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Dissertation in Practice:

Summer Reading Loss

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Summer Reading Loss

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ABSTRACT

DEBBIE BATTLES, KATHRYN MOREM, LAURA RIOPELLE, AND
CATHERINE TEDESCO: Summer Reading Loss

Each year school leaders across the nation are faced with the challenge of how to sustain and/or accelerate students' progression of reading development during the summer months. Research indicates that the reading achievement of children who have little to no access to books generally declines during the summer months, while the reading achievement of children who have access to books typically remains constant or improves. It is well established that high quality, engaging, summer learning programs can prevent summer learning loss and even boost student achievement.

An extensive review of the literature resulted in a critical analysis of what summer reading loss is, the long-term implications, and combating its effects. The research on the topic of summer reading loss points to a variety of factors that contribute to this phenomenon and can accelerate the digression over time. For example, summer reading loss has the greatest impact on children in poverty, and the loss is cumulative. Children who are not proficient by third grade are four times more likely not to graduate from high school. There is also a great disparity in the number of books in low-income areas including homes, classrooms, school libraries, and public libraries. Finally, traditional six-week, five hours per day summer school programs are not decreasing the effects of summer reading loss.

In addition to revealing the factors related to summer reading loss and the characteristics of programs failing to resolve it, the research identifies five key elements that can, alternatively, prevent reading loss. These are: early planning, access to books, self-selected (high interest) books, just right books, and engaging activities. In order to address this critical issue, a guide was developed to help school leaders plan, execute, monitor, and evaluate the impact of their program that includes the five key factors for its success. A panel of literacy leaders was assembled to garner feedback and test the validity of the guide. The final product is comprehensive in nature and includes research-based strategies and practical applications for implementing a successful summer reading program.

Order Number:

SUMMER READING LOSS

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Lynn University, 2017

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

“Literacy is a fundamental human right and the foundation for lifelong learning. It is fully essential to social and human development in its ability to transform lives” (UNESCO, n.d., para. 1). Literacy is defined by the International Literacy Association as, “The ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, compute, and communicate using visual, audible, and digital materials across disciplines and in any context” (“Why Literacy?” 2016, p. 1). The organization emphasizes the importance of literacy stating, “The ability to read, write, and communicate connects people to one another and empowers them to achieve things they never thought possible. Communication and connection are the basis of who we are and how we live together and interact with the world” (“Why Literacy?” 2016, p. 1). In this context, it is obvious that literacy is significant, not only in the school setting, but also as a crucial life skill.

During the summer months, students’ reading development frequently declines, resulting in what is known as summer reading loss. The long-term effects of summer reading loss reach far beyond the elementary school years. Middle and high school academic achievement rates and high school graduation are all impacted by the summer reading loss phenomenon. Clearly, there is a need to examine the parameters surrounding summer reading loss and to identify possible solutions to this critical issue.

Background

For years, educators have followed a traditional school calendar that includes a summer vacation. Originally, summer vacation was established to support an agrarian society in which children assisted their families with farming. Despite the shift from an agrarian to a post-industrial era, the school calendar has remained the same, structured

around a summer break. Given the disparity of today's students' educational backgrounds, coupled with the recent increase of educational demands essential for academic success, providing continuity of learning throughout the entire year is of paramount importance. Schools are slow to change from a summer vacation schedule and are unlikely to do so in the future. It is well documented that children accelerate at the same rate of learning during the school year (Allington, 2003). "Available research indicates that the reading achievement of poor children, as a group, typically declines during the summer vacation period, while the reading achievement of children from more economically advantaged families holds steady or increases modestly" (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003, p. 19). Over time, the disparity between children of means and children of poverty widens. Since students learn at the same rate during the school year, the gap will continue to widen over time based predominantly on socioeconomic status.

Significance

The negative consequences of summer reading loss are significant. Summer reading loss affects students throughout their educational career and beyond. Students who cannot read on grade level in the third grade are four times less likely to graduate by age 18 than those who read at or above grade level (Hernandez, 2012). The continuing implications of lower literacy rates and poor reading ability extend to placement in high school classes, high school dropout rates and college attendance (Smith, 2011).

For children who grow up and live in poverty, the results are even more astounding. According to Alexander, Entwisle & Olsen (2007), children from disadvantaged backgrounds experienced significant gaps in learning during the summer months as compared to their peers, and the gaps only continued to widen over time. A

study by Downey, Hippel and Broh (2004) found that the gap between students of varying socioeconomic groups grew disproportionately during the summer months, proving that schools are indeed the “great equalizers.”

Context for the study

When studying the importance of literacy as a contributing factor to becoming a successful and productive member of society, the loss of reading achievement over the summer months has a significant impact. Long-range consequences of summer reading loss are profound. Various theorists have explored a child’s acquisition of learning. Neuman and Celano (2001) established that a child’s cognition is dependent on the micro and macro environmental systems in which a child resides. Constructivists believe a child builds knowledge based on experiences. As a result, literacy development occurs over time through repeated exposure to print. When no such exposure occurs, a child’s ability to decode, interpret and respond to text suffers (Pacquette & Ryan, 2000). Clearly, the need for continuous improvement in reading and literacy throughout the summer months cannot be overemphasized.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this Dissertation in Practice (DiP) is to examine contributing factors of summer reading loss, primarily on students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and develop a process that school leaders may follow for designing and implementing a literacy program that mitigates this loss. In the absence of formal instruction during the summer months, virtually all students suffer a degree of reading ability setback. Students who have the advantage of continuing their education in a traditional summer school program or through private enrichment opportunities may

either lessen the impact of summer reading loss, or advance their skills depending on the degree to which such experiences are linked back to literacy competency development. However, this represents a decreasing category of students given widespread changes in demographics and economic stability among the American population. The current status of American education is marked by an increase in the number of Title I schools serving children from low-income families or from those living below the poverty threshold. Students from either of these socio-economic categories experience an uphill battle in staving off the negative effects that their disadvantaged circumstances have on oral language and reading proficiency development.

This DiP expounds upon the external factors associated with economic insufficiency that tend to erode a child's ability to advance at a standard developmental literacy rate. It also identifies the reasons why the rate of reading loss gets compounded during the summer months with each passing year for disadvantaged students. It is imperative that educational leaders accurately assess the grave effect poverty has on learning, particularly during the summer months, since adequate literacy development represents the gateway to knowledge acquisition in virtually all other cognitive domains.

For decades, educational leaders have responded with traditional summer school programs that have generally fallen short of abating the problem of summer reading decline among low-income or children of poverty. As part of this analysis, the current practice among school leaders across America reveals a deficient trend in summer school planning leading to programs that insufficiently meet the needs of students. Adding to the problem, summer school programs often rank as an afterthought in the scheme of comprehensive school improvement planning leaving them in want of sufficient funds,

staffing, resources, curriculum and evaluative measurements. While summer school programs are currently being implemented in many schools, they tend to have little, if any, positive impact on children and generally represent a mismanagement of funds.

Research Questions

Given summer school programs have largely failed to resolve the problem of summer reading setback among disadvantaged children, there exists an opportunity to examine what works and develop those findings into an easy-to-use planning guide for school leaders. This guide will enable them to design and implement a summer reading program that is unique to their school's needs. The fundamental research questions relative to summer reading loss involve identifying how the problem exhibits among children, why the issue is particularly perilous for disadvantaged students, as well as why the problem gets worse over time. It also encompasses analyzing such factors that contribute to summer program ineffectiveness in order to avoid their replication year after year. Finally, deficits in the research create opportunities for solutions that may be used by school leaders to close the gap of summer reading loss among low-income students.

Given the complex nature of literacy cognitive development, many would assume there exists a need for all-inclusive summer programs to remedy the problem. However, pivotal case studies unveil but a few key components that accelerate a summer program's propensity to stem the tide of summer reading loss. The research on summer reading loss uncovers an urgent need for targeted literacy programs that are commensurate with the research findings.

Assumptions

The effects of summer reading loss are evident, and it can be assumed that schools must bear the responsibility for continuous learning even when students are not at school. Furthermore, most school districts are not about to eliminate summer vacation due to public outcry. Not all summer interventions need to be exactly the same but there are key elements that must be included in order for the program to be successful.

It is also assumed in this DiP that school leaders simply lack a programmatic structure to help guide them through the critical planning process. In addition, current programs lack an evaluation component essential in guiding future planning. Targeted feedback is rarely solicited among teachers, students, and parents. If included in the program at all, progress monitoring is often administered too late to isolate the direct impact of the summer literacy program.

The examination of the research thus far has yielded a gap in resources that are essential for school leaders to plan, implement and evaluate the effectiveness of a targeted, summer literacy program. It can be assumed that a comprehensive guide will better equip school literacy leaders to design and implement a viable solution for the problem of summer reading setback.

Limitations of the Dissertation in Practice Study

For purposes of this study, there are certain limitations that exist that may impact the degree of positive student achievement results. It may be difficult to draw correlations between existing programs due to the variabilities at each school site and the policies that exist regionally. Because of time constraints, data will be drawn primarily from local participants who may be more similarly focused versus a divergence of

subjects from across a wider geographic area. The possibility exists that no single program will meet the needs of all schools as evidenced by the levels of proficient readers across the nation. Therefore, it may be necessary for the Dissertation in Practice to include a full, in-depth literature review in order to capture trends and to develop customized options that yield the greatest return on investment for each school center based on their individual needs.

Other variables that could impact our Dissertation in Practice include the number of books utilized in the program, often reflective of the school's ability to fund a project, and the variety of available reading levels. Additionally, students may have difficulty selecting books at the "just right" independent reading level. "Just right" is defined as a book that a child can both read independently at 95% accuracy or above and comprehend for meaning. This problem may be exacerbated by the lack of qualified personnel to support the implementation of the program and the fact that students experience varying levels of support in the home that may reduce the program's impact. Furthermore, a student must not only read and comprehend the material, but should also connect his or her reading to authentic activities to solidify the base of literacy skills that are being developed.

The success of the program must also include the school's inclusion of a pre- and post- assessment, as the program's success is most accurately measured in this manner. The timeliness and quality of these evaluation measurements are crucial in determining effectiveness in order to fully attribute any reading gains or losses that result from the program. Finally, there exists an overarching misconception regarding what constitutes

program success. A successful summer reading program aims to prevent reading loss during the summer; increasing reading ability is considered an added benefit.

According to Cooper, et al (2000), the five key factors that have shown the greatest impact on summer reading loss are: early planning, access to books, high interest/self-selected books, “just right” independent level books, and engaging activities. To mitigate summer reading loss, this DiP has resulted in the development of an explicit, easy-to-follow guide for literacy leadership teams to design a customized summer reading program inclusive of these five key components.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions have been provided:

Achievement gap. A statistically significant disparity in achievement between students grouped by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and gender (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.).

“Faucet Theory”. This theory suggests that all students receive the same amount of resources (from the faucet) during the school year, while during the summer this faucet is no longer turned on and the resources are inconsistent (Neuman & Celano, 2001).

“Investment Model”. A deliberate allocation of parental resources to increase their child’s academic achievement (McAllister, 2014).

“Just Right Book”. A book that a child can read independently at 95% accuracy or above, fluently, and comprehend for meaning.

Literacy. The ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, compute, and communicate using visual, audible, and digital materials across disciplines and in any context (“Why Literacy?” 2016, p. 1).

Literacy Leader. A school or district stakeholder who leads literacy development and influences curricular decisions.

“Macrosystems”. The everyday environment or culture in which children reside. This system influences the opportunities that are made available to parents and children (Neuman and Celano, 2001).

“Matthew Effects”. A reference to the Biblical passage where the rich-get-richer and the poor-get-poorer. In the context of literacy development, students who have increased exposure to text become better readers. Whereas students who lack sufficient

exposure to text suffer a decline in reading ability over time (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998).

“Microsystems”. The aspects of a child’s environment that have the greatest impact on social and cognitive development, usually involving personal interactions (Neuman and Celano, 2001).

“Parental Psychological Resources Theory”. The belief that parent expectations drive their children’s success and are equally as important as socioeconomic level in their effect on learning. They influence not only a student’s self-esteem in regards to academic achievement but also the student’s beliefs about his or her abilities (McAllister, 2014).

Reading Proficiency. The ability to identify the words on a page accurately and independently while comprehending grade level text as measured by standardized assessments (National Reading Panel, 2001).

Summer Reading Loss. The decline in children's reading development that can occur during the summer months when children are away from the classroom and not participating in formal literacy programs or summer enrichment activities. It is also referred to as “summer slide,” “summer setback,” or “summer reading shortfall” (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003, p. 19).

Title I. Title I, Part A (Title I) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended (ESEA) provides financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2015, para. 1).

CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review examines the effects of summer learning loss, particularly in the area of reading, as well as studies components of effective summer learning programs. Summer reading loss is often referred to as “summer slide,” “summer setback,” or “summer reading shortfall.” Within this literature review, loss in reading ability during the summer months will be identified as “summer reading loss.” Extensive research has been conducted on summer reading loss that addresses the following research questions:

1. What is summer reading loss?
2. What impacts summer reading loss?
3. What are the long-term implications of summer reading loss?
4. How can summer reading programs be made more effective?
5. What mitigates summer reading loss?

In response to these research questions, hundreds of related articles and studies were selected for relevancy. For inclusion in this literature review, material was reviewed, deliberated upon and selected based on alignment to the research questions.

Summer Reading Loss

Summer reading loss is defined as the decline in children's reading development that can occur during the summer months when children are away from the classroom and not participating in formal literacy programs or summer enrichment activities typically associated with children from advantaged households. However, even students who are afforded the opportunity to participate in a summer extracurricular program may

suffer reading proficiency loss if these programs do not incorporate a literacy component.

“Summer reading loss occurs when students return to school after summer vacation with diminished reading skills, presumably from a lack of adequate reading practice”

(Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003, p. 19).

In the 1980s, Hayes and Grether published their analysis of the achievement gap in the New York City schools. More recently, Alexander Entwisle, and Olson (2007) tracked reading achievement from the beginning of ninth grade in Baltimore and reported precisely, again, what Hayes and Grether reported 30 years ago: that almost all of the reading achievement gap occurs during the summer when most children are not attending school (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2009).

The reality of summer reading loss is well-documented. It is widely accepted that some loss will occur over the summer; however, the effects of summer reading loss on children are different depending on economic status. “Available research indicates that the reading achievement of poor children, as a group, typically declines during the summer vacation period, while the reading achievement of children from more economically advantaged families holds steady or increases modestly” (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003, p. 19).

The research has been consistent for decades; the reading achievement of children who have little to no access to books typically declines during the summer months while the reading achievement of children who have access to books typically holds steady or increases modestly. Summer reading loss has a direct impact on student reading success particularly for low-income students.

What Impacts Summer Reading Loss

The impact of summer reading loss affects all students to some varying degree. Unequal income levels directly relate to literacy development disparities and contribute to the widening achievement gap that grows during the summer months. Summer vacation traditionally yields a three-month gap in reading scores between children of families with average incomes and those of low-income households (Kim & Guryan, 2010, Cooper 1996).

All young people experience learning losses when they do not engage in educational activities during the summer. Research spanning 100 years shows that students typically score lower on standardized tests at the end of summer vacation than they do on the same tests at the beginning of the summer (White, 1906; Heyns, 1978; Entwisle & Alexander 1992; Cooper, 1996; Downey et al, 2004)” (“Know the facts,” n.d., para. 4).

