

Super Summer Success

SSS Resource #2 Highlights of Research on Summer Reading Loss and the Effects on Student Achievement

The basis for the "Super Summer Success Reading Program" came from the following article: McGill-Franzen, Anne & Allington, Richard. (2003). Bridging the Summer Reading Gap. *Instructor Magazine*, 58 - May/June, 17-19. As of November, 2006 the article is available in its entirety at:

http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/instructor/summer_reading.htm (website can close or change at any time).

McGill-Franzen and Allington's research suggests:

- When a child reads as few as six appropriately grade-leveled books, he or she is likely to fend off summer reading loss and maintain the reading gains made during the previous school year.
- The best predictor of summer loss or summer gain is whether or not a child reads during the summer.
- The best predictor of whether a child reads is whether he or she owns books.
- Summer reading loss is a bigger problem for children from low-income families due to lack of access to high quality, appropriate leveled books.
- Low-income students' reading levels may decline as much as an average of three months between June and September whereas a typical middle-class student improves or remains the same.
- The key to stopping summer reading loss is to find ways to get books into the hands of children during summer break.
- Research shows that public library use among poor children declines when a library is more than six blocks from their home compared with more than two miles for middle-class children.
- Besides limited access to books, another key factor is motivating children to read the books. Students with less-than-successful reading experiences aren't as interested in voluntary reading as children with successful reading experiences.
- Children need "just right books" - books that match their skill levels and interests.
- Reading more than six books over the summer leads to even greater success. When children are provided with 10 to 20 self-selected children's books at the end of the regular school year, as many as 50 percent not only maintain their skills but actually make reading gains.



The following is additional information and resources on summer reading loss and possible ways for prevention (websites can close or change at any time):

- Alexander, K.L., Entwisle, D.R., & Olson, L.S. (2001). Schools, achievement, and inequality: A seasonal perspective. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 23 (2), 171-91. This article may also be found at the following website which is part of the Johns Hopkins Center for Summer Learning. Scroll to the bottom of the page, click on "Read more...", and this 22 page document will be available for printing at www.summerlearning.org/research/sumloss.html

Highlights of this article include:

- This research reviews the achievement gap across social lines and the seasonality of academic achievement related to socioeconomic status.
 - ◆ A strong curriculum comes first, focused on reading.
 - ◆ Heyns (1978) found that the single summer activity most strongly and consistently related to summer learning is reading. This is true whether measured by the number of books read, by the time spent reading, or by the regularity of library usage.
 - ◆ Educational policies that increase access to books...stand to have an important impact on achievement, particularly for less advantaged children.
- **Allington, Richard L., McGill-Franzen, A., et. al. (2006). Ameliorating summer reading setback among economically disadvantaged elementary students.** Paper submitted to AERA for presentation at their annual meeting. This research was supported by grant #R305T010692-02 from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. Specific citation on article will come available once published.

Highlights of this article include:

- ◆ This longitudinal experimental study provides the strongest evidence to date that ensuring easy access to books for summer reading is one potential strategy for addressing summer reading setback, and therefore, the rich/poor achievement gap.
- **Allington, Richard L. (2006). What really matters for struggling readers: Designing research-based programs.** Boston: Pearson.

Highlights of this article include:

- ◆ Poor children may begin school in the fall about three months behind where they were when they left school for summer break...The accumulating effect of this summer setback means that poor children may fall as much as two years behind more advantaged students.
- ◆ Research demonstrates the relationship between access to reading materials and volume of reading and the relationship between volume of reading and reading proficiency. A proactive measure for schools is to ensure all students have access to books during the summer months. Lower-income families are those least likely to have easy access to appropriate books in their homes, schools, and neighborhoods.
- ◆ Suggestions to minimize summer reading loss include: more accessibility to school library collections, distributing classroom paperbacks to students for summer reading, and using school funds to purchase books for students.
- **Allington, R. & McGill-Franzen, A. (2003). The impact of summer setback on the reading achievement gap.** Phi Delta Kappan, September, 68 -75.

