

Kyra Zirlin

Roundtable Presentation

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Summer Reading

Introduction

Summer reading is a collection of programs across both public and school libraries. It is a wonderful and proven method to encourage youth to use libraries during the summer, maintain reading habits outside of school, and foster positive interactions between youth and libraries. The main goal is to prevent the “summer slide” (National Education Association, n.d.) through student engagement with libraries, their resources, and primarily—books. In order to promote summer reading and encourage participation, libraries often embrace specific themes. These can range from video games to the ocean, recycling, and even rocks. One of the major draws of summer reading is the fun and engaging way libraries market these programs. Along with these themes, libraries provide recommended summer reading lists, which may be sourced from various places such as the ALA, review publications, or librarians themselves. Overall, summer reading is an essential way to keep youth engaged in positive educational practices throughout the summer.

Key Concepts

What is Summer Reading?

Summer reading refers to programs held during the summer months when school is out, with the intention of encouraging students to use the library, read books, and prevent the “summer slide.” A recent study, as explored by Ashley Austrew in her article for *Scholastic* (*How to Prevent Your Kids from Losing What They Learned in School During Summer Vacation*), found that “children in 3rd to 5th grades also showed that students lost, on average, about 20 percent of their school-year gains in reading and 27 percent of their school-year gains in math during summer break.” This is a significant loss, which summer reading programs aim to combat. Summer reading programs often contain a reading list given to students, reading goals, completion rewards, and sometimes even events or activities to go with the programming.

Why is it Beneficial?

Summer reading not only encourages students to read outside of school, which helps sustain their reading skills throughout the summer, but it also fosters relationships between youth and libraries. Summer reading may attract students who have never interacted with a library before, or it may help them discover the joy of reading. Moreover, by encouraging students to read for pleasure during the summer months, libraries and schools can foster a love of reading that extends beyond just academic needs. This is especially crucial in developing independent, self-motivated learners. When students have the freedom to choose what they read, they are more likely to develop a personal interest in reading, which can lead to long-term academic success. Overall, it is a proven strategy to

prevent reading deterioration in students during the summer, promote engagement, and create healthy relationships around reading.

How Does It Work?

Summer reading programs often begin with a theme, such as nature, dinosaurs, music, or airplanes—a key component for engagement (Reed & Gates, 2020). From there, reading lists are compiled and distributed to students. These lists may come from trusted sources such as the ALA, or they may be created by the librarian using review journals, the ALA, and other resources. Summer reading lists are widespread and easily accessible—even Barnes & Noble, for example, publishes its own list every year. These programs also typically involve goals. Students might be asked to read for 20 minutes a day, finish five books over the summer, or even read one page every day. In many cases, completing these goals is rewarded with prizes, such as a journal. Additionally, students often receive a small reward just for signing up, such as a bookmark. While summer reading programs require significant planning, they are undeniably valuable.

Bibliography

American Library Association. (n.d.). *Benefits - Summer reading programs*. LibGuides.

<https://libguides.ala.org/summer-reading/benefits>

- This ALA Resource Guide offers a wonderful overview of Summer Reading, why libraries do it, the benefits, and what summer reading can look like. While offering

great definitions, this resource guide also lists additional sources and articles on summer reading.

Association, N. E. (n.d.). Get Serious About Summer Reading | NEA.

<https://www.nea.org/resource-library/get-serious-about-summer-reading>

- This collection of resources by the NEA (National Education Association) delves into why summer reading is essential to combat the “summer slide” of students. Moreover, it offers various articles all offering important information on summer reading.

Austrew, A. (2023, May 16). *Summer slide: What it is and how to prevent it*. Scholastic.

<https://www.scholastic.com/parents/books-and-reading/raise-a-reader-blog/summer-slide.html>

- This article from Scholastic explains the dreaded “summer slide” that can happen to students. It offers solid insights on how to prevent a summer slide, as well as other resources and studies on research done about this phenomena.

Berkman, C. B. (2021). Summer reading rewards. *Reading Teacher*, 74(6), 825.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1962>

- This article is a quick read that offers a little snapshot of an educator planning summer reading, questioning the rewards system. While it does not contain a whole lot of information, it is a beneficial read that encourages the reader to think about the various facets of summer reading, its pros and cons, and how one may want to design their own program.

Borman, G. D., Boulay, M., & Borman, G. D. (2004). *Summer learning: Research, policies, and programs* (1st ed.). Erlbaum. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410610362>

- Although older, this book still contains important information on summer reading. In particular, it covers the general research on summer reading and its effects on “summer slides”, as well as best practices and examples of summer reading programs.

Reed, D. K., & Gates, C. (2020). Don't fail to plan for summer reading interventions. *Preventing School Failure*, 64(3), 223–229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2020.1726274>

- This article delves into how school librarians and other education professionals can plan for a successful summer reading program. It goes into great detail, even touching on how to budget for the many, many steps it takes to plan a summer reading program.

Slade, T. S., Piper, B., Kaunda, Z., King, S., & Ibrahim, H. (2017). Is ‘summer’ reading loss universal? Using ongoing literacy assessment in Malawi to estimate the loss from grade-transition breaks. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 12(4), 461–485. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745499917740657>

- While this study's primary focus is on summer reading in Malawi, it also delves into summer reading in the US extensively. Particularly, it discusses the “summer slide” in important detail.

Stein, M. L. (2017). Supporting the summer reading of urban youth: An evaluation of the Baltimore SummerREADS program. *Education and Urban Society*, 49(1), 29-52.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124516630595>

- This study analyzes how summer reading affected a population of low-income students in Baltimore. It is an interesting read that jumps into some realities of the effects of summer readings—the ways in which it was successful and the ways in which it failed for this group of students.