



SAMPLER

SUMMER LEARNING, NOT SUMMER LOSS: IT'S A PARTNERSHIP

**Summer is here. Classes are done.
Students can learn while having some fun.
With family involvement, more students get back
To the new school year on the right track.**

Each summer, students and teachers look forward to a well-deserved break from school. It is important for students to have time to unwind, relax, and enjoy summer activities. But, students also can learn many things during the vacation.

Unlike classroom routines, the summer opens unique opportunities for enriching, applying, and extending skills learned during the school year. Some students have a “stay-cation” with time to play and learn at home. Others attend summer camp, take trips with families, and schedule other visits, experiences, and adventures. At home and on the road, students have many opportunities to use school skills and learn something new. Students may read books, write journals, compose stories about their experiences, critique movies and TV shows, draw or paint, and conduct other engaging projects.

Students may forget reading and math skills if they avoid them during the summer. Studies show that the stakes are high for children who do not read, write, or use math for two months. Struggling students are most likely to suffer summer learning loss and require remedial work when school starts again. By contrast, students who practice, use, and add skills through summer reading and other experiences are more likely to maintain skills for the new school year.

Summer reading is particularly helpful for maintaining literacy skills from spring to fall. Reading is much like exercising—you can lose what you don't use! Partnerships of schools with parents, public libraries, and other groups can keep students on the right path through the summer months. Some reading experts suggest that if students read six to eight books during the vacation, they will avoid summer reading loss.

Teachers, district leaders, and school and public librarians (often with student input) may develop grade-specific reading lists. Then, students (with parents' guidance) can choose books that interest

them. Students also may attend library story hours.

Teachers may create summer learning packets to encourage students to practice key math skills or conduct interactive family projects during the summer. Family photos and stories may be the basis for fun learning activities. Students should be asked to submit their summer projects or packets to the teacher of their new grade level for extra credit in the fall. This reinforces the value of summer learning to students and to teachers.

Community partners also may sponsor summer learning opportunities for children and families. For example, high school students may volunteer or work as interns in businesses or other community locations. Clubs, Ys, museums, and other community groups may offer free sessions to children and families to spark interest and learning through reading, math, music, art, dance, and other activities.

Enrich Classroom Teaching

The ten activities in this *Sampler* were conducted across grade levels by schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) in the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS). Other schools and individual teachers may adopt or adapt the activities to strengthen partnerships with their own students' families during the summer months.

For example, teachers at any grade level may adapt Summer Reading Program and Poetry with Parents to set plans for summer reading and writing before the school year ends. Or, grade level teams of teachers could adapt Holiday Scholars to help guide students at risk of summer reading loss to enjoy reading and maintain skills during the vacation.

See more activities in NNPS books of *Promising Partnership Practices* at www.partnershipschools.org in the section Success Stories.

This *Sampler* was developed by Marsha D. Greenfeld and Joyce L. Epstein.
© Baltimore: National Network of Partnership Schools, Johns Hopkins University, 2016.

NNPS thanks **MetLife Foundation** for its support to improve programs of family and community involvement.





Review of Research Summer Time for Learning Gains or Losses

Joyce L. Epstein, Ph.D., Director NNPS

Research conducted over several decades reveals contrasting patterns of summer learning for diverse groups of students. Studies confirm that students from families with low incomes tend to lose an average of two months of reading/literacy skills each summer. These students require remedial work at the start of the new school year, which delays their progress in learning at each grade level. By contrast, students from families who are economically advantaged tend to maintain or gain skills by reading books and conducting literacy-linked activities in the summer. Other studies show that, on average, regardless of family background, many students forget some math skills over the summer. Math teachers typically review math learning at the start of the year (Alexander et al., 2007; Cooper, 1996; Heyns, 1978; Kim, 2013).

This picture is complicated by the fact that, typically, students in families with low and high incomes learn at about the same pace during the school year. Most students gain about one year's skills in one year's time. However, summer reading losses for struggling students accumulate and contribute to serious achievement gaps between successful and vulnerable students. Weak reading skills affect students' success in other subjects. Students who fall too far behind in reading are at risk of dropping out before they graduate from high school (Alexander et al., 2007).

Studies indicate that summer programs at school and at home boost students' reading skills and reduce learning losses, regardless of family income level (Kim, 2013). Positive summer learning experiences also have been shown to boost students' confidence, motivation to learn, and commitment to stay in school to complete high school.