For specific reading areas, comprehension scores for both income groups declined over summer, but declined more for lower-class students. Reading recognition scores showed a significant gain for middle-class students and a significant loss for lower-class students (Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay, & Greathouse, 1996). The mere absence of instruction during the summer months will yield some reading loss among all children; however, financial disadvantage represents the greatest impacting factor accelerating the normal loss into ranges that even the best of instruction cannot easily resolve. While many are quick to find fault with America’s education system, citing declining achievement scores in comparison to their international counterparts, the fact remains, “overall mediocre scores are because America has a very high percentage of

children in poverty, over 20% compared to Denmark's 3%" (Krashen, 2011, p. 17).

Krashen (2011) asserts that the American education system has been successful in educating children; the problem is the growing number of children from poverty.

According to the National Center for Children in Poverty,

“More than 16 million children in the United States – 22% of all children – live in families with incomes below the federal poverty level - \$23,550 a year for a family of four. Research shows that, on average, families need an income of about twice that level to cover basic expenses. Using this standard, 45% of children live in low-income families” (“Child Poverty,” 2014, p. 1).

According to the 2014 Census Report, 21.1 percent of children under age 18 live in poverty. Adults ages 18-64 experience a 13.5 percent poverty rate as compared to adults over age 65 where only 10 percent live in poverty (“Current Population Reports”, 2014, p. 1).

There is also a culture among children of middle-class families that is conducive to literacy development. It stems from having one's needs sufficiently met that stimulates interest in developing proficient reading practices and behaviors. In addition, middle-class children naturally develop cognitive reading abilities by virtue of ample exposure to print resources. They are exposed to specific vernacular patterns, language exchanges and literacy behaviors from which they benefit. Printed resources are so deeply embedded in the cultural fabric of middle-to upper-class families and their surrounding communities that they are hardly noticeable to their literate inhabitants. This fact becomes evident with an acute focus on the sheer magnitude of printed items in these environments including books, newspapers, labels, sets of directions, advertising signage,

logos, mobile communication devices, computers, manuals, magazines, and brochures. Furthermore, these resources prompt specific literacy interactions and behaviors among individuals exposed to them over time. The boundless opportunities they have to practice these behaviors inculcate a pattern of continuous reading progression. For example, children of advantaged backgrounds experience both happenstance and deliberate language exchanges that are connected to printed materials that lead to increased decoding and comprehension abilities (Neuman & Celano, 2001).

Additionally, literacy development involving printed text contributes to the ability to perform a variety of essential cognitive functions such as sorting, memorization, recalling, classifying, analysis and drawing inferences. (Neuman & Celano, 2001). Such are the literacy characteristics of environments in which children of financial advantage are born. By the time they are ready to enter kindergarten, they have already surpassed their less advantaged peers. While these same children will experience some reading loss due to interruption of formal schooling, it is really quite negligible since it often is replaced by other language and literacy-rich experiences that travel, extra-curricular, or other planned events typically offer.

Research confirms that access to books and other printed resources for literacy development is so vital to a child's cognitive development, that it is often placed on par with Maslow's hierarchy of needs in order to survive in a print-dependent society (Maslow, 1987). Therein lies one reason why children of disadvantage experience reading ability regression during summer months. The events that shape their environments as a result of struggling to survive on low incomes or below the poverty line resemble nothing like those of their advantaged peers.

Children of disadvantage often do not live in communities where libraries or other community organizations have ample resources that are readily available. They do not frequent bookstores or attend extracurricular sports and activities or day camps. They may never visit coffee shops where they might witness people reading text on phones, newspapers or books, or visit healthcare facilities with waiting rooms colored with brochures and magazines. Families of advantage save up for and plan summer vacation trips to build their repertoire of background experiences upon which discreet literacy instruction may connect and facilitate complex cognitive tasks.

Disadvantaged children suffer a delay in literacy readiness upon the start of kindergarten, which is compounded during the summer months due to a lack of access to books and vocabulary-rich experiences connected to reading and writing. The cumulative effect of summer reading loss from first to fifth grade can be traced as the root cause for ninth-grade intervention and high-school dropout rates. “Summer learning differences during the foundational early grades help explain achievement-dependent outcome differences across social lines in the upper grades including the transition out of high school and, for some, into college” (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2007, p. 168). Subsequent ramifications of job insecurity and possible delinquency often follows upon passage into the secular environment.

Children who experience events causing circumstantial income loss suffer a decline in reading progression; whereas, children born in environments where generational poverty pervades, face a more perilous set of circumstances to overcome. Circumstantial poverty is often defined as a case of hitting on “tough times” for individuals within literate environments; generational poverty denotes an environment

where exposure to print is severely limited or completely absent in nearly every facet of one's surroundings (Neuman & Celano, 2001).

To illustrate this fact, a study comparing two suburban and two urban neighborhoods in Philadelphia examined the environments of neighborhoods in terms of access and exposure to print. Given the premise that environment plays a vital role in children's development, it is prudent to examine its influence in the context of literacy behaviors. This study attempted to gauge possible disparities in terms of facets of the neighborhood environments. It looked at the opportunities the children had to develop literacy skills through contact, experiences, and observations of written language used in everyday life. There were six domains that were observed in these communities:

1. The quantity of books and variety of selection available for purchase in the community.
2. The business area print signage and advertising.
3. Public locations where children observe people reading.
4. Quantity and quality of books available in child care centers.
5. Quantity and quality of books available in the local school libraries.
6. Quantity and quality of books available in the local public library.

Results of the study confirmed that vast differences exist in each of the six categories between the urban and suburban neighborhoods. To cite one example, there were about 13 book titles for every one child in Chestnut Hill (suburban), and one book title for every three children in Roxborough (urban). Neuman and Celano conclude in their study that, "Access to print is highly differentiated in our culture, and it may result

in differential opportunities for certain types of learning and thinking related to literacy development” (Neuman & Celano, 2001, p. 11).

Children from economically depressed communities, such as those examined in this study, experience constraints on interrelated activities that tend to support literacy development. Most of the research on reading decline and deficits among school-age children are limited to the influence within the scope of parental involvement and home surroundings. This study provides substantial evidence to verify the problem reaches well beyond the classroom walls. The way print is organized and the extent to which it is made available in communities may have an auxiliary impact on reading ability deficits among children, which are worsened during summer months in the absence of formal instruction.

Well-outfitted schools situated in high-poverty communities receive ample Title I funding that provides abundant resources; however, they continue to overwhelmingly fail as a remedy for literacy underachievement ("Title I," 2004). When students return to their sub-literate home and community environments without books and few opportunities to connect reading to authentic events in life through practice, there is minimal assimilation of newly introduced content in school.

Another in-depth study conducted in the Baltimore area found that all students, regardless of socioeconomic family background, develop at the same approximate levels during the school year. Discrepancies occurred during the summer months where the disadvantaged youth fell far behind, and these continued to compound over the years resulting in substantial achievement gaps (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2007).

Researchers Cunningham and Stanovich, make reference to a concept termed “Matthew effects,” in academic achievement; a reference to the Biblical passage where the rich-get-richer and the poor-get-poorer (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). When applying this concept to the literacy development of early readers, students experiencing difficulty in decoding have less exposure to text as compared to their more skilled peers.

“Differences in out-of-school access to books, positive reading practices, and connections with institutions supportive of self-discovery and reading, account for much of the disparity in student academic success. This has a cascading effect as children grow and develop” (“The Importance of Summer Reading: Public Library Summer Reading Programs and Learning,” 2011, para. 4). Entwisle and her colleagues (1997), coined this phenomenon the “faucet theory.” They suggested that “achievement differences are due to seasonal variations in educational opportunity by denying young children the resources they need to grow outside of school, especially in the summer” (Neuman & Celano, 2001, p. 11). Students receive the same amount of resources from the faucet during the school year, while during the summer this faucet is no longer turned on and the resources are inconsistent. This theory assumes that students from middle and high socioeconomic groups have more resources available which contributes to a widening achievement gap (McAllister, 2014).

Another theory called the “investment model” examines “different ways parents can invest in their children” (McAllister, 2014, p. 14). The more parents invest in their children via time, skills, income and materials, the higher the educational achievement for these children. Parental income, too, influences this gap and higher family income levels are directly correlated to graduation rate. The manner in which parents utilize their

income, in order to supplement learning and experiences for their children, directly impacts the child's learning and may potentially contribute to summer learning loss.

Finally, the "parental psychological resources" theory proposes that parent expectations drive their children's success. Those who subscribe to this theory believe that these expectations are equally as important as socioeconomic level in their effect on learning. They influence not only a student's self-esteem in regards to academic achievement but also the student's beliefs about his or her abilities (McAllister, 2014).

The impact of poverty restricts literacy development, and it is evident that it wields its influence within the immediate and far-reaching proximity of a child's environment. The research also substantiates that poverty is correlated to inadequate access to books and other print resources. The binary effect on disadvantaged children confirms that limited access to print and their associated literate environment will negatively impact their reading progress. While formal literacy instruction significantly mitigates the problem during school-term months, the summer months that offer no support will inevitably exacerbate the problem.

"Much research has established the contribution of summer reading setback to the reading achievement gap that is present between children from more and less economically advantaged families. Likewise, summer reading activity, or the lack of it, has been linked to summer setback" (Allington et al., 2010, p. 411). It is not the quality of education that students receive during the school year that is responsible for the gap but a cumulative summer reading loss. Research points toward four major contributing factors of summer reading loss:

1. Access to books

2. Disproportionate loss for disadvantaged youth
3. Disadvantaged youth progress in the same manner as their advantaged counterparts during the school year
4. Summer reading loss is cumulative across years. If a student loses up to one to three months of reading achievement each summer, the achievement gap can widen to as much as one to one and a half years by sixth grade (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003).

Long-Term Implications of Summer Reading Loss

There is a range of long-term implications for summer reading loss that are rooted in access to print, insufficient opportunity, and inadequate experience that builds background knowledge. “Book-related experiences may be intimately related to the cognitive activities usual for children, such as the use of decontextualized language, demonstrating how basic mental processes and activities become integrated through experience” (Neuman & Celano, 2001, p. 24).

Neuman and Celano (2001) maintain that a child’s cognitive development is based on the social and physical context in which one lives defining that environment as micro and macrosystems. Each system illustrates the interaction a child has with his/her environment and the effect that interaction has on learning. The microsystem layer, the layer closest to the child, involves interacting on a personal level as the child builds relationships. This particular layer has the greatest impact on a child’s learning. The macrosystem involves the everyday environment or culture in which children reside. This system influences the opportunities that are made available to parents and children.

The constructivist theory of learning suggests that children assimilate and build knowledge based on experiences. Solid, secure micro and macrosystems generate the experiences that build the background knowledge that, in turn, supports learning. Literacy development, in particular, is largely dependent on prior knowledge that is steadily developed by individual experiences over time. The interaction between print and prior knowledge facilitates the meaning-making upon which comprehension is contingent. Children who have limited prior knowledge face difficulty in decoding, interpreting and responding to text (Pacquette & Ryan, 2000).

Prior knowledge deficit coupled with a lack of opportunity to attend summer programs intensifies the impact of summer reading loss. Research has shown that a child's rate of learning is consistent across socioeconomic lines during the school year; however, over the summer, middle and upper income children's skills continue to improve, while lower income children's skills do not (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2007). It is estimated that teachers typically spend between four to six weeks re-teaching material students have forgotten over the summer.

The far-reaching effect of lagging literacy development is connected to learning behaviors that serve other developmental parts of the brain such as memorization, recalling abilities, sorting and classifying – all tasks that require practice as they develop and are uniquely associated with printed materials. The picture is clear - a lack of literacy development among or populations has a compounding effect on one's ability to transfer skills to other tasks essential for thriving in a print-dependent society.

A landmark research study conducted decades ago in Atlanta public schools followed sixth and seventh graders for two years in school including summer. The study

found that students who read more books over the summer had consistently demonstrated academic gains. Children who read six or more books over the summer experienced an increase in reading achievement, in contrast to children who did not, regardless of their economic status (Heyns, 1978).

Third-grade students who cannot read on grade level are four times less likely to graduate by age 18 than a proficient reader. Smith (2011) attests that, “Playing this type of ‘catch-up’ each year accumulates resulting in a two-year deficit by the time these students reach middle school” (p. 60). Additionally, the consequences of summer reading loss affects high school curriculum placement, high school dropout rates and college attendance. “This achievement level is a huge determinant of whether students stay in school and follow a college-preparatory track” (Smith, 2011, p. 60).

Alexander, Entwisle and Olson’s (2007) research shows the gap between low- and high-income students widens over time, resulting in a distinct advantage for higher income students. Table 1 explains the cumulative achievement gains over the first nine years of schooling that reflect learning.

Table 1. Reading Comprehension Test Score Decomposition over the First Nine Years of School by Family SES

Reading Comprehension CAT Score Gains, Years 1–9	Total	Family SES			Gap High-Low
		Low SES	Mid SES	High SES	
Initial Test Score, Fall 1st Grade	279.81	271.99	277.89	298.47	26.48*
Winter Gain (5 winters)	194.97	191.30	210.19	186.11	–5.19
Summer Gain (4 summers)	11.12	–1.90	4.12	46.58	48.48*
Gain Over Years 6–9	61.69	60.95	60.73	64.34	3.39
Test Score, End Year 9 (N)	547.55 (787)	522.33 (397)	552.94 (204)	595.49 (186)	73.16*

Note: Significant t-tests for mean differences between Low SES and High SES groups are shown in Gap column.

* $p \leq .05$ (two-tailed tests).

The high SES–low SES achievement gap at 9th grade mainly traces to differential summer learning over the elementary years. These early out-of-school summer learning differences, in turn, substantially account for achievement-related differences by family SES in high school track placements (college preparatory or not), high school noncompletion, and four-year college attendance (Alexander et al., 2007, p. 167).

Another noteworthy longitudinal study followed the reading and socioeconomic levels of the same students over a 12-year period. This research is significant in emphasizing the importance of reading on grade level by grade three confirming that students who do not read proficiently by the end of third grade are four times more likely to leave high school without a diploma than proficient readers. This was the first longitudinal study of its kind to track students from third grade to graduation and beyond (Hernandez, 2012).

Many studies examine the effects on students of poverty; however, this study developed the research further by separating students growing up in concentrated poverty. The negative effects are statistically significant. “The findings include:

- Approximately 63 percent of all students who do not graduate were identified as non-proficient readers by the end of the third grade.
- Of the 63 percent who do not graduate, 26 percent of children experienced poverty for at least one year and were not reading proficiently.
- For children who were poor, lived in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty and not reading proficiently, the proportion jumped to 35 percent.

- Overall, 22 percent of children who lived in poverty do not graduate from high school, compared to six percent of those who have never been poor. The figure rises to 32 percent for students spending more than half of their childhood in poverty.
- About 31 percent of poor African-American students and 33 percent of poor Hispanic students who did not hit the third-grade proficiency mark failed to graduate. These rates are greater than those for White students with poor reading skills. But the racial and ethnic graduation gaps disappear when students master reading by the end of third grade and are not living in poverty” (Hernandez, 2012, p. 4-5).

Researchers have concluded that efforts to close the achievement gap during the school year alone have been unsuccessful, and it grows wider each year. It is estimated that summer reading loss accounts for as much as 85 percent of the reading achievement gap between lower income students and their middle- and upper-income peers. State and federal dollars have been consistently allocated to combat summer reading loss, but those funds have not resolved the problem. Long-term effects of summer reading loss persist and research-based summer programs are needed to combat it.

The Effectiveness of Current Summer Reading Programs

Decades of research have confirmed that summer reading loss persists and has long-term detrimental effects on student achievement. With this knowledge, proactive planning for summer reading loss would make sense but frequently summer reading programs are planned at the end of the year based on remaining budget funds or as a reaction to test scores. “Launching a summer program is akin to launching a new school

year—albeit more limited, with less time for both planning and execution” (Augustine, McCombs, Schwartz, & Zakaras, 2013, p. 11).

