

# ENGLISH LEARNERS

SUMMER 2020 | BRIEF 4

## WHO IS THIS LEARNER?

For English learners (ELs), summer programming can help maintain linguistic gains made over the academic year. As students' level of academic language increases, so does their access to content and overall academic achievement.

The benefits of summer programming for ELs rest on two points:

- 1. Research shows that effective programs mitigate the loss of skills over the summer.** For ELs, exposure to the academic language that ensures success in school is a result of learning that utilizes all four domains of speech. Without this engagement, ELs may revert to a non-English native language at home, and therefore lose much of the daily interaction with English that builds academic fluency. While few summer programs can provide the same fluency-building opportunities as a traditional school day, even modest efforts can help maintain learning gains.
- 2. The impact of “summer slide” has been shown to have a greater effect on economically disadvantaged students.** Lower-income families tend to have fewer opportunities for their students to engage in educationally enriching activities over the summer months. Across the nation, a strong correlation exists between students identified as economically disadvantaged and English learners.

## WHY IT MATTERS

- Research shows that the impact of COVID-19, school closure and the shift to distance learning is expected to increase the effect of “summer slide.”
- The impact of summer slide has a greater effect on economically disadvantaged students, an identification shared by many state ELs.
- Research has shown that effective summer programs can stem the loss of learned skills.
- Formal instruction and district programs are often the only source of academic English for ELs, and it is academic English that most allows ELs access to instructional content.

## THINGS TO CONSIDER

Summer programs do not necessarily need to be school-based and supported with direct instruction. Research has shown positive outcomes for home-based summer initiatives that focus on reading. Successful programs tended to have the following in common:

- Allowing students a degree of agency in choosing the text with which they would engage.
- Some level of teacher-student interaction with the text.
- A formal component of family engagement.
- Some manner of recorded reflection by the student regarding the text read.
- Texts that are appropriately aligned to the student's reading level.

## ATTENDING TO EQUITY

Many districts have already begun to develop recovery strategies designed to accelerate learning in preparation for the upcoming school year. Effective summer educational programs are important tools for the recovery of academic skills, and it is imperative that these initiatives be targeted to support all learners. Districts should focus on:

- Ensuring summer educational initiatives are available to all students.
- Ensuring summer activities allow students the opportunity to engage in and explore their own areas of interest.
- Ensuring that activities and readings are provided to students with the appropriate accommodations and at the student's current reading level.
- Providing teacher outreach and support to all students enrolled in a learn-at-home summer program.
- Providing supports to EL caregivers that encourage engagement in their student's learning.

[English Learner Distance Learning Toolkit](#)

[Family Supports for English Learners](#)

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How can a summer program support our overall recovery plan?
- What can we do to ensure the greatest number of English learners engage in summer activities?
- How do we ensure summer activities and readings for ELs are aligned to their level of English proficiency?
- How can we design summer activities to require the use of all four domains of language (listening, speaking, reading and writing)?
- What are the most effective means for communicating with our EL students and caregivers?

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