Highlights of this article include:

- ◆ Summer reading setback is defined as students who return to school after summer vacation with diminished reading skills, presumably from a lack of adequate reading practice.
- ◆ 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.

- ♦ Data available consistently portrays summer reading setback as the most potent explanation for the widening of the reading achievement gap between rich children and poor children across the span of the elementary years.
- ♦ Two broad principles that focus on closing the reading achievement gap:
 1. Volume of reading is important in the development of reading proficiency, and
 2. Children must have easy, literally fingertip, access to books that provide engaging, successful reading experiences throughout the calendar year if we want them to read in volume.



- **Celano, Donna & Neuman, S.B. (2001). The role of public libraries in children’s literacy development: An evaluation report.** [.pdf file]. Pennsylvania Dept. of Education, Office of Commonwealth Libraries. As of November 2006, this article was still available at: www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/summer/research.htm .

Highlights of this article include:

- ♦ Children who participate in summer reading programs benefit from the many literacy-related activities offered, aiding significantly in literacy development.
- ♦ Programs encouraged children to spend increased time with books.
- ♦ Public Library reading programs played an important role in the reading achievement of children who lack access to books and other reading materials in their daily lives.
- ♦ Literacy-related activities and events enriched reading experiences, encouraging children to read themselves, hear stories read aloud and write about what they’d read.
- ♦ Public Library programs encouraged parents to become involved in children’s reading.
- **Cooper, Harris, et al. (2003). Summer learning loss: The problem and some solutions.** As of November 2006, this article was still available at Eric Digest – www.eric.ed.gov (eric.ed.gov #ED475391).

Highlights of this article include:

- ♦ During summer vacation the reading proficiency of students from lower-income families declined, while the reading proficiency of middle-class students improved modestly. Summer vacations created, on average, an annual achievement gap of about three months between rich and poor students. This three-month gap can accumulate to a year and a half between the end of kindergarten and the end of grade 5 (just five summers).
- ♦ The research suggested three remedies for summer learning loss: extending the school year, providing summer school, and modifying the school calendar.
- **Cooper, Harris, Nye, B., Charlton, K., Lindsay, J., & Greathouse, S., (1996). The effects of summer vacation on achievement scores: A narrative and meta-analytic review.** Review of Educational Research, 66 (3), 227-68.

Highlights of this article include:

- ♦ This research synthesis integrated 39 studies examining the effects of summer vacation on standardized achievement test scores. The 39 studies included 13 that could be included in a meta-analysis (a statistical integration) of the results. The meta-analysis indicated that summer learning loss equaled at least one month of instruction as measured by grade level equivalents on standardized test scores – on average, children’s test scores were at least one month lower when they returned to school in the fall than scores were when students left in the spring.

- ◆ Among those studied in the meta-analysis, neither gender, ethnicity, nor IQ appeared to have a consistent influence on summer learning loss. Family economics was also examined. Middle-class children showed gains in reading achievement over the summer, but disadvantaged children showed losses. Reading comprehension scores of both income groups declined, but the scores of disadvantaged students declined more.
- ◆ Authors speculated that income differences could be related to differences in opportunities to practice and learn reading skills over the summer, with more books and reading opportunities available for middle-class children.



- **Davis, Barbara H., (2000). Helping at risk first-graders maintain literacy growth during the summer. *Young Children*, 55 (3), 6-10.**

Highlights of quotes from the article and corresponding citations:

- ◆ “Extended-school programs can provide the additional time needed for maintaining and accelerating literacy development.” Cooter, R., Mills-House, E., Marrin, P., Mathews, B., Campbell, S. & Baker, T. (1999). Family and community involvement: The bedrock of reading success. *The Reading Teacher*, 52 (8), 891-96.
- ◆ “To keep up or catch up with their peers, the children need additional literacy experiences during the summer months.” Cunningham, P.M., & Allington, R.L. (1999). *Classrooms that work: They can all read and write*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Longman.
- ◆ “Teachers lament that during the summer months many at-risk children lose a significant portion of the reading gains they have made during the academic year.” Mikulecky, L.J. (1994). The need for affective literates. In E.H. Cramer & M. Castle (Eds.), *Fostering the love of reading: The affective domain in reading education* (pp. 249-254). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- **Education Commission of the States (ecs) Summer School. (2005). “Helping state leaders shape education policy”** Selected Research and Readings Archives. (www.ecs.org). This website provides information and links about summer reading loss, summer school programs that work and other options to equalize academic achievement.
- **Hennesy-Fiske, Molly. (2004). Stopping the summer slide in children’s reading skills.** Boston Globe. August 1, 2004. “Students who read regularly during the summer retain gains from the previous year, are more likely to progress come September, and are more likely to score better on standardized reading tests.”