The confirmed results raise important questions for school improvement. What can be done to eliminate the *summer slide*? What promising practices would produce more equitable summer learning experiences for more students (Augustine, McCombs, & Schwartz, 2013)? Some districts offer summer school or enrichment programs for students in low-income communities. However, nationally, these programs serve only about 10% of students in need. Summer camps—often short term—serve another small group of students in low-income communities. Many students, then, are unsupervised and without resources for summer reading and enriched learning experiences.

One study found that parents felt uninformed about *how* to promote their children's learning during the summer (Duffett, et al., 2005). Other researchers reported less learning loss when activities were linked to students' interests and when parents were guided to share a story or activity with their children (Cooper, et al., 1996; National Summer Learning Association). These findings raise questions of reform. We need to know how educators can prepare parents and community partners to guide summer learning experiences for all students from preschool through high school.

Successful interventions provide students with high-interest books at appropriate reading levels, or well-designed activities and projects that use sports, science, music, art, photography, technology, and other subjects to promote reading, writing, graphic stories, art portfolios, and other products that demonstrate literacy learning (National Summer Learning Association). Students also respond to options for extra credit (e.g., read and critique six books during the summer). These activities may involve parents and other family members in discussions of stories, presentations of videos, and other useful and enjoyable exchanges.

Goals for more and better summer learning for students in economically-disadvantaged communities can be met, but only with good planning during the school year to prepare engaging and productive summer learning activities that are closely connected to learning standards at all grade levels. Committed leadership, teamwork by teachers, and the involvement of parents, community partners (e.g., libraries, colleges and universities, business groups, political bodies, and other CBOs), and students are needed to ensure captivating content that motivates students' to complete activities during the summer. It also is necessary to collect and place a value on students' work at the start of the new school year.

With confirmed findings that identify serious inequalities in students' summer learning experiences, resulting cumulative achievement gaps, and benefits of well-designed summer interventions with family and community involvement, it should be possible—indeed, imperative—to take actions that set more students on the path to success in school.

References

- Alexander, K., Entwisle, D., and Olson, L. (2007). Lasting consequences of the summer learning gap. *American Sociological Review*, 72, 167-180.
- Augustine, C. H., McCombs, J. S., Schwartz, H. L. (2013). *Getting to work on summer learning*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND.
- Cooper, H., Nye, B., Charlton, K., Lindsay, J., & Greathouse, S. (1996). The effects of summer vacation on achievement test scores: A narrative and meta-analytic review. *Review of Educational Research*, 66, 227-268.
- Duffett, A., Johnson, J., Farkas, S., Kung, S., & Ott, A. (2005). *All work and no play? Listening to what kids and parents really want from out-of-school time*. New York, NY: Public Agenda.
- Heyns, B. (1978). *Summer learning and the effects of schooling*. New York: Basic Books.
- Kim, J. (2013). The effects of summer reading on low-income children's literacy achievement from kindergarten to grade 8: A meta-analysis of classroom and home interventions. *Review of Educational Research*, 83, 386-431.

Also see: National Summer Learning Association at <http://www.summerlearning.org>
Reading is Fundamental at <http://www.rif.org>



ALVIN ISD BOOK BUS

ALVIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
ALVIN, TX

Summer reading loss may occur if students put down their books for vacation. The summer slide in reading skills mostly affects struggling students, who are less likely to read for pleasure. When reading skills slide back during the summer, students need remedial work when school starts to get back on the right track. This further limits their growth and progress.

In Alvin ISD, the district Leader for Partnerships was aware of these reading risks and wanted to bring summer reading for fun and learning to students' neighborhoods. Not all students have books at home or time with parents or transportation to go to a public library. The leaders hoped the Alvin ISD Book Bus would keep more students reading and learning all summer. In addition, the Book Bus would keep school staff talking with parents at every bus stop.

With the Superintendent's support, the district's Family Engagement Coordinator created the Book Bus Committee with many colleagues. The Alvin ISD Education Foundation was an instrumental partner with a donation for phase one of this project. The Department of Federal and Special Programs provided funds to pay staff salaries during the summer and to equip the bus with iPad minis, laptops, award winning books, and other academic supplies for students to use when they visited the bus.

Many colleagues helped this project. Alvin ISD's Maintenance Department picked up 14,000 books donated during a book drive at schools. District librarians sorted and catalogued the books for the Book Bus. The Transportation Department provided an unused, but safe, bus that was renovated by students at the Career and Technology Center. The Communications Department designed art for the outside of the bus and for advertising materials.