Researchers have identified crucial elements to include in the development of a successful summer reading program. Vice-President for Policy for the National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) Jeff Smink develops policy and key resources for guiding the development of summer learning programs. He sees summer reading programs as a necessary part of schooling, especially for disadvantaged students, and emphasizes that “We cannot afford to spend nearly 10 months of every year devoting enormous amounts of intellect, energy and money to promoting student learning and achievement, and then walk away from that investment every summer” (Smink, 2011, para. 1). The NSLA concludes that effective summer programs focusing on individualized instruction, parental involvement, and small classes keep children from falling behind as well as reduce the achievement gap, and these programs are essential in addressing summer reading loss.

The Child Trends study looked at both experimental and non-experimental studies and summarized effective learning practices based on an extensive literature review. It concluded that to have a positive effect on summer reading loss there must be a balance of educational activities and fun or enrichment activities like sports, music, and art.

“Characteristics of Effective Summer Programs Based on Experimental Studies include:

- Make learning fun
- Ground learning in a real-world context
- Integrate hands-on activities
- Context should complement curricular standards

- Hire experienced, trained teachers to deliver the academic lessons
- Keep class sizes small” (Terzian, Moore, & Hamilton, 2009, p. 17).

Another pivotal study commissioned by the Wallace Foundation and conducted by the Rand Corporation in 2011 examined the effectiveness of summer learning programs. As a result of this study, a report entitled “Making Summer Count - How Summer Programs Can Boost Children’s Learning” was published. The report summarizes the literature on summer learning loss and the effectiveness of current programs that are currently implemented in urban school districts. To address the many challenges districts face, including cost and staffing, researchers relied on existing literature, program cost, and interviews. Key findings concluded that “Voluntary summer programs, mandatory summer programs, and programs that encourage students to read at home in the summer have all found positive effects on student achievement” (McCombs et al., 2011, p. xv). The data also supported that the effects of effective summer learning programs last for a minimum of two years after participation. The final document identified and inventoried best practices for school districts and policymakers across the nation to use a resource.

The recommendations resulting from this study laid the groundwork for two of the four studies that followed, also conducted by the RAND Corporation. These next two studies looked specifically at the summer programs of five urban school districts and were focused on identifying effective components of summer learning programs using both qualitative and quantitative data.

Getting to Work on Summer Learning – Recommended Practices for Success (Augustine, McCombs, Schwartz, & Zakaras, 2013) provided qualitative reviews relative

to variations in program design. This is the first randomized controlled trial to test the effectiveness of large-scale, district-run, voluntary summer learning programs. All the program reviews included reading, mathematics, and enrichment activities for third grade students who were being promoted to fourth grade. Each of the summer learning programs consistently offered a full-day format that included transportation to and from the school and classrooms staffed with highly-qualified, certified teachers.

Although student achievement scores were not a factor in this study, qualitative data was collected through a series of surveys, interviews, and direct classroom observations to help determine a set of recommendations for implementing an effective summer learning program. The original intent of this study was to offer districts effective approaches that they would be able to replicate. As the study progressed, recommended protocols within seven domains were identified that refined and improved student achievement outcomes: planning, curriculum and instruction, teacher recruitment, enrichment activities, attendance, time-on-task, and funding.

Relative to planning, schools that started as early as December experienced fewer programmatic disruptions with increased participant satisfaction rather than those that postponed this vital process until late spring. With sufficient planning time, teachers were able to familiarize themselves with the commercially adopted curriculum and customize it to the needs of their students who were identified at an early stage as program candidates. Additionally, in schools where enrollment deadlines were set and adhered to, teachers were spared the frustration of instructional interruptions caused by late planning. Schools that started their program planning later in the year also missed the critical funding allocation to purchase viable curriculum, leaving teachers ill-prepared

to spend time developing or modifying existing resources. These were also the same schools that hastily hired teachers on a self-selection basis as opposed to the schools that benefited from the results of early recruitment and marketing to the highest qualified teachers in the district. The latter schools could augment staff with paraprofessionals to assist with facilitation of flexible ability-grouping.

A strong correlation was also observed in schools that reported greater student and teacher satisfaction when less time in the day was spent on standardized literacy and mathematics and more time was spent on enrichment activities. Increased engagement was also observed among students whose learning objectives were directly linked to the enrichment activities, and these activities were considered central to attracting students to the programs (Augustine, McCombs, Schwartz, & Zakaras, 2013).

The third in the series of five reports was published in 2014 (Wallace Foundation, 2014) and offered the first set of student outcome findings on math, reading, and social and emotional assessments. Researchers from the RAND Corporation collected outcome data on the summer learning programs of five urban school districts located in Boston, Dallas, Duval County (Florida), Pittsburgh, and Rochester (New York). This report, *Building Our Understanding of Summer Learning: Near-term Findings of the National Summer Learning Project*, included quantitative data collected in the fall of 2013 from students who attended district-run voluntary summer programs in the participating districts for two consecutive summers.

Over 5,000 third grade students applied to attend the voluntary summer learning programs, and 3,194 students were randomly selected to attend with another 2,445 students assigned to a control group. Across all five school districts, results indicated an

average effect size of 11 percent of one standard deviation on student performance in math, particularly with students who attended regularly. This number reflects the spread in scores between students who participated in the program and those who did not. It does not measure the growth in learning from the beginning of the summer to the end for either group. This impact is considered significant, especially for a four to six-week program (Augustine et al., 2013).

Summer learning programs did not show the same measurable improvement in reading. The effect-size for reading was just two percent of one standard deviation. The students who did increase reading skills received instruction from a teacher with grade level experience and higher quality instruction (McCombs et al., 2014). There was no difference in the results between students who attended and the control group in social-emotional assessments administered in the fall.

This RAND Corporation study is the largest of its kind to measure the effectiveness of summer learning programs in large districts over time; however, its significance and relevance for determining the effectiveness of summer learning programs has not yet been established. Collection and analysis of the data will continue for the next several years with the goal of providing a solid base for designing and implementing summer learning programs that will yield the results districts desire.

The randomized control study used by the RAND researchers is considered a rigorous method that ensures random and fair participation. It mandates that there is no criteria set for project participation so differences in outcome results can only be attributed to the program. The fact there were no near term effects is relevant to any study on summer reading loss. This outcome could be a result of the study's comparison

of the treatment and control groups' outcomes on fall assessments rather than a pre- and post-growth model. Research such as this informs districts on methods for developing criteria and setting goals for designing summer learning programs.

All three Rand studies that have been completed so far are complex in both the scope of research and in the implications for education. As the RAND Corporation and The Wallace Foundation are well-established entities, their findings have even greater relevance than a study conducted by a single individual at one school site. Each study provides insight into what comprises an effective summer program offering districts and other community agencies specific recommendations for developing a successful summer learning program. Recommendations emphasize early planning as key to the process and recognize that beginning a program early in the school year facilitates collaboration with key stakeholders while maximizing attendance and achievement.

Mitigating Summer Reading Loss

The disparity of literacy development among youth is arguably a sociocultural phenomenon that requires a systemically designed solution. The research is extensive regarding the effects of summer reading loss especially among disadvantaged students and the essential components of summer programming that yield the highest return on investment. Current summer school options can be very costly and yield negligible results. A meta-analysis completed in 2000 determined that funds be allocated to increase participation in summer programs, specifically to improve participation among students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Cooper, Charlton, Valentine, Muhlenbruck, & Borman, 2000). With minimal investment and proactive planning, initiatives can be offered that yield equal, if not better, results than those found in a

traditional summer school program. These initiatives include providing access to self-selected, just right books together with engaging activities.

For too many years, summer reading loss has not been the focus of education reform efforts. Research has confirmed that effective summer reading programs could impact this cumulative loss. As a result of this extensive literature review, five key components that have proven to have the greatest impact on summer reading loss have emerged:

- Early Planning
- Access to Books
- High Interest, Self-Selected Books
- Just Right Books
- Engaging Activities

Early Planning

The RAND Corporation study established that all too often, summer reading programs are planned at the end of the school year with funds that are left over from the current school year's budget. The consequences of this method of planning usually results in a poorly planned summer program that is unfocused and ineffective.

Designing a comprehensive summer learning program early in the school year ensures that the funds are available at the end of the school year. Qualified staff may be recruited, hired, and provided with professional development that is relevant to the summer program. Allowing time for program planning, marketing, and recruiting also maximizes student attendance.

Access to Books

One of the major contributing factors to summer reading loss is the lack of access to books and rich experiences that stimulate reading, writing, listening, speaking, and thinking. A large book collection at home has a greater impact on a child's reading frequency than household income. Regardless of ethnicity, socioeconomic level, or previous achievement, children who read four or more books over the summer fare better on reading-comprehension tests in the fall than their peers who read one or no books over the summer.

As far back as 1996, Cooper (2000) established that, "...income differences appear to be related to differences in opportunities to practice and learn reading skills over summer; more books and reading opportunities are available to middle-class children" (Cooper et al., 2000, p. 227). This corroborates the theory that the number of books available has a direct impact on a child's reading achievement.

A recent study, commissioned by the PEW Foundation and conducted by Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, Florida, examined the effectiveness of the Preventing Summer Slide grant implemented in 16 high-poverty elementary schools in Palm Beach County. Participating schools were each awarded \$10,000 to operate a summer program with an emphasis on increasing access to books that included a book exchange and check out component. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected for all third-grade students in late spring 2015 and again in the early fall from the participating schools. Qualitative survey data included participant perceptions of the success of the Preventing Summer Slide program.

In addition to book exchange and check-out, 13 of the 16 schools reported that they offered engaging activities to enhance their summer program. However, there was no statistical difference in the data for schools who offered this option. Leadership teams of these schools affirmed that these activities increased participation.

Findings from this study revealed that 85 percent of the participating schools' third grade students prevented the summer slide. Researchers identified increased access to books as the only significant component of the programs offered (Heydet-Kirsch & Snellgrove, 2015).

There is a simple formula for getting better at reading. "The more you read, the better you get at it; the better you get at it, the more you like it; and the more you like it, the more you do it. The more you read, the more you know; and the more you know, the smarter you grow" (Trelease, 2001, p. 3). Attention should be given to quality and quantity of classroom, school, and local library facilities.

According to a study conducted by Jim Trelease (2001), increased access to books has proven to have a significant impact on those living in poverty. This study substantiates an access problem not only in the home, but in class, school and in public libraries as well. The goal of public education and public libraries is to level the playing field, and this study reveals that access to resources is not equal. The following disparity chart illustrates this point.

Table 2 Disparity Chart

Neighborhood	# of books in the home	# of books in class	# of books in the school library	# of books in the public library
Beverly Hills	199	392	60,000	200,600
Watts	.4	54	23,000	110,000
Compton	2.7	47	16,000	90,000

(Trelease, 2001, p. 145)

Access to books, one of the primary attributing factors to summer reading loss, requires a series of strategies in order to influence change such as:

- Bring representatives from the public library to family events at the school affording students the choice of obtaining a library card
- Take a field trip to the public library to stimulate interest
- Open the school library one day a week during the summer to offer a book exchange
- Change school policy to allow for summer book check-out
- Increase the number of books that can be checked out at a given time
- Make reading a part of the school culture
- Talk about books often
- Make reading enjoyable

In 2007, James Kim corroborated these findings in a study measuring the effects of a voluntary summer reading program on the number of literacy activities and reading achievement scores of students in grades one through five. Although he found no significant difference in reading achievement scores between students who received books over the summer and those who did not, he did suggest that efforts to increase access to books has a larger positive impact on the reading achievement of low-income and minority children than on the scores of middle-income students (Kim, 2007).

Allington and McGill-Franzen found, “There is consistent correlational evidence illustrating that better readers read more than poorer readers, a finding that supports theoretical models that emphasize the importance of the volume of successful reading experiences in the development of reading proficiency” (Allington & McGill-Franzen,

2003, p. 23). Access to books is a major factor in helping develop proficient readers. Anderson, Fielding, and Wilson (1988) determined that students scoring at the 90th percentile or above on standardized tests read five times as many minutes as those scoring at the 50th percentile and read 200 times as many minutes as those scoring in the 10th percentile.

Hanover Research conducted an extensive review of summer literacy programs in 2013 and presented best practices for these types of programs. One of their primary findings was that “Independent reading, often the centerpiece of effective summer literacy programs, has been shown to improve student achievement” (*Hanover Research*, 2013, p. 4). This includes consideration of a child’s reading preferences, guaranteeing that books are appropriately leveled and rigorous, and offering a variety and range of high quality books (*Hanover Research*, 2013).

Self-Selected / High Interest Books

According to the research study conducted by Allington et al., the most important components of a summer reading program included access to a minimum of 12 books that were self-selected by students. They believed that the students would be motivated to read the books if they had the opportunity to select them (Allington et al., 2010). Their findings illustrate that “providing easy access to self-selected books for summer reading over successive years does, in fact limit summer reading setback” (Allington et al., 2010, p. 422). This easy to replicate strategy has been shown to minimize the achievement gap that exists between varying economic groups and to assist in slowing or reversing summer slide.

Kim and White (2011) indicate that allowing students to select books that are commensurate to their reading level and in which they are interested are key parts of an effective summer reading program (Kim & White, 2011).

Referring to a “free reading” longitudinal study called “Hooked on Books” conducted in 1976 with boys attending a reform school, Stephen Krashen (1998) endorses choice as a significant factor in reading growth. In the study, all boys in the treatment group were given a book of their choice that could be exchanged for another one at any time. There were no book reports or any other kind of accountability for their reading. After two years in the program, the boys in the treatment group showed significant improvement in comprehension, writing fluency, writing complexity, self-esteem, and attitude toward school. Boys in the control group showed no growth in any of those areas. Krashen maintains that students read more when they have access to interesting reading material referring to another study where sixth graders were given magazines of their choice to read showed a half year increase in their California Test of Basic Skills in Reading as compared to their peers who did not participate in the program (Krashen, 1998).

Just Right Books

It is important to have the students select their books; however, guidance needs to be provided to be sure that the selected books are ones that the children are able to read independently. In the Kim and White study (2011), the students selected their own books and did not make improvements in their reading levels after participating in the program.

A plausible explanation is that many children chose books that were too hard for them to read. Indeed, 67% of the children picked books with a mean readability

level above their independent reading level. Other studies have found that struggling readers are likely to select books they can't read, leading to frustration (Donovan, Smolkin, and Lomax 2000). Similarly, children may pick books that are well below their reading level and thus fail to gain in reading level, vocabulary, or reading rate (Kim & White, 2011, p. 65).

In their book, *Leveled Books, K-8: Matching Text to Readers for Effective Teaching*, Fountas and Pinnell (2006) define a just right book for independent reading as one that must be read smoothly with fluency and understanding. "Poor readers have a tendency to make a "safe" choice (always going for short and very easy books) or to choose books that are much too difficult just to pretend to be part of the group" (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006, p. 94). They also caution that the varying demands of each genre should be taken into consideration when choosing a just right text. They suggest that teachers develop a way of keeping track of student choices who can inform them when students are choosing text that may be too difficult so they stay engaged and motivated.

Looking at past research that suggested long-term health is better if a child can read, Seaman (2015) cites Dr. Erin Kelly's study that tracked two groups of students who were provided books to read over the summer. Group one had the opportunity to select books of their choice while group two received a package of books that was selected for them. The students' reading levels were assessed at the beginning and end of the summer break. The group of students who self-selected their books showed a significant increase in their reading level while the other group made no change in level showing access to books alone is a successful strategy to preventing the summer slide. In fact, having

access to books that students can personally select positively impacts their reading levels (Seaman, 2015).