-
- **Heyns, Barbara, (1978). Summer learning and the effects of schooling.** New York: Academic Press.

Highlights of this article include:

In her definitive and classic study, Barbara Heyns followed 6th and 7th graders in the Atlanta Public Schools through two school years and the intervening summer. Summary of findings include:

- ◆ The number of books read during the summer is consistently related to academic gains.
- ◆ Children in every income group who read six or more books over the summer gained more in reading achievement than children who did not.
- ◆ The use of the public library during the summer is more predictive of vocabulary gains than from summer school attendance.
- ◆ The major factors determining whether a child will read over the summer were:
 1. Whether the child uses the public library.
 2. The child's sex (girls read more than boys but also watched more TV).
 3. Socioeconomic status.
 4. The distance from home to a library.

- **Johnson, Peter. (2000). Building Effective Programs for Summer Learning.** U.S. Department of Education. http://www.ed.gov/inits/americanreads/sum_build.doc

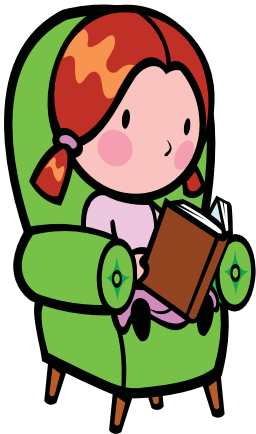
Highlights of this article include:

- ◆ Johnson's report focuses on: 1) Who needs summer programs and 2) Effective ways to reach them.
- ◆ Drawing on research from the Baltimore "Beginning School Study" (Karl Alexander and Doris Entwisle, 1996), he found that "the academic gap between rich and poor children, as measured by test scores, increases throughout the elementary school years...Summer losses in achievement add up year by year and seem to be the major reason why the academic gap between low- and high-income children grows throughout the elementary school years."
- ◆ Since the losses are largest in the summers of the first three to four years of school, "preventing these losses, particularly over the first few summers, could make the gap much smaller."

- **Kim, Jimmy. (2004). Summer reading and the ethnic achievement gap.** Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 9(2), 169-188.

Highlights of this article include:

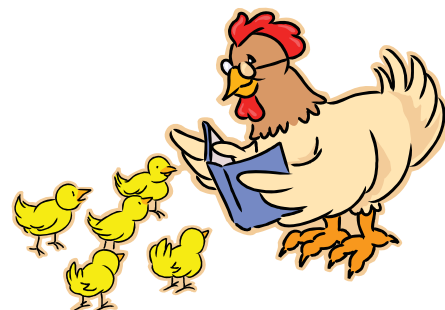
- ◆ Summer learning is more consistently and strongly related to reading as measured by the number of books read and the frequency of leisure reading.
 - ◆ The effect of reading 4 to 5 books during the summer is enough to prevent a decline in reading achievement scores from the spring to the fall.
 - ◆ Children who had easy access to books read more books.



-
- **Krashen, Stephen. (1993). *The power of reading*.** Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.

Highlights of this article include:

- ◆ Krashen’s book shares research demonstrating the value of free voluntary reading in the development of reading, writing and spelling skills. He makes a strong statement: “Free voluntary reading (henceforth FVR) is one of the most powerful tools we have in language education, and...is the missing ingredient in first language ‘language arts’ as well as in intermediate second and foreign language instruction.” The book then reviews studies that illustrate how free voluntary reading benefits student achievement.



- **Locke, Jill. *The Effectiveness of Summer Reading Programs in Public Libraries in the United States*** (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1988).