Students across the district suggested and voted for the name of this program. The development of this project was a social media phenomenon on Facebook and Twitter. TV Channel 13 reported the debut of the Book Bus. During the last week of school, flyers were sent home with students' report cards that showed where and when the Book Bus would stop in all neighborhoods.

This summer, the Book Bus will visit 12 neighborhoods and community parks where Alvin's students live. At each stop, students will be able to check out their favorite books. A librarian will be available to read stories and facilitate other academic activities, such as literacy games and crafts. Bilingual books and bilingual staff will be available. At this writing (June), over 1500 students and 300 parents came to the bus stops for books.

The collaboration of so many district leaders, departments, teachers, librarians, students, parents, and community organizations was amazing. It is clear that everyone is invested in the success of this project to contribute to the success of Alvin's students. As the President of the Board of Trustees stated, "Today was a very exciting day for Alvin ISD, because we all got to see the start of a reading program that shows the commitment that the district has made to provide excellent programs and opportunities for our students to reach their full potential." In this district it is clear that all stakeholders have taken up the fight to prevent summer reading loss.

Ana Pasarella
Parent Involvement Coordinator
apasarella@alvinisd.net

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

Birdneck Celebrates Christmas in July

*Birdneck Elementary School
Virginia Beach, Virginia*

What does Santa do in July? He goes to the beach, of course – Virginia Beach. And while he’s there, the jolly fellow takes some time away from sand and surf to visit students at Birdneck Elementary, along with their parents and teachers.

Knowing that Santa Claus is coming to their beach, the school administrators and its Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) planned Birdneck Celebrates Christmas in July, now an annual community celebration that stresses the importance of summer reading. This was Santa’s second summer visit.

Shunning his sleigh and fur-trimmed red suit, Santa arrived in a Jeep driven by the Grinch. Santa was played by the Birdneck principal, wearing an old-fashioned bathing suit, swim cap and flip flops. He climbed onto a mobile stage to the cheers of hundreds of students and the strains of Christmas carols.

Santa came to the children’s neighborhood. Two bus loads of students and summer school staff arrived at the Wadsworth Housing development, while other families poured out of their apartments. The Birdneck staff also invited 150 students from a nearby summer school at Cooke Elementary. Cooke’s principal jumped at the invitation: “This was something fun to break up the summer and to get children to read,” he said.

Santa led the students in singing “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.” After reading “‘Twas the Night Before Christmas,” Santa praised the children’s accomplishments in school. He added how important it was to keep reading, even during the summer. Students then lined up for individual visits with Santa.

Each child received a book, which Birdneck teachers helped them select. Their younger siblings also received books to plant the seeds of reading early. The children cooled off with popsicles during the celebration. Before Santa arrived, members of faculty, staff and administration greeted families from the neighborhood.

Christmas in July resulted because the school’s ATP wanted to help promote summer reading by adding books to the students’ home libraries. The practice supports the school improvement goal of increasing reading and language arts scores on state tests, especially among minority students.

The event also strengthened school and family relationships, as the staff spent time in the children’s neighborhood. The fact that school teachers and administrators took time in the summer to decorate the stage, distribute treats and books, and greet students and families showed the community how much they care about their students and about reading.

ATP members joined the housing development director, Birdneck’s Parent Involvement Coordinator, and other faculty and staff members to plan and conduct Christmas in July. Advertising began at the end of the school year with a notice in the June issue of the parent newsletter. Organizers also mailed fliers to all Birdneck families, posted notices in the housing office and throughout the neighborhood.

The school used Title I funds to buy books, treats, costumes, and other expenses. The cost was about \$800.

The event was a great success. “I got to meet Santa,” said one 5-year-old, who added proudly, “I read 15 minutes every day.” Teachers expected to see the benefits of summer reading when the students returned to school.

Birdneck Elementary will continue scheduling Christmas in July and hopes to add something new and exciting each year. And what was that sound as Santa headed back toward the beach? It sounded a little like: “Happy summer to all, and to all a good book!”

*Wendee Long
Parent Involvement Coordinator
(757) 437-4819, ext. 53448
wendee.long@vbschools.com*

BOOKS IN THE PARK (District Activity)

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF ALTOONA ALTOONA, WI

Leaders in the School District of Altoona were aware that some of its most academically vulnerable students lost reading skills over the summer. The district wanted to stop—and even reverse—the summer slide with Books in the Park. This program invites all students to come periodically to a neighborhood park for fun events and free books for summer reading. It also pairs struggling students with a reading mentor for extra encouragement to read books all summer.

