

Chief's Summer Reading Challenge Program Overview

THE ISSUE

No matter what type of academic calendar a state or school district uses, U.S. students attend school every year for an average of 180 days. During that time, most students achieve some level of growth in their reading abilities. Then summer break starts, the formal learning process ends, and, instead of progressing, students start to slip in their abilities. Research shows that all students experience some level of learning loss—commonly referred to as summer slide—when they do not engage in educational activities during the summer. Perhaps, what is even more alarming is that summer slide impacts low-income students the most—those who generally reside in low-literacy environments where daily reading is not encouraged or modeled and appropriate reading materials are not available. Research indicates that two thirds of the achievement gap between low-income children and their more affluent peers can be explained by twelve contiguous summers of lost learning activities.¹ Figure 1 illustrates how summer loss affects low-income students.²

THE OBJECTIVE

CCSSO, in partnership with MetaMetrics®, is coordinating a national, state-led summer reading initiative to bolster student reading achievement during summer break. The “Chief’s Summer Reading Challenge” will raise national awareness of the summer loss epidemic, share compelling research on the importance of personalized reading activities, and provide access to a variety of free resources to support targeted reading and the initiative as a whole.

THE CHALLENGE

The “Chief’s Summer Reading Challenge” initiative consists of three primary components:

1) Comprehensive State-Level Commitment and Coordination

The initiative must be a statewide effort, led and coordinated by top education leaders (preferably, in conjunction with the Governor’s Office), that adds value to new and existing programs by private and public organizations.

2) More Personalized Reading Based on Ability Level and Interests

The initiative must support the development of personalized reading lists, as well as the free resources that allow readers to create these lists and locate their book selections at the public library. One such resource is MetaMetrics’ “Find a Book” utility, which is already being utilized by a number of states. Additional tools include Barnes & Noble’s Lexile® Reading Level Wizard and Scholastic’s Teacher Book Wizard.

3) Public Awareness of the Research Supporting the Importance of Summer Reading

The initiative must raise public awareness of summer slide research and embrace more effective methods for combating this epidemic (for learners at all reading ability and socio-economic levels). For example, research by Harvard University’s James Kim demonstrated that if children read high-interest, ability-appropriate books during the summer their reading skills can grow as much as their peers who attended summer school.³

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

CCSSO will recommend practical, cost-effective strategies to help leadership teams implement a successful summer reading program that incorporates the three components above. These strategies will include real-world examples from state education agencies and Governors’ Offices which have effectively implemented summer reading programs that encouraged matching students with high-interest, ability-appropriate books.

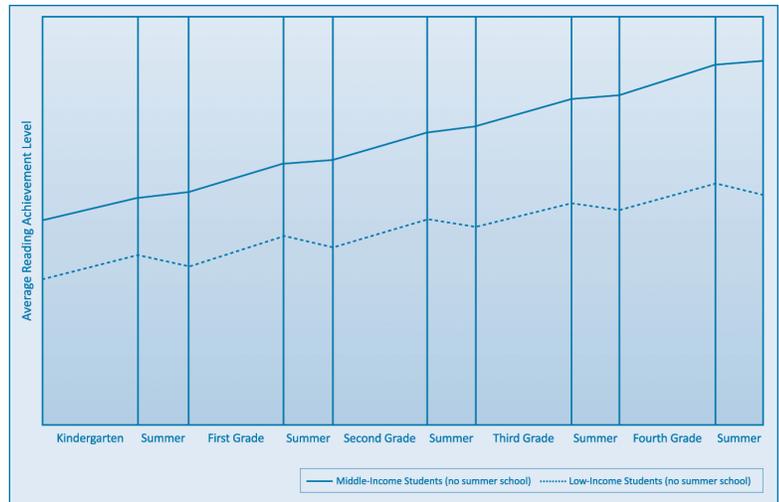
¹ Alexander, K. L., Entwisle D. R., & Olson L. S. (2007). Lasting consequences of the summer learning gap. *American Sociological Review*, 72, 167-180.

² Fairchild, R. McLaughlin, B. & Brady, J. (2006). “Making the Most of Summer: A Handbook on Effective Summer Programming and Thematic Learning.” Baltimore, MD: Center for Summer Learning.

³ Kim, J.S. (2005). Project READS (Reading Enhances Achievement During Summer): Results from a Randomized Field Trial of a Voluntary Summer Reading Intervention. Paper presented at Princeton University, Education Research Section, November 7, 2005.

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Figure 1. Summary of Reading Achievement Trajectories



For more information on Lexile measures and
The Challenge visit www.Lexile.com/Chiefs-Challenge.