Highlights of this article include:

- ◆ In her dissertation, Jill Locke evaluated previous studies and conducted her own study which dealt with public library programs. The previous studies showed:
- ◆ Any summer reading plan is better than no plan, but a library reading program is superior. (Cook, 1952)
- ◆ An experimental group that received individual library attention achieved significant gains in reading comprehension, speed and vocabulary when compared to a control group which received no library attention. (Bogensen, 1960)
- ◆ An experimental group showed a gain in ability of seven months after a summer of weekly bookmobile visits and completing a reading record log. (Aasen, 1956)
- ◆ A significant gain in reading ability was noted among first graders participating in the public library summer reading program. (Howes, 1986)

- **McGill-Franzen, Anne & Allington, R. (2001). “Lost Summers: For Some Children, Few Books and Few Opportunities to Read.”** Classroom Leadership On-Line, August 2001, Available at www.ascd.org.

Highlights of this article include:

- ◆ A 1996 University of Missouri study found “an annual reading achievement gap of about 3 months between students from middle- and lower-income families.” The middle-income children’s achievement remained stable or increased.
- ◆ In the elementary grades, “a summer loss of 3 months accumulates to become a gap of 18 months by the end of 6th grade. By middle school, summer reading loss plus an initial achievement lag at the beginning of first grade...produces a cumulative lag of two or more years in reading achievement, even when effective instruction during the school year is available.”
- ◆ According to the National Reading Panel’s 2000 report, hundreds of correlational studies suggest that “The more children read, the better their fluency and comprehension.” (p. 12)
- ◆ The most obvious strategy to prevent summer reading loss for low-income families is to ensure they have a supply of appropriate books to read during the summer.
- ◆ By providing children with 10-20 self-selected children’s books at the end of the regular school year would have a positive impact on the reading development of 25-50 percent of participating children from low-income families.

-
- **Mikulecky, Larry J. (1990). Stopping Summer Learning Loss Among At-Risk Youth.** Journal of Reading 33(7), 516-521. (eric.ed.gov # EJ 406812)

Highlights of this article include:

- ◆ The Summer Training and Education Program is designed to reduce summer learning loss and improve reading skills. The report indicated success in slowing, and in many cases stopping, summer learning losses of at-risk students.

- **Reading is Fundamental. (2005). Keeping Kids Off the Summer Slide - www.rif.org**

Highlights of this article include:

- ◆ “Experts agree that children who read during the summer gain reading skills, while those who do not often slide backward. According to the authors of a November 2002 report from Johns Hopkins Center for Summer Learning: ‘A conservative estimate of lost instructional time is approximately two months or roughly 22 percent of the school year...It’s common for teachers to spend at least a month re-teaching material that students have forgotten over the summer. That month of re-teaching eliminates a month that could have been spent on teaching new information and skills.’
- ◆ Furthermore, they note that family income plays a significant role in determining the magnitude of this summer slide. Students from low-income families “...experience an average summer learning loss in reading achievement of over two months.” Not only do these students suffer greater sliding during the summer, they also experience cumulative effects of greater learning loss each summer.
- ◆ Sociologists Karl Alexander and Doris Entwisle have shown that the cumulative effect of summer learning differences is a primary cause of widening achievement gaps between students of lower and higher socioeconomic levels. Research demonstrates that while student achievement for both middle and lower-income students improves at similar rates during the school year, low-income students experience cumulative summer learning losses throughout their elementary school years.

- **Schewe, Audrey. (2006). Put a Plug in the Summer Brain Drain.**

<http://www.cnn.com/2006/EDUCATION/06/29/summer.learning.loss/index.html>

Highlights of this article include:

- ◆ The article provides background on the phenomenon called “summer learning loss” and explains why it is important that consideration be given to what students are going to do over the summer months. “If professional athletes or musicians took a three-month break from any type of training or practice, you would expect them to come back to their sport or to their orchestra experiencing a lag in their performance, and it would take a while to get back into performance shape. And while parents lament the loss of lazy days of summer, experts emphasize that learning doesn’t stop just because the school year ends...”

Super Summer Success

