Summary of Research Protocols

In 2013, there were six programs and three main research protocols. Students in what we term English “Mass Literacy” and French “Mass Literacy” participated in a reduced research protocol consisting of testing summer program students on the first and last day of their program (STAR testing for English Literacy and GB+ for French Literacy), and recording their attendance and FNMI status. Our data from the previous three years made us confident that most French and English Literacy programs are effective, and so we decided that a full research protocol was no longer necessary.

English Numeracy, French Numeracy, FNMI and the six longitudinal boards participated in what we term the “full” research protocol which included testing summer program participants in June and September (STAR testing for English Numeracy and Tâches diagnostiques en mathématiques for French Numeracy), a parent survey and report card data. Three of the longitudinal boards participated in a qualitative parent engagement study which consisted of interviews with parents and teachers and site visits.

2013 Research Protocol

	Mass Quantitative	Full Quantitative	Qualitative
Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> English Literacy French Literacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> English Numeracy French Numeracy FNMI Six longitudinal boards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three of the longitudinal boards
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summer program students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summer program students Control group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summer program teachers and parents
Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> STAR testing (English) GB+ (French) Summer program attendance FNMI identification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> STAR testing Parent survey Tâches diagnostiques (French) Report card data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Site Visits

2013 Quantitative Research Findings

The 2013 research project mostly bolsters results from previous years. All of the 2013 summer programs continued to attract students with pre-existing literacy and numeracy learning challenges. Summer program participants experienced less summer learning loss than did similar peers who did not attend those programs. Participants narrowed pre-existing gaps with their peers by 20% to 30%.

In 2013, six boards participated in a longitudinal study. To examine longer term impacts of summer programs, this subset of our project will track participating students and a control group over three years. As in 2012, FNMI programs faced challenges in terms of summer program attendance and participation in the research protocol.

MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS:

- Summer programs continued to recruit students with pre-existing challenges in literacy and/or numeracy, with lower grades and worse school-year attendance, and who came from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds
- Summer programs had good success in raising students' skills in French and English Numeracy and Literacy. Numeracy results were particularly promising.
- Summer program students narrowed the pre-existing gaps with their peers by 20% to 30%. FNMI programs faced challenges of summer program attendance and participation in the research protocol.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS BY PROTOCOL

1) Mass Quantitative Protocol

Using full data for 491 and 230 students attending the English Literacy and French Literacy programs respectively, we found that participants had significantly positive literacy gains and avoided summer learning losses. Gains were largest among children with high attendance.

Figure 1: Summer Gains/Losses in English Literacy, 2010-13

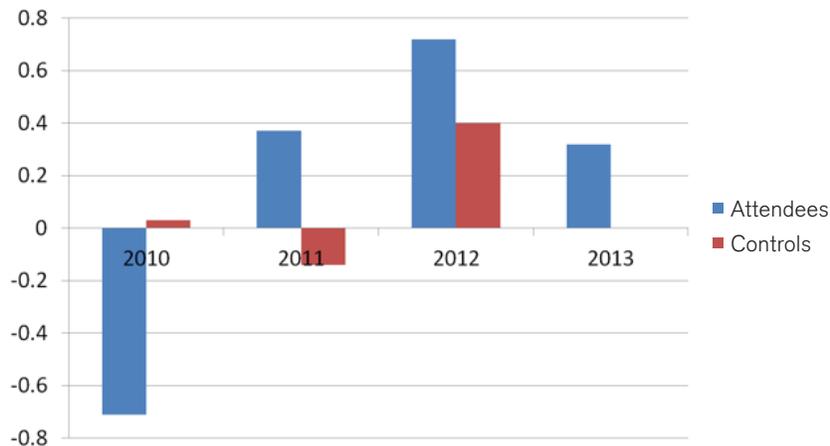
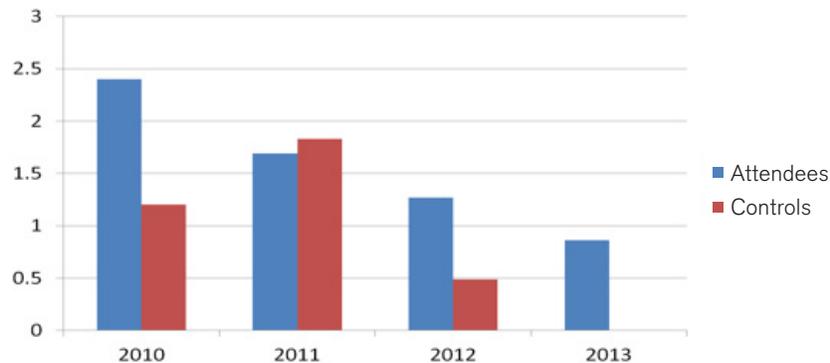