Engaging Activities

In addition to high interest texts that are on the students' independent reading level, Kim & White (2011) believe, "teacher and parent scaffolding that encourages sound comprehension and fluency practices and plenty of parent/child interactions" are critical components to include in a summer reading program (p. 67).

An examination of multiple studies substantiates the impact of summer reading loss on low-income students, stating "...the difference in how low and middle SES children respond to summer programs points to the importance of also addressing familial and neighborhood effects during the summer" (McAllister, 2014, p. 24). Including enrichment activities into a summer program is one way to address this gap (McAllister, 2014).

The Goals of Summer Reading at New York Libraries is a program that works to foster a love of reading so children will develop a reading habit. Including family members in developing literacy skills and reading habits in the home are also critical components in combatting summer reading loss ("The Importance of Summer Reading: Public Library Summer Reading Programs and Learning," 2011, para. 1).

Horizons National programs use public and private partnerships to support low-income students. Their summer programs include enrichment activities that integrate parental involvement throughout the duration of the summer. These activities are those usually experienced by middle- and high-income children and may include field trips, music instruction, Broadway shows, or swimming lessons. Parent participation in

introductory and concluding events as well as parent education are important and help support the programs' success. This is evidenced by academic achievement gains of two to three months over a six-week time period and increased high school graduation rate for students who attend the program as compared to the national average.

Terzian, Moore and Hamilton (2009) summarized a variety of literature and arrived at several approaches to help low-income children avoid summer learning loss. Among their key findings, "Summer learning activities should be interactive, fun, hands-on, relate to real-world experiences, and incorporate cultural enrichment as well as group activities to keep students engaged and interested" (Terzian et al., 2009, p. 27). Practices that focus on relevance, connecting books to childrens' lives generate interest in reading. Creating simple hands-on tasks that build relevance for the text, demonstrates to children that reading is important (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010).

Incorporation of technology such as digital storytelling, online reference sources and video-sharing devices are further examples of engaging activities that can help mitigate summer reading loss (Laverick, 2014). In a five-week program, the utilization of flip video cameras and audio recorders contributed to improvement in reading proficiency as measured in both formal and informal assessments. Furthermore, reading specialists who responded to study questionnaires reported that students paid attention more during instruction, were able to set goals for themselves, and felt more of a sense of ownership toward their learning when using technology (Laverick, 2014).

Finally, as noted previously, the RAND institute study, *Getting to Work on Summer Learning: Recommended Practices for Success*, found that including enjoyable and engaging enrichment activities allowed programs to attract more students and

maintain attendance. The study emphasized the integration of these activities with academic curriculum in order to maximize achievement (Augustine, McCombs, Schwartz, & Zakaras, 2013).

Conclusion

There is extensive research confirming that summer reading loss has a cumulative effect, especially among low socio-economic children. The long-term effects of summer reading loss can be minimized with a well-designed summer learning program that is planned early in the year. Summer reading programs that focus on providing access to a wide variety of high interest books selected by students have the greatest impact. Additionally, students who are afforded extended opportunities to verbally interact and engage in activities related to the themes developed in their self-selected books experience gains in reading achievement. This is a role certified teachers or parents may fulfill to support reading behaviors among students during summer months.

By and large, school leaders are left on their own to decipher the critical components of an effective summer reading program to serve low-income children who experience the greater literacy loss. The little direction they receive has vastly resulted in misdirected funds spent on costly programs that could otherwise be dedicated to building literacy-rich school environments with which to support a summer reading programs. Depending on the resources available through avenues that may not have been explored, resourceful, effective summer programs can become a viable solution for any school attempting to bridge the summer literacy gap and halt the cumulative effect it has on disadvantaged students with each passing year.

Given that research identifies the programmatic elements for a successful summer program, school leaders would be remiss if they did not make an attempt to fill this need based on the recommendations. In fairness, the research has fallen short in identifying a step-by-step solution to guide principals in the logistical process of designing a commensurate program based on their existing or projected funding, staffing, and quantity of literacy resources. Such a guide would take the guessing game out of the process and guarantee positive outcomes for children who would otherwise suffer persistent reading ability loss during the summer.

The exhaustive examination of research evident in this literature review confirms the need for a comprehensive guide intended for school principals to apply best practices for addressing summer reading loss among all learners, but with intentional focus on economically disadvantaged children. Little research has been completed on the need to incorporate evaluation into the guide. However, it can be implied that the effectiveness of the program is dependent on data-driven results of student progress and the absence of reading loss that can be directly correlated to the impact of the program. Additionally, it is important to garner formative feedback from families of students who participated in the program to determine their perception regarding program efficacy, ease of access, and the affective level of the learning environment.

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

Each year school leaders across the nation are faced with the challenge of how to sustain and/or accelerate students' progression of reading development during the summer months. Research indicates that the reading achievement of children who have little to no access to books generally declines during the summer months, while the reading achievement of children who have access to books typically remains constant or improves. It is well established that high quality, engaging, summer learning programs can prevent summer learning loss and even boost student achievement.

School leaders are often left on their own to decipher the critical components of an effective summer reading program conducted with limited staff and resources. As a result many summer programs end up as a mere continuation of a program that has been utilized during the school year. The little direction school leaders receive has vastly resulted in misdirected funds spent on costly programs that could otherwise be dedicated to building literacy-rich school environments with which to support a summer reading program. Why are districts not proactively planning for what will inevitably occur? Do district and school leaders truly understand the collective impact of summer reading loss? Why is it that most summer programs are so quickly planned at the end of the school year to address this spiraling phenomenon? An extensive review of the literature resulted in a critical analysis of what summer reading loss is, the long-term implications, and methods for combating its effects. As the literature review progressed, the following questions provided a basis for narrowing the focus of the research:

Research Questions

1. What is summer reading loss?
2. What impacts summer reading loss?
3. What are the long-term implications of summer reading loss?
4. How can summer reading programs be made more effective?
5. What mitigates summer reading loss?

Key Findings

The research on the topic of summer reading loss points to a variety of factors that contribute to this phenomenon and can accelerate the digression over time. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that current summer reading programs designed along traditional structures, defined earlier in this dissertation, have done little to solve the problem. The following statements provide a summary of key findings that later become informative tenets for developing a summer reading program guide that navigates school and literacy leaders along the design process, complete with avenues for customization based on individual schools' needs:

- Summer reading loss has the greatest impact on children in poverty.
- The effect of summer reading loss is cumulative.
- Children who are not proficient by third grade are four times more likely not to graduate from high school.
- Traditional six-week, five hours per day summer school programs are not decreasing the effects of summer reading loss.
- There is a great disparity in the number of books in low-income areas including homes, classrooms, school libraries, and public libraries.

- The reading achievement of children who have little to no access to books typically declines during the summer months while the reading achievement of children who have access to appropriate books that they personally select and read typically holds steady or increases modestly.

In addition to revealing the factors related to summer reading loss and the characteristics of programs failing to resolve it, the research consistently pointed the reader in the direction of salient elements that can, alternatively, prevent reading loss. Surprisingly, the elements are not as complex and costly to implement as most school leaders would deem essential for a summer reading program. However, there lacks a sufficient amount of support and guidance for school leaders on how to plan, implement, and evaluate program content and procedures. Hence, a summer reading program inclusive of the following key elements has the power to mitigate the negative effects that an absence of reading instruction typically has on students enrolled in public and private schools operating on traditional, nine-month calendars:

- Early Planning
- Access to Books
- High Interest, Self-Selected Books
- Just Right Books
- Engaging Activities

Limitations of the Study

While it became evident that a summer reading program guide would fill an essential need for school literacy leaders, there are certain parameters that should exist to increase the likelihood of program success. The absence of such parameters represents

the limitations of the study. For purposes of this study, limitations will be explained in relation to the five key components of a successful reading program. As one might expect, many limitations are related to school variables including the number of books, often reflective of the school's ability to fund a project, and the variety of reading levels of books that may or may not negatively affect a student's ability to access text. Additionally, students may have difficulty selecting books at the "just right" independent reading level and the lack of qualified personnel may exacerbate this problem. In terms of the home environment, students may also experience varying levels of support for their reading development during the summer months. A student must not only read and comprehend a book's content but should also be afforded the opportunity to connect his or her reading to authentic activities that solidify their reading development.

Product

Recognizing the need for supporting literacy leaders in the summer program development, a guide was created based on a nine-step navigation process that embeds research-based key elements throughout the content. The guide begins by providing school leaders with a synthesis of what the research says about summer reading loss, including its compounding, long-term effects, particularly on under-resourced children with little exposure to print. The guide maintains a straight-forward, practical approach and voice throughout its content in order to appeal to busy literacy leaders charged with resolving the issue of summer reading loss among their many other challenges. It provides guidance on how to plan early to strategically allocate existing funding and, if needed, identify alternative avenues for monetary support such as grants, donations, and foundations. Moreover, careful attention is given to strategies for gaining stakeholder

support, hiring qualified personnel, advertising and branding the program, enlisting key volunteers, and incentivizing strong student participation. Most importantly, the guide provides suggested procedures for maintaining the key five components to ensure the integrity of the program; thus, preventing reading loss among student participants with the possible added benefit of increasing their reading ability. School and literacy leaders are responsible for executing a myriad of tasks related to instructional and building management leadership. Given this fact, it is critical that a guide be structured so that key elements are easily identifiable with resources and replicable samples that are readily accessible. Furthermore, school leaders need to see how the content may be customized considering differences among student, parent, and staff population needs as well as variations in resource allocations. The guide followed this lay-out with additional advice on how to manage the planning timeline and monitor the fidelity of the program implementation. Most importantly, it is clear about how to evaluate the program's impact on students' reading ability by identifying and measuring outcomes of individual elements that each contribute to the overall effect of the program.

Methods

At a strategic milestone marker in the guide development process, and before its finalization, the guide was subjected to a review by 21 current school and literacy leaders. This panel was invited to preview the product in order to garner feedback relevant to the development of the step-by-step guide for a summer reading program. To attain the most impactful targeted feedback, the panel was split into four focus groups, and members were presented with a draft version of *Planning Your Summer Reading Program: A Step-by-Step Guide*. Each group participated in a book walk of the guide conducted by the

investigators, and a discussion ensued as to the recommendations and commendations for the guide.

Following the discussion, consent for participation was provided and signatures of participants were obtained. The survey was then presented in a mixed methods format using both a Likert scale and open-ended questions. It began with six questions that established the participants' profiles followed by a series of twelve questions focusing on content relevant to the guide. Individual participant responses were unidentifiable and were aggregated to determine generalizations that further informed the development of the guide. The following verbiage was used to obtain consent for participation in the survey.

Consent

Potential participants will acknowledge their agreement to these terms prior to completing the survey. Voluntary participation implies informed consent for your results to be used for analysis. You may withdraw from the survey at any point by not submitting the survey.

Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Survey

You are being asked to participate in a survey conducted by Debbie Battles, Kathryn Morem, Laura Riopelle, and Catherine Tedesco from Lynn University. The purpose of this survey is to determine the attitudes and beliefs of principals and literacy leaders regarding the establishment of summer reading programs and their effects on summer reading loss. This survey will contribute to the completion of Mrs. Battles, Mrs. Morem, Mrs. Riopelle, and Mrs. Tedesco's doctoral dissertation.

Research Procedures

By accessing and completing the survey, you are granting consent to have your data aggregated with others and analyzed to inform the development of a step-by-step guide for designing a customized summer reading program. This survey will be distributed during the focus group session and completed in hard copy form at this time.

Time Required

Participation in this study will require approximately 10 minutes of your time.

Risks

There is no perceived risk from your involvement in this survey.

Benefits

Potential benefits from participation in this survey include the opportunity for you to provide feedback that will ultimately benefit students.

Confidentiality

The results of this survey will be presented as a part of the doctoral defense. The results of this survey will be coded in such a way that the respondent's identity will not be included. The doctoral candidates retain the right to use and publish unidentifiable data.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this survey or after its completion, please contact: Debbie Battles, Kathryn Morem, Laura Riopelle, or Catherine Tedesco at [REDACTED]

Giving of Consent

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this survey. I freely consent to participate. I certify that I am at least 18

years of age.

Results of this survey will be utilized to inform the development of a comprehensive guide for designing a program that prevents summer reading loss. The data for this survey will be collected anonymously and will be used to better inform the investigators about the value of the content and functionality of the guide. The results of this survey will be used to improve the content and delivery of the information in the guide. The information gathered from the survey will be protected by storing it on a thumb drive that is stored in a locked cabinet that will not contain any identifiable information. Your voluntary participation implies informed consent for your results to be used for analysis. You may withdraw from the survey at any point by not submitting the survey.

Participant Profile Survey Responses:

1. What is your current position?
 - a. 57% - Principal
 - b. 19% - Assistant Principal
 - c. 9.5% - Literacy Coach
 - d. 5% - District Curriculum Specialist
 - e. 9.5% - Other

2. Where is your school located?
 - a. 28.5% - South Region
 - b. 24% - North Region
 - c. 47.5% - Central Region
 - d. 0% - Glades Region

3. What is your gender?
 - a. 14% - Male
 - b. 86% - Female

4. Did your school receive Title I funds in FY16?
 - a. 29% - Yes
 - b. 57% - No
 - c. 14% - not applicable

5. What is the current percent of students at your school who receive free and/or reduced lunch?
 - a. 24% - ranging from 0 – 39%
 - b. 24% - ranging from 40% - 69%
 - c. 38% - ranging from 70% and above
 - d. 14% - not applicable

6. What percent of your current 4th and 5th grade students scored a Level 1 or Level 2 in reading on the 2016 FSA?
 - a. 33% - ranging from 0 – 25%
 - b. 29% - ranging from 25% - 49%
 - c. 19% - ranging from 50% - 74%
 - d. 5% - ranging from 75% - 100%
 - e. 14% - not applicable

Content Survey Responses:

1. A summer reading program has a positive impact on reading achievement.
 - a. 81% - Strongly Agree
 - b. 14% - Agree
 - c. 5% - Neutral
 - d. 0% - Disagree
 - e. 0% - Strongly Disagree

2. A needs assessment is required when seeking grant funds. Principals would benefit from assistance in creating a needs assessment.
 - a. 71% - Strongly Agree
 - b. 19% - Agree
 - c. 10% - Neutral
 - d. 0% - Disagree
 - e. 0% - Strongly Disagree

3. Principals would benefit from guidance on how to generate funds from outside sources for a summer reading program.
 - a. 71% - Strongly Agree
 - b. 29% - Agree
 - c. 0% - Neutral
 - d. 0% - Disagree
 - e. 0% - Strongly Disagree

4. A checklist of essential components for an effective summer reading program would be beneficial.
 - a. 81% - Strongly Agree
 - b. 19% - Agree
 - c. 0% - Neutral
 - d. 0% - Disagree
 - e. 0% - Strongly Disagree

5. A preplanning timeline is critical for developing a successful summer reading program.
 - a. 76% - Strongly Agree
 - b. 24% - Agree
 - c. 0% - Neutral
 - d. 0% - Disagree
 - e. 0% - Strongly Disagree

6. A marketing campaign to advertise a summer reading program is critical to its success.
 - a. 81% - Strongly Agree
 - b. 19% - Agree
 - c. 0% - Neutral
 - d. 0% - Disagree
 - e. 0% - Strongly Disagree

7. Guidance on essential summer staff and their duties is needed to support a successful summer reading program.
 - a. 67% - Strongly Agree
 - b. 33% - Agree
 - c. 0% - Neutral
 - d. 0% - Disagree
 - e. 0% - Strongly Disagree

8. Ideas for increasing parent involvement among lower socio-economic and linguistically diverse school communities to support summer reading programs would be beneficial.
 - a. 86% - Strongly Agree
 - b. 14% - Agree
 - c. 0% - Neutral
 - d. 0% - Disagree
 - e. 0% - Strongly Disagree

9. Principals would benefit from guidance on how to progress monitor the effectiveness of a summer reading program.
 - a. 67% - Strongly Agree
 - b. 33% - Agree
 - c. 0% - Neutral
 - d. 0% - Disagree
 - e. 0% - Strongly Disagree

10. Principals would benefit from guidance on how to accurately assess the impact of a summer reading program on student achievement.
 - a. 76% - Strongly Agree
 - b. 24% - Agree
 - c. 0% - Neutral
 - d. 0% - Disagree
 - e. 0% - Strongly Disagree

11. A step-by-step guide would help in the development of a program to prevent summer reading loss at your school.
 - a. 71% - Strongly Agree
 - b. 29% - Agree
 - c. 0% - Neutral
 - d. 0% - Disagree
 - e. 0% - Strongly Disagree

12. Criteria for identifying resources that meet the needs of the students attending your summer program would be beneficial.
 - a. 57% - Strongly Agree
 - b. 38% - Agree
 - c. 5% - Neutral
 - d. 0% - Disagree
 - e. 0% - Strongly Disagree

Of note in the findings is the number of times that respondents agreed with the premise of the guide and/or its contents. Most particularly, in response to question 11, 100% of respondents believed in and agreed that developing a step-by-step summer reading guide would help in the development of a program to address summer reading loss in their school. Additionally, of the remaining multiple choice questions, 98% of responses indicated that the participants either strongly agreed or agreed with various components of the guide's purpose. These responses substantiated the investigators' initial claim that a step-by-step guide would be beneficial.

