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Do Summer Bridge Programs Actually Work?

Retention and academic success in the first year of university are critical predictors of longer-term student outcomes. Summer math bridge programs are one common intervention designed to address these challenges, offering students additional mathematical preparation before the academic year begins.

Prior academic preparation and demographics play a significant role in shaping both who participates in these programs and who benefits most. Identifying which students are being successfully reached, and which students are being left behind, is crucial if these programs are to achieve their goals of promoting equity and improving academic outcomes across diverse student populations.

We will evaluate three summer bridge programs that have been run at York University since 2014. Do they actually work? Do they help bridge performance gaps or enhance inequities? Do program structure and format impact efficacy? How do you go about obtaining and analyzing data? Do they have an equal impact on short-term and long-term success metrics? Answering these questions will suggest whether such programs are a valuable tool in the battle of student preparedness, or a relic that should be replaced with more effective and modern programming.