To ensure that struggling readers keep reading for pleasure during the summer, the Title I director developed a list of students who would benefit from reading mentors. Teachers and the Title I director assigned staff and community volunteers to serve as mentors. They were asked to contact their mentees four times during the summer with phone calls of about 15-20 minutes each.

Students who had parents' permission to participate in the program chose four books to read. The district Reading Specialist helped the students select books at their reading levels. The reading mentors delivered the books to their students. They also contacted their students one or two days prior to each Books in the Park giveaway to encourage them to attend.

Books in the Park started as a pilot program in 2010. Two teachers drove to various neighborhoods on specified days and times to distribute free books. It was hoped that if students had books at home, they would read them.

In 2011, the district added the mentorship component. The RTI (Response to Intervention) model undergirded this practice. All students were encouraged to attend Books in the Park (Tier 1-a universal, preventative activity). The reading specialists and Title I director visited every elementary school class before the summer break to stress the importance of summer reading

and to invite all students to attend Books in the Park.

At-risk students were assigned mentors (Tier 2-a targeted service for extra help). Teacher mentors tended to exceed the required time commitments. Some even read books weekly with their mentees. The teachers did not want their students to lose the reading skills that they had worked so hard to develop during the school year.

The main cost of Books in the Park was for the books given to students. That was offset by financial and gently-used book donations. Classroom teachers donated Scholastic points to buy as many books as possible. The Altoona Children's Council, Pederson Elementary PTO, and Altoona Middle School PTO donated funds to purchase new books for students. The Altoona district leaders and teachers believe it is important for students to own books. One noted, "Owning a new or gently used book at the level you can read makes children feel special and makes reading enjoyable."

To evaluate Books in the Park, the district measured each student's reading level at the end of the school year and at the beginning of the next year. After summer 2010, data for struggling readers indicated an average reading loss per student of two reading levels. After summer 2011, the average struggling reader with a mentor lost less than one level or gained a reading level.

The measurable success for struggling readers yielded an important message for teachers and parents. Summer is not the time for "a break" from reading. It is time to enjoy reading over the break!

Juanita Peck
AmeriCorps VISTA
jpeck@altoona.k12.wi.us

CAMP OUT WITH BOOKS

**FULBRIGHT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
LITTLE ROCK, AR**

Type 4

On a survey last year, parents at Fulbright Elementary School requested more information and ideas for enhancing their children’s reading skills and joy of reading. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and reading teachers designed Camp Out with Books* to help parents encourage children to read “S’more.” At Camp, there were literacy stations, creative decorations, and refreshments. The planning group evaluated the activity, analyzed the data, and will use the data to plan future reading-related engagement activities. The school’s community partners—Huntington Learning Center—contributed funding and resources for families. A college English professor was designated as the “campfire round-up reader.” Other information on summer reading camps and resources came from the University of Central Arkansas, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, and the Little Rock Writing Project.

At Camp Fulbright, families were welcomed by Park Rangers (faculty and staff). After signing in at the Visitor Center, families entered Camp Fulbright Pavilion (cafeteria) where they were addressed by Park Ranger Jackson (the principal). The winners of a school-wide book mark design contest were announced and awarded a gift certificate from Barnes and Noble.

Each family was given an Official Reading License that guided families along reading trails with camp-themed activities for students and their families by grade level. Among the literacy stations were Summer Reading Journals, Campfire Book Swap, Exploring the Future, myOn Technology (a digital books platform for students), and Campfire Read Aloud. The book swap was a huge success. Over 300 books were exchanged at this station. Leading up to the event

students had been encouraged to bring books to exchange for new reading material and they enthusiastically complied.

After two activity rotations, the “dinner bell” rang and participants went to the Fulbright Picnic Area for an old-fashioned camp cook-out of grilled hot dogs (cooked by parent volunteers), chips, s’mores and lemonade. Students played playground games, while parents visited teachers and each other.

Camp Out with Books was evaluated by about 150 parents and caregivers and 30 teachers who attended. Responses to the event were very positive. Suggestions will be considered for future activities to engage parents with students on reading and literacy skills.

Students and parents were happy to come to Camp to enjoy reading, gather information, and meet others in an informal setting. As one parent shared, “Our family had a great time at Camp Out with Books with our Fulbright Family! My twins especially enjoyed the story time around the campfire and the book exchange. The myOn Technology session was particularly helpful to me. It was such a fun evening and a great way to get kids excited about literacy.” A teacher reported, “This was a very well planned and orchestrated event. A lot of teamwork went into making it a successful opportunity for parents and students to grow. The decorations were adorable, the activity stations were engaging, and the food was delicious. What a fun night for all!” Throughout the planning and implementation of Camp Out with Books, teamwork, leadership, and friendships were strengthened, and a sense of community was cultivated at Fulbright.