Moreover, the investigators were interested in capturing any additional suggestions. This was accomplished via open-ended questions that allowed respondents to provide critical feedback that was used to adapt or revise the guide. The first open-ended question asked respondents if they had ever implemented a summer reading program and, if so, what components they found most effective. Several of the respondents that had implemented a program on their own stated that the most important components of their summer programs were a needs assessment, parent involvement,

buy-in, early planning, access to books, and self-selection. These responses directly correlate to the findings in the literature review and support the key factors that mitigate reading loss.

The second open-ended survey question asked the 21 participants what additional information or sections should be included to enhance the guide. Responses indicated that 11 participants felt that the guide's components were comprehensive in nature and encompassed all pertinent sections. Six of the suggestions were incorporated into the guide, supporting both the research and the investigators' findings. The remaining five recommendations were thoroughly considered; however, due to their program specificity they were not included. An example of this is the request for vendor names for book purchases. The investigators felt this suggestion was too narrow in scope and did not allow for fluidity in the future. Another suggestion was to modify the guide for use at the secondary level. The investigators believe this to be a valid suggestion but determined that the pervasiveness of summer reading loss at the elementary level necessitated that the design of this guide address primarily younger students.

Summary

There is currently very little information available to address the significant phenomenon of summer reading loss. It is a persistent challenge that school leaders struggle to address year after year for a myriad of reasons including lack of funding, planning, personnel, and resources. As a result, traditional summer school programs that are currently being implemented fail to close the reading achievement gap during the absence of formal schooling. What is more, these programs are not based on the five key factors that have been proven to mitigate summer reading loss. This became the rationale

for developing *Planning Your Summer Reading Program: A Step-by-Step Guide* that would typically become available to administrators via hard copy or online. What is particularly useful is the manner in which the content is presented. The step-by-step guide is easy to follow, facilitates real-time planning, and offers replicable resources to customize a program. It is evident by the results of the survey that this guide does, in fact, satisfy an imperative need for those charged with addressing summer reading loss. The investigators hope that, through the use of this guide, school literacy leaders will become better equipped to improve reading achievement by eliminating summer slide.

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Planning Your Summer Reading Program

A Step-by-Step Guide



Debbie Battles, Kathryn Morem, Laura Riopelle and Catherine Tedesco



Planning Your Summer Reading Program

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Debbie Battles is currently the Principal at Dwight D. Eisenhower Elementary School in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. Debbie entered the field of education 23 years ago where she began her career as an elementary classroom teacher. In addition to being a classroom teacher, she has also served as a Reading Coach, District Literacy Specialist, Assistant Principal, Director of Federal Programs, Director of Elementary Education, and a Principal. Debbie holds a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education Grades 1-6, a Master's Degree in Reading K-12, an ESOL Endorsement K-12, and is currently a Doctoral Candidate in Educational Leadership, graduating in May 2017.

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A Note from the Authors

The purpose of this guide

Each year school leaders across the nation are faced with the challenge of how to sustain and/or accelerate students' progression of reading development during the summer months. Educators work all year to close the achievement gap only to lose ground over the summer. It is not a question of should we address this phenomenon, but how do we incorporate a solution to maintain a seamless learning culture?

High quality, engaging summer programs can prevent reading loss and even boost reading achievement for all students. However, the complexity of summer reading loss and how to address it is daunting. With the many end-of-year tasks that administrators face, often times they are forced to quickly plan their summer reading program based on limited or nonexistent funds. This step-by-step guide helps school leadership teams get a head start on designing an implementation plan for a quality summer reading program.

Whether you currently have a program or are just starting out, this guide is for you! It includes the essential elements that over 100 years of research clearly identify as critical to the development of a successful summer reading program. This guide can be utilized as a road map to design your program from start to finish, or you can select from the key ideas and customize it to fit your needs.

Regardless of where you start, you are already on your way to implementing a successful summer reading program.

Navigating this Guide

Quick tips and symbols for other useful resources are included throughout this guide to assist you when planning your summer program.



Snip it, lift it, paste it! For writing funding proposals (grants, partnerships, etc.)



Sample Template is in Appendix



Idea with a specific example

RESEARCH



Helpful website



NOTES

STEP 1

EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH

Step 1 is intended to solidify your rationale for establishing a successful summer reading program. This section of the guide will provide leadership teams with key conclusions from expert researchers supporting each step in the planning process.


As literacy leaders, we know that continuing learning over the summer is imperative to closing the summer reading gap. Year after year millions of dollars are spent to address this problem with little to no positive results.

- ✂ “We cannot afford to spend nearly 10 months of every year devoting enormous amounts of intellect, energy and money to promoting student learning and achievement, and then walk away from that investment every summer” (Smink, 2011, para. 1).

Current summer school programs are not decreasing the effects of summer reading loss, yet we continue to implement them at school sites. These programs are characterized by remediation, skill and drill, last minute hires, and a continuation of what didn't work during the school year. Their lack of relevancy results in low level engagement and minimal learning for students. Without a strong grasp of evidence-based research, literacy leaders can easily be subject to common pitfalls that inevitably compromise the impact of a summer reading program. So what does the research say?


Long-term Effects of Summer Reading Loss

Unfortunately, the cumulative effect of summer reading loss is powerful enough to erode positive gains made during the school year. The long-term effects of summer reading loss reach far




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RESEARCH



Smink, J. (2011). This is your brain on summer. *NY Times*, A29 Retrieved from: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/28/opinion/28smink.html?_r=0



NOTES

beyond the elementary school years. Middle and high school academic achievement rates and high school graduation are all impacted by the summer reading loss phenomenon.

- ✂ Students who cannot read on grade level in the third grade are four times less likely to graduate by age 18 than those who read at or above grade level (Hernandez, 2012).
- ✂ “The racial and ethnic graduation gaps disappear when students master reading by the end of third grade and are not living in poverty” (Hernandez, 2012, p. 4-5).

The Effects of Poverty on Summer Reading Loss

Students from low socio-economic backgrounds experience an uphill battle in evading the negative effects that their disadvantaged circumstances have on oral language and reading proficiency development. It is imperative that literacy leaders accurately assess the grave effect poverty has on learning, particularly during the summer months, since adequate literacy development represents the gateway to knowledge acquisition in virtually all other content areas. The video clip in the reference column illustrates this phenomenon in plain terms.

- ✂ A study by Downey, Hippel and Broh (2004) found that the gap between students of varying socio-economic groups grew disproportionately during the summer months, proving that schools are indeed the “great equalizers.”

Research indicates that the reading achievement of children who have little to no access to books generally declines during the summer months, while the reading achievement of children who have access to books typically remains constant or improves.

RESEARCH



Hernandez, D. J. (2012). Double jeopardy: How third-grade reading skills and poverty influence high school graduation. <http://www.aecf.org/resources/double-jeopardy/>



News clip on summer reading loss <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M2haD7FhMys>

RESEARCH



Downey, D. B., Von Hippel, P. T., & Broh, B. A. (2004). American Sociological Review [Entire issue]. SAGE Journals, (5). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/000312240406900501>

- ⌘ Neuman and Moland cite the recent Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS; Mullis, Martin, Foy, & Drucker, 2012), which surveys 215,000 children across 49 countries, the presence of children’s books in the home strongly predicts reading achievement, with the average reading achievement difference between students from homes with many children’s books (more than 100) and those from homes with few children’s books (10 or fewer) being very large (91 score points, almost one standard deviation).
- ⌘ According to a study conducted by Jim Trelease (2001), increased access to books has proven to have a significant impact on those living in poverty. This study demonstrates that it is not just an access problem in the home, but also in class, school and public libraries. While the goal of public education and public libraries is to level the playing field, this study reveals that access to resources is not equal. The following chart illustrates this disparity.

Neighborhood	# of books in the home	# of books in class	# of books in the school library	# of books in the public library
Beverly Hills	199	392	60,000	200,600
Watts	.4	54	23,000	110,000
Compton	2.7	47	16,000	90,000

(Trelease, 2001, p. 145)

- ⌘ Neighborhoods of concentrated poverty constitute “book deserts,” which may seriously constrain young children’s opportunities to come to school “ready to learn” (Neuman, S.B. & Moland, N., 2016, p.2).

RESEARCH



Neuman, S.B. & Moland, N (2016). *Book Deserts: The Consequences of Income segregation on Children’s Access to Print*, SAGE Journals. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0042085916654525>

RESEARCH

Trelease, J. (2001). *The read-aloud handbook* (Fifth ed.). New York, NY: Penguin Books.



RESEARCH



Neuman, S.B. & Moland, N (2016). *Book Deserts: The Consequences of Income segregation on Children’s Access to Print*, SAGE Journals. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0042085916654525>

3. High Interest, Self-Selected Books

- ✂ According to a research study led by Richard Allington and Anne McGill-Franzen, the most important components of a summer reading program included access to a minimum of 12 books that were self-selected by students (Allington et al., 2010).
- ✂ “Providing easy access to self-selected books for summer reading over successive years does, in fact, limit summer reading setback” (Allington et al., 2010, p. 422).

This easy to replicate strategy has been shown to minimize the achievement gap that exists between varying economic groups and to assist in slowing or reversing summer slide.

- ✂ Kim and White (2011) indicate that allowing students to select books that are commensurate to their reading level and in which they are interested are key parts of an effective summer reading program (Kim & White, 2011).

4. Just Right Books

It is important to have the students select their books; however, guidance needs to be provided to be sure that the selected books are ones that the children are able to read independently.

Fountas and Pinnell (2006) define a just right book for independent reading as one that must be read smoothly with fluency and understanding.

- ✂ “Poor readers have a tendency to make a “safe” choice (always going for short and very easy books) or to choose books that are much too difficult just to pretend to be part of the group” (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006, p. 94).

They also caution that the varying demands of each genre should

RESEARCH

Allington, R. L., McGill-Franzen, A., Camilli, G., Williams, L., Graff, J., Zeig, J., Nowk, R. (2010). Addressing summer reading setback among disadvantaged elementary students [Special issue]. *Reading Psychology, 31*(5).

RESEARCH

Kim, J.S. & White, T.G. (2011, April). Solving the problem of summer reading loss. *Phi Delta Kappan, 92*, 64-67.



RESEARCH

Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (2006). *Leveled books k-8: Matching texts to readers for effective teaching*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

be taken into consideration when choosing a just right text. They suggest that teachers develop a way of keeping track of student choices. This allows teachers to determine when students are choosing text that may be too difficult, thus improving engagement and motivation.

- ✂ Students who self-selected books showed a significant increase in their reading level while those that didn't had no change in level, indicating access to books alone is a successful strategy to preventing summer slide. In fact, having access to books that students can personally select positively impacts their reading levels (Seaman, 2015).

5. Engaging Activities

- ✂ It is critical to have additional activities to complement your summer reading program. They may serve the purpose of increasing participation in the initial book selection process as well as build excitement in order for participation to continue throughout the summer. If the program is designed for students to attend on a regular basis, activities should connect and extend their reading experiences.
- ✂ “Summer learning activities should be interactive, fun, hands-on, relate to real-world experiences, and incorporate cultural enrichment as well as group activities to keep students engaged and interested” (Terzian et al., 2009, p. 27).
- ✂ Practices that focus on relevance, connecting books to children’s lives generate interest in reading. Creating simple hands-on tasks that build relevance for the text, demonstrates to children that reading is important (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010).

RESEARCH



Seaman, A. M. (2015). Choice in books may help kids' reading score over summer. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-pediatrics-reading-choice-idUSKBN0NK2A720150429>

RESEARCH



Terzian, M., Moore, K. A., & Hamilton, K. (2009). Effective and promising summer learning programs and approaches for economically-disadvantaged children and youth: A white paper for the Wallace Foundation [Special issue]. *Child Trends*. Retrieved from <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/documents/effective-and-promising-summer-learning-programs.pdf>

Research



Cambria, J., & Guthrie, J. T. (2010). Motivating and engaging students in reading. *The NERA Journal*, 46, 16-29. Retrieved from <http://literacyconnects.org/img/2013/03/Motivating-and-engaging-students-in-reading-Cambria-Guthrie.pdf>

STEP 2


THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

It is critical to the design of your summer reading program that you begin the process by accurately assessing your needs. This section will focus on developing a comprehensive needs assessment. It should provide sufficient data that will substantiate a need for your program and determine the design of a summer reading program that addresses the needs of your school. The amount of data collected is directly related to the scale of your summer reading program. What follows will provide you with the framework of a comprehensive needs assessment.

What exactly is a comprehensive needs assessment? As educators, we are accountable for how we address the needs of students. Conducting a needs assessment is never a waste of time and when properly designed it can:

- Provide data that supports the need for a program
- Prioritize program components
- Determine staffing capacity
- Identify possible cost factors
- Become a resource for funding proposals

The needs assessment process can be started at any time during the school year and must be monitored as the year progresses. In order to plan your summer program early, the needs assessment process should be started at the beginning of the school year so you are not scrambling at the end of year to put together a justification for your program.


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Relying on one or two staff members can delay the process, so the first thing you should do is form a Needs Assessment Committee (NAC) that will remain permanent in order to facilitate program and grant requests.

Once you have formed your committee and decided on the data you will need to collect, you should be able to design a comprehensive plan based on the specific needs of your population.

