



What Research Says About Summer Reading

- The summer learning shortfall experienced by low-income children in the elementary grades has consequences that reverberate throughout their schooling and can affect whether a child ultimately earns a high school diploma and continues on to college. (Alexander et al. 2007)
- Children who read more in the summer do better in reading in the fall, as long as two factors are present: access to books that match the reader's ability level and interests and a focus on comprehension that is monitored by an adult, parent, or teacher. (Kim 2004)
- Two-thirds of the achievement gap between lower- and higher-income youth can be explained by unequal access to summer learning opportunities. (Alexander et al. 2007)
- The research shows that sending books home with children over the summer yields greater achievement gain and is less expensive and less extensive than providing summer school or engaging in comprehensive school reform. (Allington and McGill-Franzen 2008)
- Several longitudinal studies conclude that the effects of a summer learning program can endure for at least two years after the student's participation. (Jacob and Lefgren 2004; Matsudaira 2008; McCombs, Kirby, and Mariano 2009)
- Creating incentives for students by offering a range of fun activities can be an effective strategy for maximizing out-of-school time and summer program participation. (McCombs et al. 2011; Lauver, Little, and Weiss 2004)
- All young people experience learning losses when they don't engage in educational activities during the summer. Research spanning more than 100 years shows that these 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 and Alexander 1992; Cooper 1996; Downey et al. 2004)
- Programs that included a parental involvement component were associated with more positive achievement than those that did not. (Cooper et al. 2000)
- Parents consistently cite summer as the most difficult time to ensure that their children have productive things to do. (Duffett et al. 2004)

Implementing a Summer Reading Program Can:

- Provide windows of opportunity for early readers
- Promote independent reading and heighten motivation
- Build text-rich environments and foster a reading culture at home
- Enhance language acquisition for English language learners
- Prepare students for college and careers

What the Research Shows

Early Literacy Findings

Learning to read represents the weaving together of multiple skills, understandings, and orientations, many of which have their developmental origins in infancy and toddlerhood. (Snow and Juel 2005; Pinnell and Fountas 2011)

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that pediatricians encourage parents to read aloud daily, beginning as early as six months of age. (2014) Dr. Pamela High, lead author of the AAP policy, explains that "... those 15–20 minutes spent reading with a child can be the best part of the day. It's a joyful way to build child-parent relationships and set a child on the pathway to developing early literacy skills."

Independent and Pleasure Reading Findings

"Independent reading is an essential practice, one that develops background knowledge, improves fluency and comprehension, heightens motivation, increases reading achievement, and helps students broaden their vocabulary." (Miller and Moss 2013)

Children who read for pleasure are likely to do significantly better at school than their peers who rarely read. Sullivan and Brown (2013) demonstrate that pleasure reading is linked to increased cognitive progress over time. They recommend that educators and policy makers "support and encourage children's reading in their leisure time."

Home Literacy Findings

In general, books help establish a reading or "scholarly culture" in the home—one that persists from generation to generation and is largely independent of education and class—creating a "taste for books," and promoting the skills and knowledge that foster both literacy and numeracy lead to lifelong academic advantages. (Evans et al. 2010)

Parents' interactive strategies, particularly the quality of the language that they share with their children and the books they read aloud, are strongly related to their children's language development. (Hart and Risley 2003; Landry and Smith 2006)

English Language Learners Findings

Free voluntary reading or independent reading is one of the most powerful tools we have in language education. Research suggests that the acquisition of English as a second language is enhanced by native language use. Therefore effective teachers, to the extent possible, provide English language learners with trade books in both languages. (Goldenberg 2011; Freeman and Freeman 2007; Pilgreen 2000)

We acquire language when we understand what we hear and what we read—also known as "comprehensible input." The ability to understand and use correct grammar and vocabulary in a second language comes largely from reading and listening. Students pay attention to this linguistic input when it's compelling enough to catch and engage their interest. (Crawford and Krashen 2007; Mah 2014; Mora 2014; Moua 2014; Rami 2014; Wong Fillmore 2014)

College and Career Readiness Findings

By the time both students from well-off families and those of lesser means are ready to graduate from high school, years of summers without access to books has added up to a four-year reading achievement gap. As a result, high school seniors from low-income families are performing at about the same level as eighth-graders from families with means. (National Center for Education Statistics 2010)

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