



**Dear Summer Learning Loss, you're no match for us.**

**Sincerely,  
Dallas Citizens**

### Summer Camps 2010: Defeating Summer Learning Loss

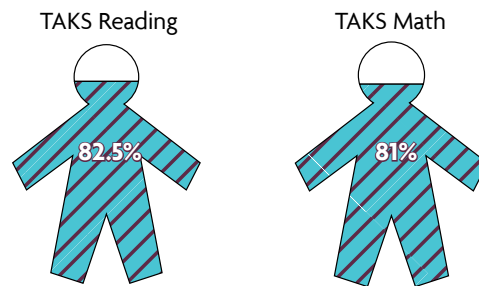
It's well known that the summer time is a make or break season for students – research shows that during this critical time students can lose months of knowledge when not engaged in educational activities.

With so much at stake, the community has an obligation to attack the problem from all sides, leaving no room for children to go academically backwards during those lazy summer days.

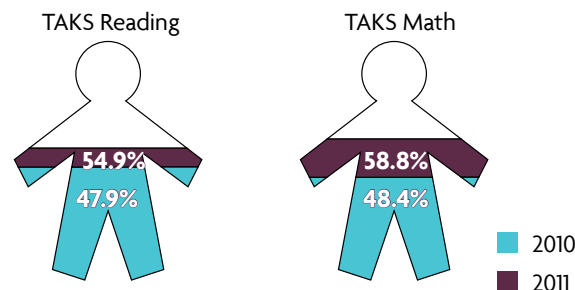
In the summer of 2010, The Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) and Big Thought set out to defeat the summer slide once and for all through a combination of collaboration, commitment to core subjects and creativity. Together, we asked our community to become part of a movement in summer learning – one which utilized a cadre of local people, businesses and institutions to deliver an exciting and engaging summer experience to 8,000 students.

### Closing the Achievement Gap TAKS Pass Rate Grades 3-5

The average Dallas ISD 3-5 grader began with solid 2010 TAKS pass rates in both reading and math, which remained stable in 2011.



Thriving Minds students who trailed their peers significantly in 2010 showed impressive increases in TAKS pass rates for 2011 – 7% in reading and 10.4% in math. As Dallas continues to invest in summer learning, these high-potential\* students will be better equipped to meet their academic goals, closing the achievement gap.



\*Typically fails 2 or more subjects



Convening Partner



Convening Partner



Managing Partner



W.W. Caruth, Jr. Foundation, Communities Foundation of Texas



**“First, one must create a state of mind that craves knowledge, interest and wonder. You can teach only by creating an urge to know.”**

**- Victor Weisskopf, Physicist**



## **Thriving Minds Summer Camps 2011: Three Environments for Learning**



**Dallas ISD  
Elementary  
Camps**

- 17 Campuses
- Approximately 7,150 Served



**Community  
Elementary &  
Middle School  
Camps**

- Four City of Dallas  
Neighborhood Arts Centers
- Partner Programs with 20+  
Cultural Organizations,  
Institutions of Higher  
Education
- Approximately 1,455 Served



**Dallas ISD  
Middle School  
Camps**

- 9 Campuses
- Approximately 1,800 Served

In 2011, Dallas ISD and Big Thought expanded on the success of Thriving Minds Summer Camp's first year and became even more bold in programming. Together, we set out to disprove the myth that students won't take an active interest in learning during the summer. We challenged participants to think bigger, engage fiercely and learn more. This work is gaining national momentum as an innovative approach to get students to invest in the classroom. How is it done?

## **The High Five of Engaging Learners:**

### **1. United We Stand**

It's possible to have an education partnership without the cooperation of the public school system. It just doesn't make much business sense. Fortunately, the Dallas ISD is one of the most partner-minded districts in the country. Each year, Dallas ISD educates 157,000 students and, over the past three years, has raised test scores and increased college readiness. By working in tandem with the District, Big Thought and its partners can combine expertise, resources, curriculum, instructor pools, and ideas to build a unique public/private approach to educating our students. We're able to reach more students and in better ways.

### **2. Value the Power of Imagination**

Imagination is where it all begins. Every business, every innovation, and every good grade grew from the mind's ability to assess a problem or idea and create an answer to



**“I like the fact that [Thriving Minds Summer Camps] are project–based. No worksheets whatsoever. As a teacher I get to think outside the box and have kids do a hands-on project that’s integrated into core subjects. This is the closest it gets to real teaching, real school.”**

**— Guadalupe Garza, Teacher, Dallas ISD**

it. Just as students need to reason with their left brain, they must be able to explore with their right. This combination of brain power means the difference between reciting the right answers and internalizing the right concepts, a deeper kind of learning that will truly benefit kids.

### **3. Take learning beyond the classroom**

All students’ experiences are not equal. Some have access to a multitude of places and activities, some only a few. With this in mind, the Dallas ISD and Big Thought helped middle school students direct their curiosities to real world experiences – by engaging with almost 25 Dallas institutions like the Trinity River Audubon Center to take nature walks, examine pond samples and learn in real-world environments. In fact, students experienced two weeks of summer camp at Dallas’ historic Fair Park, exploring some of the city’s most esteemed cultural institutions.

### **4. Connect school to life**

Students need relevancy in their studies. They want to know that what’s learned in the classroom will actually be useful in building a career and securing a future. To that end, students learned with 125 corporate volunteers what careers

are possible for them – if they stay on track academically through high school, preparing for college or professional training opportunities.

### **5. Consider the Environment**

Different ages come with different learning requirements. A five-year-old needs a markedly different environment than a fifteen-year-old. In Thriving Minds Summer Camps, elementary school students learned core classes like math, science, English and social studies in the morning and in the afternoon were allowed to play and discover through theater, music, visual arts and other creative endeavors. In between, integrationists connected the afternoon “studio” time and the morning’s core classes. Middle school students require instruction that allows them to take the wheel, bringing tactile lessons to abstract principles. To augment core curriculum, “exploratory coaches” worked with teams of middle school students to design and implement a project that builds teamwork, negotiation, higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills. For instance, students worked together to build model suspension bridges to heighten their awareness of Trinity River bridges, helping them connect to their city and their school work.



## 2011 By the Numbers

**1,225** Dallas ISD and Big Thought staff, including teachers, support staff and administration provided their expertise

**125** corporate volunteers representing 50 businesses showed students how their classrooms connected to their futures

**134** instructors, exploratory coaches, scientists, historians, integrationists, etc. used hands on learning to boost core academics

**150+** hours of professional development for instructors to learn the most effective ways to reach children

**51** high school students spent their summer reading to and mentoring younger students

**288,000** snacks served to feed the brains of kids hungry to learn

**23** non-profit institutions that opened their facilities to community-driven summer camps

**91** parents and volunteers who worked in classrooms, communities and across Dallas to lend a helping hand

Thriving Minds is a citywide initiative that brings together organizations that believe in the power of imagination, creativity and innovation to change the way children learn.

To learn more visit [www.bigthought.org/thrivingminds](http://www.bigthought.org/thrivingminds)