Typically a needs assessment begins with a general demographic profile of the school that includes:



Appendix A – Demographic Profile

- Name/Location of the school
- Student population by race/gender/ethnicity
- Academic gap analysis comparing subgroups
- Percent of students receiving free/reduced lunch
- Number of English Language Learners
- Percent of students receiving exceptional/special education services
- Number of retentions
- Number of suspensions
- Number of students in an intervention process (RtI/MTSS)
- Number of walkers, car riders, and bus riders

Additional data for a summer reading program should include:

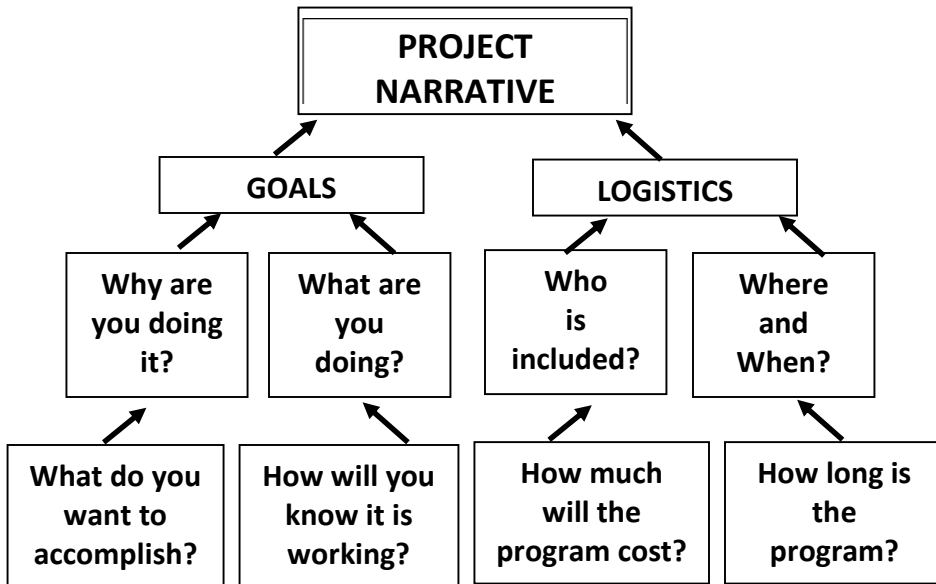
- Number of students above, on, or below grade level in reading
- Beginning-of-Year reading data
- End-of-Year reading data

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Appendix C

Design and distribute a student interest survey and use the data to customize your program.



Now that you have gathered quantitative data on your school, the committee should write a narrative description of the school and your prioritized needs. If you are using this information to share with stakeholders to support the need for your program, this information can become part of your presentation. For information on how to customize your presentation for various stakeholder groups, see STEP 3 – Stakeholder Input.

If you are seeking significant funding from outside sources you will need to create a narrative that provides a snapshot of your summer reading program. The following questions should be answered in your grant project narrative:

- What are the goals for your summer program?
- What will the program design look like?

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STEP 3


STAKEHOLDER INPUT

In order to maximize the effectiveness of your summer reading program you must start with a well-designed plan. To ensure that the program design is implemented with fidelity, it is imperative to get input from all stakeholders.

In this section, we will describe how you and your literacy leadership team can actively engage your stakeholders in developing the summer reading program. After you have gathered the evidence demonstrating why a summer reading program is necessary for students, bring your stakeholder focus group together and present the “Why.” The presentation to stakeholders should include:

- Historical reading achievement data
- A clear definition of summer reading loss
- Summer reading loss research
- Five key factors proven to have the greatest positive impact on summer reading loss (see pages 7-10)
- Summer reading loss data for your school (if available)

The effort taken to demonstrate the need and generate stakeholder input to develop the plan will be time well spent. It is important that you have diverse representation in your stakeholder group. In order to gain multiple perspectives, members may include students, parents, school staff, and community partners.

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Student Stakeholders

The goal is to create a summer reading program that inspires students. Rather than assume we know what motivates students, ask them some questions to get a better understanding of what would promote their participation over the summer months.

Once you have formed a student focus group, use the following questions to prompt a discussion:

- If the school had open media center over the summer, would you like to participate?
 - If so, how often would you like to come to school over the summer to exchange books and participate in a fun activity?
- What summer reading activities do you suggest to make open media more exciting?
- Is there a summer reading theme that you would like to suggest?
- Would you like to use the computers when you come in over the summer?
- What type of incentives would motivate you to participate?
- If purchasing books is an option, ask the students for recommendations regarding favorite titles, authors, series, topics, and genres.

If students need help in generating ideas, see the list below:

- Books and BINGO
- I Scream, You Scream, We all Scream, for Ice Cream AND Books!



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- Book Chat and Chew (bring a bag lunch and talk about your book)
- Movie and book exchange
- Pop in for Popcorn and a book
- Cool off with a snow cone and a cool book
- Pop in for an ice pop and a book
- Bouncing for Books (Read to earn time in a Bounce House)
- Read-a-thon (Raise funds to support the summer program)
- Blankets and books
- Reading pajama party
- Read a book, dunk your principal
- Read with a stuffed animal
- “Selfie” reading day
- Treasure hunt for books
- Geocache activity

Parent Stakeholders

Establishing buy-in from the parents is extremely important to getting students to participate in a summer reading program. Form a parent focus group with a wide variety of parent perspectives. Similar to the students, introduce the concept of summer reading loss to the parents and the importance of preventing it. Explain how the solution is really quite simple and identify the key factors to preventing summer reading loss. Share student responses with the parents and ask questions to determine what they think should be included in the planning process.


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Once you have formed a parent focus group, use the following questions to prompt a discussion. (Assume that an adult or older sibling is required to remain with the students):

- If the school had open media center over the summer, would you like your child to participate?
- How often would you like your child to participate?
- What days and times of the week work best with your schedule?
- When you bring your child to open media, would you be interested in participating in parent training? If so, what topics would you like to learn about?
- Do you have older children who would be interested in volunteering?
- Would you be interested in having access to the computer lab?
- Would you like to participate in some of the learning activities with your child?

Staff Stakeholders

Getting buy-in from the staff is critical for a successful implementation for many reasons. When your staff is sold on the summer reading plan, they will promote it and encourage participation. Whether staff members volunteer or are compensated, they will serve in critical roles by monitoring students, conducting activities, assisting students with selecting a “just right book,” helping with book check-out, and re-shelving books. Teachers have a vested interest in preventing summer reading loss. It eliminates the need to spend time re-teaching skills lost over the summer since their students are ready to hit the ground running.

 **NOTES**

Don't take it for granted that your entire staff understands the degree of impact that a summer reading program can make. They may have formed misconceptions about traditional summer reading programs resulting in no change for students due to their poor design. Remember, this program is different! It is based on five key factors that research shows has the greatest effect on eliminating the summer reading gap.

Start your collaboration with staff by sharing student and parent responses that were provided during your previous stakeholder meetings. In addition to teachers, consider including other staff member groups such as custodians, cafeteria, office, and paraprofessionals to gain their perspectives and valuable input for planning.

Once you have formed a staff focus group, use the following questions to prompt a discussion.

- If the school had open media center over the summer, would you be willing to participate?
- What days of the week fit your schedule the best?
- What times of the day are most convenient? Mornings? Evenings?
- Would you consider volunteering if you were offered compensatory time to be used during the school year?
- Would you be willing to sponsor a book blog to stimulate interest over the summer?



You may be able to offer compensation through grants, fundraising efforts, community donations, etc.

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- Would you like to conduct a book drive with your patrons to benefit the school’s program?
- Do you have any incentive items you would like to donate?
- Would you like to make a donation for company branded book bags imprinted with the dates and times of open media?

Depending on your school dynamics and the time you have available for planning, you may opt to combine stakeholder groups. The overall goal is to get as many perspectives as possible.



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STEP 4

LOGISTICS AND COORDINATION

At this point in your preparation process you have established the need for a summer reading program with stakeholder input and support. The development of your program will vary depending on when planning was started and available resources. This section will help you customize the summer reading program so that it matches your timing and budget.

Better Late Than Never Approach



Even if you find yourself late in the game with planning and short on funds, don't throw in the towel. You can still pull it off!

Typically, media center personnel inventory their book collection during the last few weeks of school, finalize reports, and close the media center during the summer months. Here is a way you can create a successful program with a bare bones approach by simply opening your media center over the summer. It's that easy! Just make sure you consider the following:

- Determine the number of books in circulation and total student enrollment.
- Send home no more than fifty percent of your total collection. For example, if you have 10,000 books in your collection with 500 students in your school, you could easily send home 5-10 books per student. Typically, more fluent readers that are reading chapter books require fewer books than primary students who are reading early readers.
- Determine the frequency of open media times based on

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the number of books that are checked out. For example, if you have circulated 10 books per student, you may not need to open your media center as frequently.

- Determine the dates and hours of operation
- Conduct training based on the skill level and role of your volunteers including staff, parents, community members, or high school students
- Schedule volunteers to assist with book circulation, re-shelving books, maintaining parent communication, student supervision, and reading/conferring with students
- If you have a difficult time getting volunteers you can offer incentives to staff members (Go to Page 21 for incentive ideas)
- Begin marketing your program (Go to STEP 7 – Marketing)

Additional Ideas for Increasing Participation



Start advertising while students are still in school.




Take advantage of a captive audience and coordinate with any existing activities (i.e. summer camp) that are occurring at your school to maximize participation.



Entice parents by offering access to media center computers or your computer lab while their children book shop (Go to STEP 6 – Parent Involvement).

When creating your schedule for open media, determine times that are convenient for working families. Consider connecting the media hours of operation with existing breakfast or lunch programs that are typically offered in Title I schools.

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Additional Ideas for Increasing Your Inventory

If your current media selection is limited or you simply want to increase the number of books available, try a book swap! This is where students are asked to bring books that they have already read and are willing to exchange them for new ones. You can also use donated books from a variety of sources including:

- Books from student homes
- Book drives
- Local businesses or places of worship
- Sister schools
- Libraries
- Vendors

Book swaps are great way to build anticipation and excitement for the love of reading!


Early Bird Gets the Worm



Research supports that early planning is one of the five key factors that contributes to a successful summer reading program. It allows you ample time to seek adequate funding, identify resources, and hire highly qualified personnel. It also ensures that you have sufficient time to get input from all stakeholders and maintain their support throughout the program.

If you anticipate that your school’s budget will not support the type of summer program you need, be prepared to use your needs assessment analysis to justify additional funding requests. If you are applying for small mini-grants, you may be able to secure

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funding six months prior to the start of your summer program. If you are seeking larger grants of ten thousand dollars or more, the approval timeline may take up to a year (for additional information on seeking funds go to STEP 5 – Show Me The Money!).


Now you will have to really think through the nuts and bolts of your summer program! You have already conducted the school needs assessment with the support of the literacy leadership team and gathered input from your stakeholder groups. Depending on the program model you select, some steps may be eliminated or reordered to meet your school needs.



Here are some key components to consider:

- Review stakeholder feedback.
- Set program goals.
- Select a theme for the summer literacy program based on stakeholder input.
- Coordinate parent training if stakeholder groups expressed interest.
- Develop a summer reading program calendar of dates and hours of operation.


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- Coordinate custodial schedule to support the summer reading program, as well as prepare for the upcoming school year.
- Ensure coordination of campus-wide summer events and activities with the summer reading program.
- Determine the number of books that students may check out and take home during the summer.
- Coordinate the book swap if incorporated in the program.
- Decide on fun, engaging activities to incorporate into the program based on stakeholder input.
- Plan a culminating, celebratory event to be held at the end of the program.

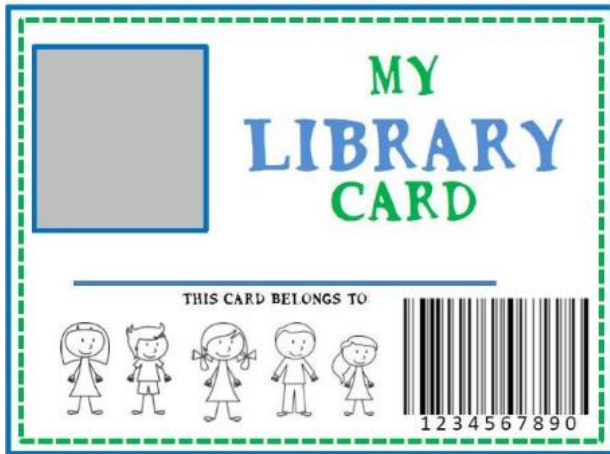


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recommended lists such as Caldecott or Newberry.

- o Pull your media circulation report and look for trends based on interest, authors, titles, book series, and genre. Basically... books you cannot keep on the shelf!
- Translate student information, as necessary.
- Organize distribution of promotional items to students.
- Determine the structure for distribution of tangible incentives for students.
- Conduct media center book circulation inventory before opening the summer reading program.
- Schedule a date for local public library representatives to visit the school summer reading program to advertise their events and issue library cards.



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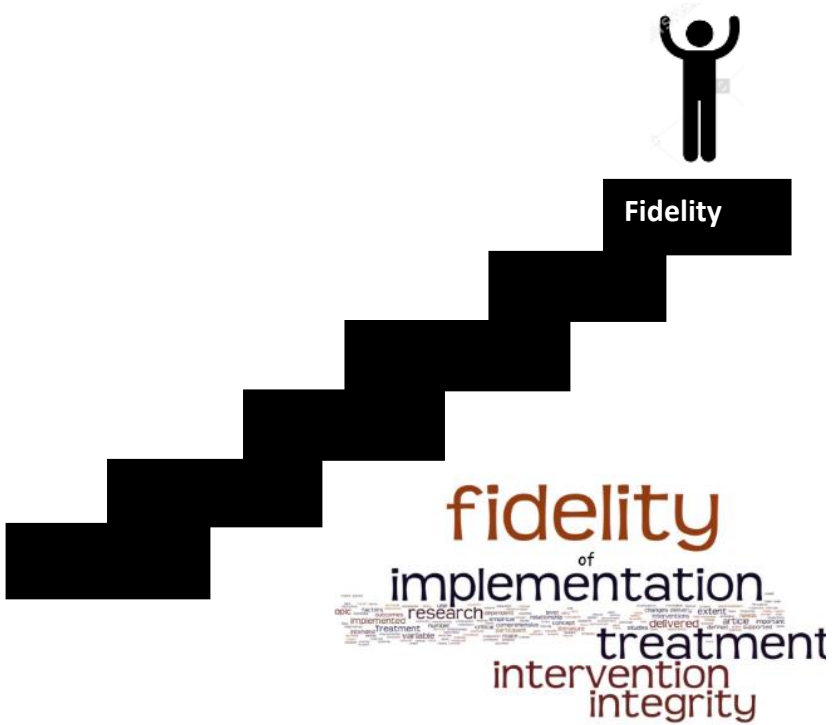
- Develop a presentation for the staff kick-off.
- Hold a staff kick-off meeting to present the purpose and logistics of the program so they have the information to promote it to their own students.
- Identify the required staff and/or volunteers.
- Provide training on key roles for managing the operational and instructional facets of the program.
- Schedule volunteers for who will lead activities or fulfill other supervisory roles.
- Provide all staff with a program presentation, including directions on how to select “just right” books, to share with their own students.
- Present staff with the final details of the summer program.

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- If needed, arrange for translation of any marketing materials for students and parents.
- Develop and implement the marketing plan to build anticipation and excitement for the program.
- Host a school-wide summer literacy kick-off celebration.
- Host an informal parent meeting to share information on the summer reading program.

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- Determine how you will evaluate student achievement progress as a result of the summer reading program using some form of a pre- and post-assessment.

- Determine a method for tracking student attendance and per pupil book circulation.

- Administer the reading pre-assessment to establish the baseline directly before the start of the program.

- Revisit goals as you implement your program and make necessary adjustments.

- Administer a reading post-assessment to identify individual student achievement outcomes as a result of the summer reading program.

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STEP 5

SHOW ME THE MONEY!

So far you have chosen the research to support your program, completed a needs assessment, received stakeholder input, and developed a plan with logistics and coordination. You are well on your way to establishing a solid rationale for grant or private funding.

But, let's face it; finding funds for anything extra in education is difficult at best. The primary barrier for schools that are not able to offer a summer reading program is lack of funding for materials, staff, and other resources. This section will offer suggestions for identifying funding sources within most school and district budgets as well as where to look for support from outside agencies.