** This activity prepares students for summer reading.*

*Karyn Wortsmith
GT Specialist and Parent Facilitator
karyn.wortsmith@lrsd.org*

READING

Celebrating Reading (Summer Reading Program)

*Maplebrook Elementary School
Naperville, Illinois*

The School, Family, Community Partnership (SFCP) Committee at Maplebrook Elementary turned those “lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer” into a learning opportunity with its Summer Reading Program.

Research indicates that students who struggle with reading tend not to read at home over the summer. To encourage summer reading, the SFCP committee gave a book bag to each of the school’s more than 500 students before school closed for summer vacation. Packed into each bag were a book, a bookmark, a coupon from a local bookstore, suggested reading lists, a magnet and a beach ball. The SFCP also included ice cream coupons from one of the school’s business partners, as an incentive for students and parents to complete the summer reading activities.

Initiated through a grant from the Naperville Education Foundation, the practice supported the school’s improvement goal of increasing literacy skills while instilling in students the love of reading. The program cost \$3,000, paid for by the education foundation grant and a Home and School donation.

The SFCP and other volunteers worked with the teachers to pick the appropriate books for each grade level and to prepare the bags. They also solicited donations and assembled materials. To help promote the activity, Maplebrook’s administrators announced the Summer Reading Program in the school’s monthly newsletter.

Although the Maplebrook staff initiated the activity, parents and community members contributed to its success. The local librarian gave a presentation about summer reading programs offered in the community. Parents took time to read at home and to go to the library with their children.

The school did not set a quota for the number or type of books that students should read. They wanted students “just to read” and enjoy reading without any pressure. A local pizza restaurant rewarded students with a Celebrate Summer Reading luncheon during the first week of school last fall. All the students needed to qualify for lunch was a slip of paper naming one book they had read during their vacation.

Maplebrook Elementary evaluated the practice with a follow-up survey of parents in the fall. The responses were overwhelmingly positive.

If the school implements the practice next year, it will delay some of the incentives and rewards until after the summer reading has been completed. The organizers also hope to improve the practice by adding other community partners and by holding a celebration of students’ reading achievement in the middle of the summer to keep the students excited about reading.

*Gwen Bockman
Principal*

(630) 420-6381

gbockman@naperville203.org

HOLIDAY SCHOLARS

DAVID C. BARROW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ATHENS, GEORGIA

Even as they celebrated students' progress and success, the Leadership Team at David C. Barrow Elementary School couldn't help but worry that the impending summer break could cause "learning loss" for some students. Barrow's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) decided that encouraging letters, books, and engaging work packets might help keep students fresh and eager to learn. Holiday Scholars, as the initiative is known, has two goals: minimize vacation-time learning loss and recognize students who continue to work hard over the summer.

About a month before the long break from school, teachers and administrators identified students who could benefit from extra work and encouragement. A group of school staff compiled packets of pertinent activities and collected books for the student to take home, read, and keep. Students also received a log sheet to record the minutes per day they spent on the activities.

During the week before the break began, parents of the selected students attended a lunch to discuss the Holiday Scholars. Parents divided into grade levels and, with teachers, reviewed the assignments in each packet. The organizers presented short demonstrations of skills that would be helpful to use at home to reinforce students' effort and progress. For example, one teacher read a book and showed parents how to stop and have their child predict what will happen next or connect how a character in the story is just like them.

Event organizers allotted time for a general discussion on issues that impact all families, such as discipline. Some students joined their parents for lunch, whereas others came at the end of a day to receive their packets along with guidelines on the program.

As an added incentive, each student was assigned an adult "buddy" from the school—teachers, administrators, or support staff—who wrote to the student several times over the break.

They also sent additional paperback books for the students to read and to add to their home libraries. The school covered the cost of the books and postage.

Within a week of returning from the summer break, students brought back their work—completed activities and reading logs signed by a parent. The Holiday Scholars celebrated their summer accomplishments with a pizza lunch, an assembly, and a certificate.

The Holiday Scholars program has been so popular that Barrow was bombarded with requests from parents for their child to be included. One parent commented that they "have never been to a school that cared so much about their child's learning."

