SUMMER READING RECONSIDERED: THINK PEOPLE, NOT PRIZES

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Summer Slide

- SS contributes to the achievement gap between learners of different socio-economic backgrounds. (Alexander, Entwistle, & Olsen, 2007)
- Disadvantaged students lost considerably more learning than their peers over the summer months. (Heyns, 1978; Cooper, Nye, Linsey, et al., 1996)
- The most accurate predictor of reading improvement is time devoted to reading independently. (Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding, 1988; Cunningham, 2001)
Can SRP help beat summer slide?

One-Two Punch: Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivators. Let’s have a closer look...
Let’s Talk Motivation

**Intrinsic**
- Comes from inside the individual
- Pursuing an activity for its own sake or the enjoyment it provides

**Extrinsic**
- Comes from outside the individual
- Can be punishments or rewards

How do public libraries influence/use intrinsic and extrinsic motivators?
Current Research
Extrinsic Motivators

- Have no impact or a negative impact on children’s motivation to read
- Competitive endeavor (Smith and Westberg, 2011)
- When successful, they are in the form of literacy incentives (Kutsch, 2012; Marinak, 2007; McGaha & Igo, 2012).
Current Research
Intrinsic Motivators

- Has much more positive impact on recreational reading
- Read often, work toward becoming better readers, and value reading or belonging to a community of readers
- Appealing to a child’s interest and providing them with a variety of choice (De Naeghel, Van Keer, Vansteenkiste, & Rosseel, 2012; Huang, 2012; Neugebauer, 2013; Strommen & Mates, 2004)
Girls experience more intrinsic motivation for reading than boys (De Naeghel, Van Keer, Vansteenkiste, & Rosseel, 2012; McGeown, Goodwin, Henderson, & Wright, 2012; Putnam, 2007; Shaulskiy, Capps, Justice, & Anderman, 2014)

Teacher’s positive impact (Strommen & Mates, 2004; Williams & Hall, 2010)
How do intrinsic and extrinsic motivations play a part in your SRP?
So how do we know if SRP motivates kids to read?
Measuring Success

- Number of books read
- Number of hours or minutes read
- Parent questionnaires/surveys
- Number of children who sign up and/or complete
- Circulation statistics
- Some programs trying to test students who participate to see if reading improves
Problems with these Measures

- Self-selection bias. Would these children be reading anyway?
- The real questions, then, have to do with whether SRP is motivating children to read and how we might attract those children who do not generally read and/or participate in these types of activities.
- How do we find out how SRP is impacting reading and why children elect to participate or not?
What are you measuring?
What is that telling you?
What kids told us.
Our Research

- 3 sets of focus groups in North Carolina schools
- Fourth graders
- Divided into students who had participated in a summer reading program and students who had not participated
- 30-45 minute group interviews with a standard set of predetermined questions
Research Questions

Our study was designed to answer these questions:

- What are the reading habits and motivational forces of students who participate in public library summer reading programs?
- What are the reading habits and motivational forces of students who do not participate in public library summer reading programs?
- What would motivate the students who do not participate to take part?
Results

- Much smaller number of participants (n=8) in the sample than non-participants (n=26)
- Readers versus Non-Readers
  When asked about summer leisure activities, 3 participants mentioned reading and 12 non participants mentioned reading
Number of Books Read

Participants

- Zero to Five: 1
- Six to Ten: 1
- Eleven to Twenty: 1
- Twenty-one to Fifty: 3.5
- More than Fifty: 2
- I don't know: 1

Non-Participants

- Zero to Five: 1
- Six to Ten: 8
- Eleven to Twenty: 4
- Twenty-one to Fifty: 5
- More than Fifty: 9
- I don't know: 1
Kids and the Library
Non-Participants Did Not Sign Up for SRP Because

- Too busy doing other things—4
- Didn’t know about it—3
- I’m already a good reader—2
- Parents may not allow me—1
## Non-Participants and Library Visits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for visiting the library</th>
<th>Reasons for not visiting the library</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To get books — 3</td>
<td>No time; other obligations — 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because I like to read — 2</td>
<td>My parents can’t or won’t take me — 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To read in the quiet — 1</td>
<td>Lost my library card — 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because I like the library — 1</td>
<td>Issues or problems going on in my life — 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boredom — 1</td>
<td>I don’t like to read — 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To use the computer — 1</td>
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Participants and SRP

Why did you sign up?
- Parents made me—2
- Boredom—2
- Because I like to read—1
- To improve reading—1
- Because I’ve done it before—1

What did you like about SRP?
- Prizes—5
- Reading enjoyment—4
- Book selection/access—3
- Choice of reading—3
- Vocabulary improvement—2
- Free books—1
- Really nice staff—1
What would motivate you to read more?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Non-participants</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning new things—4</td>
<td>Prizes/Treats—9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prizes—2</td>
<td>Books I like—8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books I like—1</td>
<td>Money—2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A good place/time to read alone—2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning new things—2</td>
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Where do we go from here?
Conclusions and Take-Aways

- Advertising and marketing are crucial.
- Aim at parents as well as children—choose messages accordingly.
- Don’t worry if you can’t afford big prizes. Small works too. Literacy-related prizes are great.
- Emphasize library collections, readers’ advisory, and special programs/events even more than prizes.
- Work on developing relationships between library staff and young patrons.
- Consider alternative approaches and models – free your thinking
Some Ideas…

- Moving more in the direction of summer learning
- Counting experiences and library visits vs. accumulation of books read
- Prizes being more experiential designed for more learning
- All of this is evolving process
What are your long-term goals?
What are your short-term goals (objectives)?
What strategies are you using to meet those goals?
How do you know if they are working?
How can you tell this story?
Logic Model Template

Strategies/Activities (What I do)

Objectives (What I hope will happen in the short-term)

Goal(s) (What I hope will happen in the long-term)

Measuring Success—how will you evaluate these objectives/goals? What will count as success for you?

How can you describe and communicate this success as community impact?


References