We all know how fast a year goes by and suddenly we find ourselves at the end of the year with depleted budgets. That's why it is so important to secure funding as early as possible for summer programs. If you receive Title I dollars you can plan early by putting funds aside for your summer reading program. If you are not a Title I school, or need to use those dollars for other purposes, then you will need to seek the funding elsewhere.

Don't put all your eggs in one basket! Look for multiple funding sources, tweak your grant, and submit for all that apply. The following is a list of possible sources:

Within Your School

- Title I funds
- School Advisory Council (SAC)
- Parent teacher organizations

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- Rental income funds
- Fundraisers
- Aftercare

Within Your District

- Title II
- Title III
- 21st Century
- Feeder pattern schools
- Donations

Beyond Your District/School

- Grants
- Local or national foundations
- Local businesses
- Community book drive
- Vendors
- Places of worship
- Partnerships (local library, other summer programs)
- Donations

Grant Writing Tips

- When searching the Internet for grants be very specific with key word searches.
 - Ex. "Reading Grants" will generate thousands of hits. Narrowing your search to "summer reading grants available in Florida for (insert current year)" will help optimize your search results.



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STEP 6

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

School leaders inherently know the value of parent involvement in their students' education. But, like many initiatives not directly related to the classroom, brainstorming effective techniques for increasing parent involvement often get relegated to the back burner in school improvement planning.


The challenge to provide meaningful and accessible opportunities for parents to participate in their child's education has increased in complexity. Teachers and principals are grateful for parents who volunteer to make copies and put up bulletin boards; but in all fairness, this level of participation is not the norm, and not the type of involvement that makes the most impact on student learning.

The parent community of today is as diverse as our student body. Strategies for parent involvement, both during the school year and summer literacy programs, must be creatively designed by optimizing strategic scheduling, digital resources, learning content for parents, and community partnerships.

- ✂ According to the report, *The Power of Parents*, "Research indicates a strong association between parent involvement with a child's education both at home and at school and student performance in school. Engaging parents is particularly important for English learners and students from low-income families. In fact, greater parent involvement is correlated with higher student test scores and better grades for the school as a whole" (Thigpen, Freedberg & Frey, 2014, p. 7).

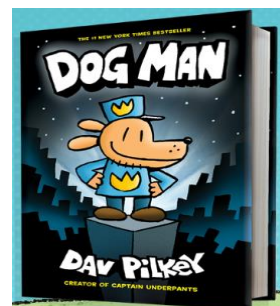
Studies show that parent participation is more impactful on their child's education than their socioeconomic background. Schools

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RESEARCH

Thigpen, D., Freedberg, L. & Frey, S. (2014). *The Power of Parents: Research underscores the impact of parent involvement in schools.* EdSource and New America Media.




must take the initiative to create innovative parent involvement programs that appeal to a wide array of parent needs.

Current research on parent involvement reveals that students learn and grow at home, at school, and in the community when parent involvement comprises the following key program components:


- Parenting – providing support on child-rearing skills
- Communication – effective communication between school and home
- Volunteering – providing opportunities to volunteer at school, based on parent work schedules
- Learning at home – teach parents how to facilitate learning with their children at home
- Decision-making – provide opportunities for families to participate in school decisions
- Community collaboration – coordinate local business and charitable partnerships to provide resources for families (Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders, and Simon, 1997).

How do we maximize participation? The key is to know your parent needs. For example, the success of a summer program is dependent upon parents’ ability to transport their children to and from your program. The following chart will help in designing the parent participation for your summer program based on your population. Any of these literacy ideas can be used to extend parent participation throughout the school year.

 NOTES


RESEARCH

Epstein, J., Coates, L., Salinas, K.C., Sanders, N.G., & Simon, B.S. (1997). School, family, and community partnerships. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

 NOTES


IF....	THEN
Your parents are illiterate in their own language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Suggest offering informal instruction on developing parent reading skills in their native language.• Model basic reading guidance behaviors in which to engage with their child (pointing, skimming, turning the pages).• Provide basic question stems with visuals on flash cards to generate conversation with their child during reading.• Offer informal instruction in parents’ native or English language on accessing community resources, acquiring technical job skills, and creating a supportive learning environment at home.• Provide informal instruction for parents on how to navigate the public education system and support their children with college preparation or career choices.
Your parents are non-English speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide access to, or invite community organizations in to provide English language instruction.• Provide access to books in the parents’ native language so they may read to their children.• Create a book club for parents and their children using books in their native language.• Designate family read aloud times at school, offering a meal or other participation incentives. Have children translate the sentences or act out the characters as parents read aloud.

NOTES




	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Host a “make a recipe” event where parents write and read aloud a recipe in their native language while students follow directions and recreate the recipe in English. Add additional selections about the food that they can share together. ● Partner with community organizations to host shared reading events at local places of worship, shopping, restaurants, or other frequented locations.
<p>Your parents have limited resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide community or school “clean-up” events that start with shared reading and end with meals or other participation incentives. ● Offer career advancement opportunities by inviting community partners in to provide instruction on job-related, technical, and communication skills. Host a meal with the event. ● Conduct weekend literacy treasure hunts with parents and students. Each treasure is a book with other participation incentives. End the event with a shared reading activity. ● Seek grant funding for school-sponsored transportation to your program and/or other family events ● If parents are unable to transport their children to your summer program, consider bringing the program to them.
<p>Your parents work extended hours</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ask teachers to save tasks that allow working parents the opportunity to volunteer. ● Provide access to community resource events that focus on learning technical, health, or parenting support skills.

NOTES



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Survey parents to find out how and when they could share their professional expertise (i.e. medical, police, security, construction, retail) and connect this back to literature.● Create a parent/child book club challenge using digital platforms to set up virtual chats, blogs, or face time conferencing.● Schedule a virtual connection during class for parents to engage in a book chat during their scheduled breaks.● Provide opportunities for volunteering in the evening or on weekends.● Partner with local grocery store or other retail businesses that are frequented by working parents. Create a QR code vocabulary word hunt throughout the store for parents and children to complete. Stores may provide free incentives for completing the hunt during their visit.● Utilize "remind apps" or automated phone call-outs to announce events or remind parents to engage in reading tasks with their children.
Your parents have flexible schedules and access to technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Invite parents to participate in a shared book club with their child.● Host early evening or weekend events at the school or at a local book store.● Invite parents to participate in a book blog, a virtual threaded discussion, or other shared document portal to discuss a book.● Create a podcast with your child.● Record an interview about a book.

NOTES



STEP 7

MARKETING

Marketing of any summer program is critically important to its success. In this section we will provide strategies for promoting participation in your summer reading program.

✂ “Because we know that students need to attend these programs to benefit from them [Borman, Benson, and Overman, 2005; Borman and Dowling, 2006; McCombs, Kirby, and Mariano, 2009], recruiting students into the programs and then maintaining their attendance are critical” (McCombs et al., 2011, p. 33). All of this involves marketing your school program.

What is Marketing?

Marketing is the principle means of advertising the benefits of your program and how you approach it will vary depending on your stakeholder group. In its purest sense, marketing involves promoting a program or idea.

As school literacy leaders, your jobs encompass a wide variety of tasks; the most important of which is student achievement. You may feel that you do not have the time or resources to launch a successful marketing campaign. However, the power of an effective marketing campaign cannot be understated. It is one of the key components to a successful summer reading program that benefits your students throughout the entire year.

The purpose of getting input from your stakeholders was to plan, develop, and create buy-in for your summer reading program. Now you have to sell it using clever marketing tactics to ALL members of your school community.

RESEARCH



McCombs, J. S., Augustine, C. H., Schwartz, H. L., Bodilly, S. J., McInnis, B., Lichter, D. S., & Cross, A. B. (2011). Making summer count - How summer programs can boost children’s learning. Retrieved from: <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/summer-and-extended-learning-time/summer-learning/Documents/Making-Summer-Count-How-Summer-Programs-Can-Boost-Childrens-Learning.pdf>

NOTES




Horizontal lines for taking notes.

- Remember to include your PTA and SAC to help advertise your program. These individuals are already involved in your school and are frequently your biggest cheerleaders. Equip them with the tools and knowledge to speak about your program and market it naturally in their interactions with others.
- During the summer program, have at least one opportunity to showcase what is going on. Don't wait until the end of the program to do this.

Getting the Word Out

- Brand tangible items like bags, pencils, t-shirts, giveaways, etc. with and imprint the schedule on any of these items.
 - Have students participate in a contest to design your logo.
 - Tap your business partners to help fund the cost of tangible items and, in return, include their logo on the items.
- A company may want to sponsor a weekly event. For example, a local ice cream shop may want to sponsor the *I Scream, You Scream, We All Scream, for Ice Cream AND Books* event.
 - Remember to thank your partners by advertising their contributions on your marquee, newsletter, signage, flyers, etc.
- Use a variety of communication methods to maintain continuous communication (mass emails, text messages, callouts, marquee, flyers, postcards, letters, newsletter, school website etc.).

NOTES



Using Your Website Effectively

- Ensure that your website is user-friendly and information is easily accessible.
- Ensure that your links are current and are free of questionable pop-ups.
- Ensure your summer reading program is easily identifiable and the critical pieces of information that parents need and want such as location, times, dates, and program requirements are included.
- Ensure that your search engine allows parents to use key words to find important information and is easy to navigate.
- Provide translations of program information.
- Include a method for contacting a school representative to request additional information such as an interactive form, a contact name, email address, etc.

What are some additional ideas for marketing?



Marquee/signage throughout the community



Neighborhood newsletters



Neighborhood community centers/HOA



Child care center



Include local book stores and libraries



Other summer programs



Inserts in report cards



Communicate with feeder schools (transition grades and day cares)



NOTES



Use social media – Twitter, Facebook, etc. Include videos and pictures as well as direct links for parents to enroll in your summer program

IMPORTANT


Never underestimate the power of your position as the literacy leader. You are the program’s chief enthusiast and have multiple opportunities to talk about the program throughout the school year! Be sure to have your two minute “infomercial” ready for whenever opportunities arise like a parent meeting, an assembly, or any event where parents are in attendance.

Is there competition?

- What other programs are out there?
- Do they offer similar benefits?
- Is there an opportunity to collaborate with them?

Does marketing end once the program begins?

Absolutely not! Just because your summer reading program is underway does not mean that your marketing efforts should cease. In fact, after the initial “opening” you may notice a decline in participation. That is why it is important to monitor attendance throughout the program and continue to promote it. You may consider adding or changing incentives for students during the summer months to maintain engagement. Attention to marketing will not only help you get off to a great start but will ensure momentum throughout your summer program!

 NOTES

Access to Books



Monitoring access to books is foundational to your summer program. How you collect data will depend on your program components.



If your program is based on media center book check-out, book circulation data can be retrieved through your media's inventory system (Follett, Destiny....) that typically provide usage reports.



An easy way to monitor a book swap is to issue a separate ticket for each book a student wants to trade. At the end of the swap, tickets are collected and matched to the number of books they have in hand and this data is recorded.



For students that are participating virtually, you can monitor their access and entries through digital reading logs, blogs, electronic survey, or a commonly shared document.

High Interest, Self-Selected, Just Right Books



Monitoring that students are choosing high Interest, self-selected books is critical to maintaining high participation levels and student motivation. Children who enjoy reading will read more frequently.



Appendix I

Provide an exit ticket that will help you monitor that students are checking out high interest books that are on their reading level.



NOTES

A vertical rectangular box containing 25 horizontal lines for taking notes, starting below the 'NOTES' label and ending just above the page footer.



Conduct a basic digital survey using emoji's or a simple thumbs up/thumbs down to gauge students' motivation.



Appendix J

Utilize the Exit Ticket Conference to determine if students are self-selecting high interest, just-right books.


Engaging Activities

Monitoring activities is dependent upon your program. Whether or not you are offering a comprehensive full day, half day, or pop-in summer program, engaging activities would be linked to the learning that is taking place in your classrooms. You should be monitoring for relevance, interactivity, hands-on experiences, and connection to the books students are reading. If your program is theme or incentive-driven, you may want to regularly survey students regarding how they feel about the activities that are being offered. An easy way to capture this information is to add an additional question to your exit ticket mentioned earlier.

Additional Monitoring Possibilities

- Number of volunteers and/or teachers involved in the program and hours spent on summer program tasks. This includes times and days worked. This allows you to determine if your participation needs were met with adequate staffing.
- It is also important to monitor student perceptions of their own progress throughout the program. As a basis for this feedback, students need to develop personal

NOTES



STEP 9


PROGRAM EVALUATION

How often do we, as school leaders, have the time to really analyze the results of a program and determine our return on investment? How often have school leaders been asked how a program went and the response is always, "Great!" with no data to support that claim. While many programs have a positive effect on student learning, some do not. Without including methods to evaluate program effectiveness during the planning phase, it's next to impossible to know exactly what aspects of the program, if any, had a direct effect on student learning and achievement.

We get so involved in the planning and implementation phase, program evaluation is often put on the back burner or forgotten all together. It makes sense to plan the program evaluation prior to beginning implementation, especially if you expect to improve upon and replicate your program the following year.

Program evaluation is comparable to conducting a science experiment. When done right, it can yield fascinating and powerful data for informing your next steps for school improvement. The process starts out the same by generating a hypothesis regarding the program's potential impact on student learning and achievement.

We've all sat through educational sales presentations where vendors typically have this step covered for you. However, that's where they often leave off. It's up to you as the school leader to develop your own parameters for measuring the effectiveness of the program.

 NOTES

How will you account for other mitigating factors that may skew the results of your evaluation?

- Factors that could impact program results may include student participation, staff absenteeism, varying levels of staff qualifications, presence of and/or types of incentives for participation.

Will you run a treatment and control test group?

- Back to the science experiment analogy, the most effective way to evaluate program effectiveness in terms of student reading levels.
 - Administer a pre- and post-reading inventory assessment to all students at the same time. In this case, timing is everything!
 - Retain accurate records of students who participate in the summer reading program and compare their pre- and post-assessment results to their individual attendance rates.
 - Upon the start of the new school year, administer a post reading inventory assessment to all students in your school, regardless of summer reading program participation.
 - Compare achievement trends among your control and treatment groups after incorporating an analysis of any mitigating factors.
 - The longer you can extend the summer reading program, the greater likelihood end-of-year reading levels will be retained or even increased.



NOTES


Do you want to track other trends during the school year that may correlate to the previous summer reading program?

Now that you have determined the reading levels based on the post-assessment reading inventory for students who participated in the program, you may want to monitor additional trends during the school year by continuing to use your control and treatment group for continued analysis. Asking yourself the following questions will help you decide what else you might want to monitor:

- Will these same students exhibit a decrease in student referrals or disciplinary incidents during the subsequent school year?
- Will their reading levels advance at a faster pace during the school year as compared to their same grade level peers who did not participate in the reading program the previous summer?
- Do the parents of these children continue to maintain involvement trends during the school year?
- Can you discern achievement trends of these same students in other subject areas such as math or science?

It is up to you as the school leader to select and prioritize the data points that will determine a partial or full return on investment. Regardless of your results, a strong evaluation will give you the essential data to refine the details for next summer’s implementation. Never underestimate the correlational impact of parent, student, and teacher program perception, as well as motivation on student reading development and achievement.


NOTES



Remember, stopping summer reading loss is the foremost goal; any other gains experienced are considered an added benefit. Your summer reading program can have a powerful influence on developing good reading habits that lead to lifelong reading!