Figure 2: French Literacy Results, 2010-13



2) Full Quantitative Protocol

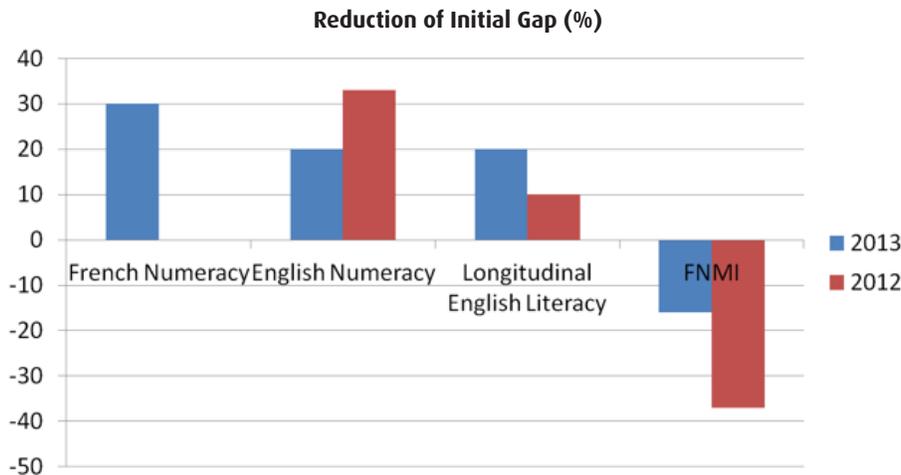
English Numeracy: Using data on 2,351 students (463 attendees, 1,888 controls), we found that summer recruits had lower prior numeracy, grades, parental education, income, employment, more IEPs, but fewer FNMI students. Both Attendees and Controls had numeracy losses. However, attendees fared better controlling for student characteristics (1 month more gain, effect size = 0.17).

French Numeracy: Using data on 130 students (45 attendees, 85 controls) participating in the French Numeracy program, we found that attendees had significantly lower June numeracy scores, report card grades, more IEPs, parents with less education, income, employment. The summer programs had large, positive effects: attendees gained 4.5 points more than controls. Controlling for student characteristics, this effect grew to 5.4 points (effect size = 1.06).

FNMI English Literacy: Using data on 682 students (559 controls, 123 attendees), we found that summer recruits had lower prior literacy, grades, more IEPs, less parental education, income, employment. Half of the summer students were identified as FNMI, compared to 29% of controls. However, both groups had summer learning losses. Summer attendee losses were less than those among controls once student characteristics were accounted for. Thus, while these programs successfully recruited disadvantaged children and lessened summer learning losses, they still face challenges of attendance and matching the success of our other summer programs.

Longitudinal English Literacy: Using data on 1,478 students (1,280 controls, 198 attendees), we found that summer recruits had lower prior literacy, grades, more IEPs, though fewer FNMI students. Both groups had literacy losses, but after accounting for student characteristics, we found that attendees lost 1 month of literacy less than controls. This was a significant effect.

Figure 3: Reducing Gaps in 2013, 2012
(% Spring Gap Reduced by Fall)



2013 Qualitative Research Findings

In 2012 and 2013 we interviewed 200 parents and teachers from three school boards participating in the longitudinal research study. Summer program parents repeatedly talked about heightened parent and student engagement. Summer program teachers echoed this finding, and also described a wide range of professional development opportunities afforded by the summer program. We also looked closely at one board's FNMI-based summer program. Their professional development model, including the use of FNMI coaches, was seen to facilitate a meaningful integration of the Aboriginal curriculum.

We identified a continuum of parental engagement to illustrate varying levels of trust, communication and opportunities to share literacy or numeracy learning strategies. While all of the parents we spoke to subscribe to the value of parent engagement in the abstract, the lower-SES parents in our sample were less able to translate these values into actions in ways that enhance their children's school success. Parental efficacy often speaks to how they understood the roles and responsibilities of parents and schools, their confidence in their own ability to help their children at home and their ability to engage with professionals at school. These parents have trouble translating the materials and instructions sent home, and missed warning signs (e.g., poor record card) often because they believed that the school would have initiated action if a problem was serious enough. These parents were also afraid to reveal their lack of knowledge about basic schooling processes, terminology and assessment tools. The summer programs were seen to overcome some of these challenges and forge more positive parent-school connections.

Major Highlights

- Momentum for summer programs continues to build. Students are returning year after year, and several boards have waiting lists.
- Teachers credited the summer program for helping them learn new teaching strategies.
- Teachers and parents discussed varying levels of parent engagement. Lower-SES parents have greater difficulty connecting to schools and supporting their children's learning at home.
- Teachers and parents credited the summer program for helping them develop stronger relationships and for improving parents' knowledge of literacy and numeracy learning. Examples of activities that enhanced relationships and parental efficacy:
 - Teachers described how the summer program afforded them the opportunity to talk to parents daily and include parents in a variety of activities.
 - Parents became more active participants in the summer program through volunteering, working individually with students and attending celebrations.
 - Parents appreciate the programs and notice quantitative (e.g., enhanced numeracy) and qualitative (e.g., reading enjoyment) gains. Parents recognize that the intensive focus on literacy and numeracy learning, along with healthy meals, snacks and recreational activities, has provided their children with an enriched summer vacation.
- Teachers described heightened student engagement during the summer program including greater risk taking and enthusiasm for learning.
- Teachers argued that students who attend the summer program are better prepared in September. Students are more ready to learn and teachers can "hit the ground running."

Conclusion:

Overall, most summer programs were successful. They helped students retain more literacy and numeracy skills than those students would otherwise retain over the summer months. They also benefit teachers professional development and improve home and school relationships.