

SPOTLIGHT:

LEXINGTON SCHOOLS "FACE" LITERACY NEEDS IN THE SUMMER AND BEYOND



THE ISSUE AT LARGE

In Lexington County, South Carolina, several elementary schools were experiencing a disconnect between the classroom and the home. The opportunity to bridge the gap came with the implementation of Scholastic's My Books Summer program. But their literacy efforts haven't stopped there. Through family and community engagement (FACE), the district is addressing the issue beyond the summer break.

SCOPE OF SUMMER READING IMPLEMENTATION



5
Title I
Schools



11,000+
PreK–Grade
12 Students



98,353
Books
Distributed

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

School districts across the nation struggle to engage children during the summer months. Lexington County School District One found an effective solution. Since 2010 it has implemented the *My Books Summer* take-home program. Now all five of their Title I schools provide every child with the resources to own a book (or two) during the summer, and every parent the steps to create quality time through reading.

As success comes, goals evolve. What began as a stepping stone to building a connection with parents has blossomed into the blueprint for shaping a community of literacy.

SET UP FOR SUCCESS

Recognizing that all communities are unique in their own way, many schools have customized their summer reading programs to fit the needs, interests, and themes of the students and parents they serve.

Book Customization

Saxe Gotha Elementary School has used the customization method to implement its summer reading program for the past several years. Premade packets are designed to match the reading levels of the students, and the media specialist makes sure that they get books that match their interests. The managers of the distribution process implement input from those who know the children's reading habits better than anyone else—their teachers. Because of that diligence, every child received a desirable book at his or her grade level.

Self-Selection

Gilbert Primary School decided to implement their resources in a different way. After trying the customization method, their leadership decided to migrate to the self-selection model. This approach allows for the child, with guidance from a specialist, to browse through the books and decide which ones they want for themselves. Both students and parents appreciated this method the most, and as praise for the program spread through the community, the school added self-selection distributions for the winter and spring breaks as well.

"We set up the self-selection of the take home like a book fair. Students select books based on their reading levels with the assistance of our intervention team."

—Michelle Smith, Forts Pond Elementary

"FACE" THE ISSUE

Family and community engagement has been the key to the success of Lexington

“Self-selection is powerful.”

—Mylisa Apperson, Gilbert Primary 3rd year implementing summer reading at the school



County’s outreach. Red Bank Elementary promoted the program with a family night with books, popcorn, and a pajama party. This event turned out to be a massive success with a huge turnout of parents and their children.

Red Bank Elementary, is also looking to establish an automated phone call home that would ask questions about the book that the child has taken home for the summer. As a form of incentive, children and their parents can drop off the answers to those questions in order to retrieve another book.

Forts Pond hosted a literacy workshop for grades 3–5. Parents were given tips for promoting literacy at home while their children engaged in literacy activities nearby. At the end of the workshop parents and their children selected a book together, reinforcing the role of the parents as partners in their children’s literacy journey.

One grateful parent shared at a family literacy session that she hadn’t understood the importance of being a reading model because her parents did not have that knowledge when she was younger. Thanks to this workshop, she and her child received the first book that they would have in their home.

SHARING WHAT WORKS AND WORKING TOGETHER

The program has become a social phenomenon in the Lexington community. There have even been book exchanges among children because they want to share the stories they have read with their peers.

When the program first started, the schools did not have set parameters; they just wanted their students to read more at home. What makes the program so effective is that each school has learned what works for them as principals improve quality across the board and implement feedback from parents.

The program has allowed leaders to be flexible in planning and implementation to “FACE” the challenges of their particular community. The ability to build and expand as you go allows staff to raise the level of engagement with parents. It works for the schools! It works for the coordinators! It works for the community!