NOTES



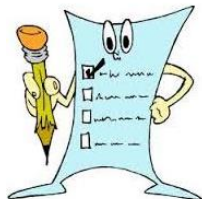
Appendix

Name of School _____		Date _____												
Grade Level	# of students	Ethnicity Percents				Percent F/R Lunch	Percent ELL	Percent ESE	# of Retentions in FY16	% Reading on level	% Math on level	% Science on level	End of Year RRR Data	Beginning of Year RRR Data
		White	Black	Hisp	Other									
Kindergarten														
First														
Second														
Third														
Fourth														
Fifth														
ELL														
ESE														
RTI/MTSS														

Demographic Profile – add columns as needed

Teacher Name: <u>Mrs. Jones</u> Grade: <u>Third</u>											
Student Name	Student #	ESE Special Services	Retentions	RTI/MTSS	Bus Car Rider Walker Daycare Aftercare	Reading Running Record Levels (Put in new data as levels change, add columns as needed)			Winter Diagnostic Data	Spring Diagnostic Data	Notes on Behavior/Motivation Next Steps
						Date	Level	Date			
Marcus		Speech	NO	NO	Bus						
Johnny		IEP	YES/2	NO	Car Rider						
Ginelle		NO	NO	Tier 2	Bus						
Lisa		NO	NO	NO	Aftercare						
Joseph		LU/SAI	NO	NO	Bus						
Shamira		NO	NO	NO	Car Rider						
Dante		NO	NO	NO	Car Rider						
Jasmine		LU/SAI	YES/K	NO	Bus						
Sammy		NO	NO	NO	Bus						
Matthew		NO	NO	NO	Aftercare						
Rafael		504 Plan	NO	Tier 1	Bus						
Heather		NO	NO	NO	Bus						
April		NO	NO	NO	Daycare						
Sarah		NO	NO	NO	Bus						
Christian		Gifted	NO	Tier 3	Walker						
Jennifer		NO	NO	NO	Car Rider						
Steven		NO	YES/1	NO	Bus						
James		IEP	NO	NO	Bus						
Candice		NO	NO	Tier 2	Car Rider						
Lucas		NO	NO	NO	Bus						
Gabriel		Sp/Lang	NO	NO	Daycare						

Sample shared document with teacher tabs



Interest Survey

Name _____ Grade Level _____

1. I would come to school in the summer if.....

2. If I could buy any book I wanted, I would get.....

3. If I woke up in the morning and was told there was NO school today, I would....

4. Circle your favorite subjects...

Science

Music

Math

Reading

Physical Education

Social Studies

Writing

Dance

Art

Technology

S.T.E.M.

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear Parents,

We have completed another successful year at *(insert school name)*! During this time, your child has made a great deal of progress in all areas, but particularly in reading. Because reading is so important to all subject areas, we want to encourage your child to ***keep reading this summer!***

We are excited to announce that *(insert school name)* will be offering a Summer Reading Program available to *(insert grade levels)*. Our media center will be open *(insert days and times)* so that you and your child can come check out books, participate in fun activities, and read together.

In your child's summer reading folder, you will find *(insert names of materials such as reading logs, suggested book lists, etc.)*. Each student will set his or her own reading goals and track progress throughout the summer. At the end of the summer, we'll have a fantastic reward for all of our students to recognize their success!

You may wonder why it is so important for your child to keep reading over the summer.

- Children who do **not** read during the summer lose 2 to 3 months of reading growth, putting them at a disadvantage when the new school year begins.
- This reading loss is cumulative throughout elementary school, meaning your child may enter middle school over 2 ½ years below grade level if she or he does not continue to read over the summer.
- Continued reading loss has long term effects, even impacting high school graduation.

Reading just 15 minutes a day will help! So please continue to encourage your child to read this summer whether at home or at school.

Remember, the value of the gift of reading can never be underestimated! We look forward to seeing you at the *(insert school name)* media center this summer!

Sincerely,

SAMPLE LETTER TO STUDENTS

Dear Student Reader,

This has been a fantastic school year, and we are so proud of your accomplishments! As you get ready to head off for summer vacation, we want to remind you about our new summer reading program (*name of program if applicable*).

At our kickoff celebration, we talked about how you will be able to visit our media center to check out books, participate in fun activities, and read with your parents. You will start by signing your reading pledge and setting your summer reading goal. Your teacher will help you with this. In this folder, there are (*materials such as books lists to help you choose a just right book and book logs to help you track your progress*). Make sure to share this information with your parents.

We know that reading 15 minutes or more every day will help you as enter a new grade. So, don't forget to come to (*insert school name*) media center on (*insert days and times*) this summer. At the end of the summer, you will be rewarded for your tremendous progress. (*insert reward*)

We will see you this summer. In the meantime, keep on reading!

Sincerely,

Student: _____ Grade: _____

SUMMER READING LOG

DATE	BOOK TITLE	LEVEL OF BOOK	GENRE	HOME OR SCHOOL	START PAGE	END PAGE	TOTAL MINUTES	RATING



My Summer Reading Pledge

I pledge to read every day to reach
my summer reading goal.
I know that the more I read,
the more I learn.



My Summer Reading Pledge

I pledge to read every day to reach
my summer reading goal.
I know that the more I read,
the more I learn.



My Summer Reading Pledge

I pledge to read every day to reach
my summer reading goal.
I know that the more I read,
the more I learn.

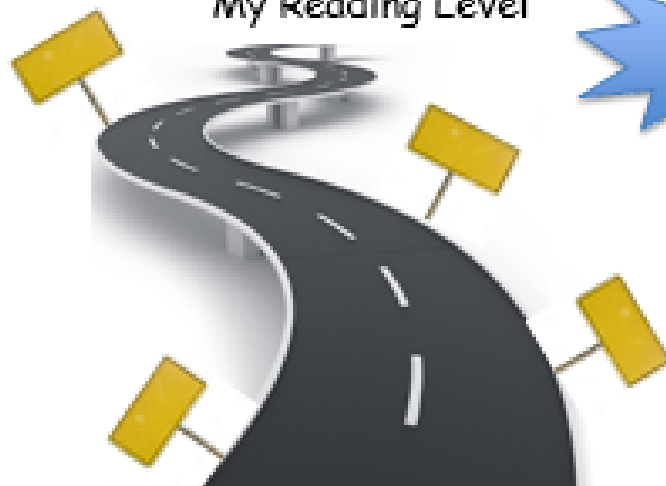


My Summer Reading Pledge

I pledge to read every day to reach
my summer reading goal.
I know that the more I read,
the more I learn.

Name: _____

My Reading Level



Write the date you reach your new reading level in the mile markers.



My Summer Reading Goal

My Attendance Record

Check each day that you attend the summer reading program

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

My Exit Ticket

Name _____

My Reading Level _____

Put an **X** on your answer.

Did you select a book that you are interested in reading?

YES

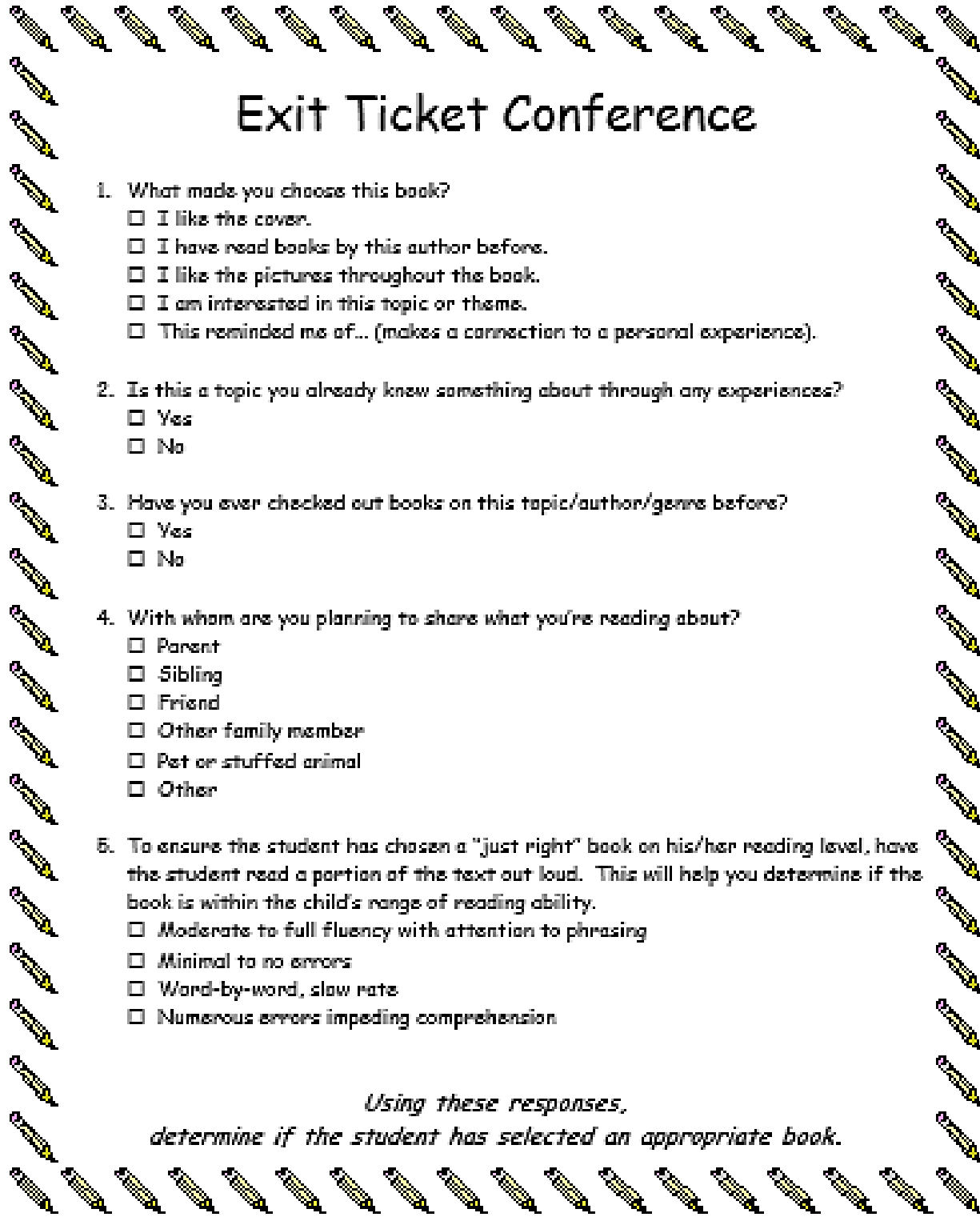
SOME
WHAT

NO

Did you choose a book that is on your reading level?

YES

NO



Exit Ticket Conference

1. What made you choose this book?
 - I like the cover.
 - I have read books by this author before.
 - I like the pictures throughout the book.
 - I am interested in this topic or theme.
 - This reminded me of... (makes a connection to a personal experience).

2. Is this a topic you already knew something about through any experiences?
 - Yes
 - No

3. Have you ever checked out books on this topic/author/genre before?
 - Yes
 - No

4. With whom are you planning to share what you're reading about?
 - Parent
 - Sibling
 - Friend
 - Other family member
 - Pet or stuffed animal
 - Other

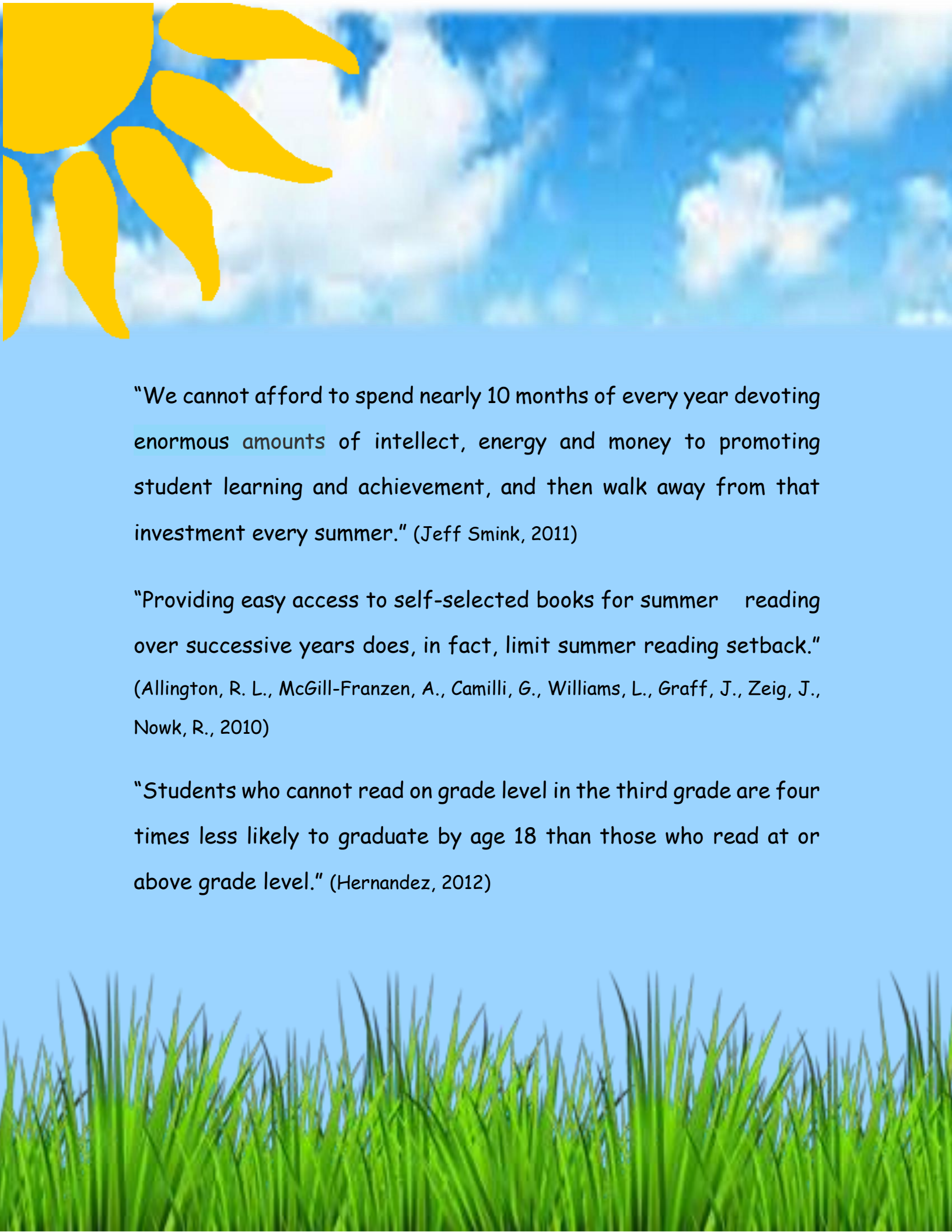
5. To ensure the student has chosen a "just right" book on his/her reading level, have the student read a portion of the text out loud. This will help you determine if the book is within the child's range of reading ability.
 - Moderate to full fluency with attention to phrasing
 - Minimal to no errors
 - Word-by-word, slow rate
 - Numerous errors impeding comprehension

*Using these responses,
determine if the student has selected an appropriate book.*

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"We cannot afford to spend nearly 10 months of every year devoting enormous amounts of intellect, energy and money to promoting student learning and achievement, and then walk away from that investment every summer." (Jeff Smink, 2011)

"Providing easy access to self-selected books for summer reading over successive years does, in fact, limit summer reading setback." (Allington, R. L., McGill-Franzen, A., Camilli, G., Williams, L., Graff, J., Zeig, J., Nowk, R., 2010)

"Students who cannot read on grade level in the third grade are four times less likely to graduate by age 18 than those who read at or above grade level." (Hernandez, 2012)