

Fifth Block of Instruction

General Information about Fifth Block

The voluntary Fifth Block of uninterrupted instruction is designed for students who have demonstrated growth but need more time to become proficient. This supports the belief that all students can learn, but some students need more time. The classes focus on math and literacy (reading and writing).

Through experience, Fifth Block has demonstrated a solid impact on student achievement by extending the year for approximately 4,000 students with a highly focused-academic program. Studies indicate that adding a significant amount of time will impact student achievement. Research also shows that it is not time alone that yields the greatest results. Time must be coupled with high-quality instruction.

Keys to success in the Fifth Block are well-trained, experienced teachers, good curriculum and adequate physical facilities. That is why fifth block is 23 days long, and students are generally taught in their own schools using district curriculum. Class size is set at a 25 to 1 ratio. Fifth Block also shortens the long summer break that can cause a loss of learning for some students.

To maximize the 23 days of instruction, Fifth Block is designed for students who have demonstrated evidence of growth and the most potential to make progress toward proficiency. It is for those students who have had one-year continuous enrollment in APS (March to March) with consistent attendance. Using data from the Division of Assessment and Research, each school identifies those students they believe will benefit most from the additional time and quality instruction.

June 2011 marked the fourth consecutive year that Aurora Public schools offered its extended school-year program, Fifth Block. The program was initially implemented in June 2008.

The 2011 Fifth Block session saw the largest cohort to date: 3,753 students participated this year; 3,159 participated in 2010; 3,299 in 2009; and 3,075 in 2008. Twenty-five percent of students in the 2011 cohort were participating for the second consecutive year.

Overall attendance rates during 2011 Fifth Block were greater than 90%, and only two office referrals were entered into Infinite Campus during Fifth Block.

Analysis of CSAP growth data for students who participated in Fifth Block during previous years shows that program participants tend to make better progress than non-participants.

- Median growth percentiles were higher for 2010 Fifth Block participants on the spring 2011 math and reading assessments across all grade levels
- Median growth percentiles were higher for 2010 Fifth Block participants on the spring 2011 writing assessment at all grade levels except 4th and 8th
- Median growth percentiles for 2011 Fifth Block participants exceeded 50 on 18 out of 21 assessments

Results from principal, teacher, and parent surveys reflect the belief that students benefit academically from attending Fifth Block. Rates of agreement on the three surveys were 88.9% (principals), 88.4% (teachers), and 86.8% (parents).

Historically, the district provides many extra supports for high achieving students and the lowest performers. APS provides numerous programs and strategies to help our at-risk students, but there have not always been enough supports in place for students who are near proficiency. Fifth Block targets instruction to those students who are not proficient (either partially proficient or unsatisfactory), but who have demonstrated through their effort, performance and attendance that the extra 23 days of instruction could accelerate their learning.