Another shared that their child "couldn't wait to finish the work."

In years to come, Barrow will continue to make holiday learning a priority for all students with support from families. Their goal is to foster the spirit demonstrated of one industrious student who asked, "I really want a packet. Could you mail one to my house that I can finish over Spring Break?"

Mimi Elliott-Grover
Family Resource Coordinator
elliottgowerm@clarke.k12.ga.us

LITERACY AND LEARNING = STUDENT SUCCESS (State Activity)

UTAH GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON LITERACY MURRAY, UT

When it comes to literacy and learning, summer is no time to snooze. That's why the Utah Governor's Commission on Literacy launched a statewide summer family reading program to engage parents in their children's education. The Governor's Commission on Literacy, started in 2003, set goals for Utah's children to read at or above grade level by the end of the third grade and for parents and children to read together for at least twenty minutes every day. Shared reading is not only fun for everyone, but also helps students develop their vocabulary, listening skills, and love of reading.

The summer program, Literacy and Learning, was spearheaded by Utah's First Lady, Jeanette Herbert. In May, every McDonald's restaurant in the state hosted a kickoff event. Families gathered at the restaurants to enjoy free apple dippers, face painting, art projects, and literacy-linked activities conducted by public librarians and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) members.

They learned about the Governor's Summer Reading Challenge. If families read together for 20 minutes a day for the whole summer, then students in grades K-6 would earn a Certificate of Achievement signed by the Governor and First Lady, along with a gift certificate for a free McDonald's Happy Meal and coupons from Applebee's and Chuck-a-Rama. Families could record and mail a Family Progress Report on their summer reading, or report their minutes of daily reading on the state's website, www.utah.gov.

Families started reading together right away, thanks to free new books distributed at

the McDonald's. Each restaurant distributed 100 new children's books purchased from Scholastic. Families also received reading calendars to keep track of minutes of reading and bookmarks printed with reminders of the 20-minute-a-day plan. Students who could not attend a kickoff received a calendar and bookmark at school. The materials were available in Spanish and in English.

Earlier, the Governor's office sent all school districts a PowerPoint presentation explaining the program and how it supported state goals for increasing students' reading achievement, along with stacks of calendars and bookmarks for over 300,000 elementary school students across the state. Press releases were sent to TV and print news organizations, and the PTA was asked to urge parents to read with their children. Participants could tweet progress and photos of family reading to @mcdonalds_utah. Other supporters of the summer reading program were the University of Utah, the state library system, the PTA's Three for Me program to encourage volunteers, and Latinos in Action.

The summer reading challenge was made possible by the Governor's office and a large donation from McDonald's for its state-wide effort. Tasty treats, gift books, and valued rewards are a winning combination to encourage students to read for pleasure, prevent summer learning loss, and prepare for the next school year.

Colleen Taylor
Executive Director
colleen_taylor353@hotmail.com

Summer Expo 2008

*Naperville Central High School
Naperville, Illinois*

A summer job fair had students from Naperville Central High School looking forward to June, July, and August—and not because they would be on vacation. The Summer Expo 2008 helped students and parents explore the work and volunteer opportunities available for the summer ahead.

The pilot job fair featured businesses, non-profits, and organizations that needed summer employees and volunteers.

The School Family Community Partnership (SFCP) team sponsored the job fair to help improve the social and emotional environment at the school. Team members wanted to give students positive activities that they could participate in during the summer. Such experiences help raise students' self esteem and improve behavior at school.

Team members recruited businesses and other organizations to attend the spring event. They solicited participants through phone calls and by e-mail.

Staff advertised the Expo to parents and students in fliers, e-mails, and phone calls. They also published announcements in the school's newsletter and reminded students during regular assemblies.

About 75 parents and 75 students attended the Expo, which began with a large group introductory meeting. After that, students and parents explored employers' booths and talked one-on-one with the representatives about paid and volunteer opportunities. For instance, several summer camps wanted to employ the students as camp counselors. The school's guidance counselors and coaches also presented information on academic and athletic possibilities over the summer.

SFCP members and school officials were pleased to see so many students taking an interest in summer experiences that could help identify potential career paths. Parents and

students were happy to have the opportunity to explore so many options.

The only expenses were printing, thank you notes, and balloons. The minimal costs were paid with funds from the school's regular budget.

Based on the success of this pilot Expo, Naperville Central will schedule another summer job fair next spring. Organizers will start planning earlier and try to get even more support from the business community.

*Pam Wilson
SFCP Team Chair
(630) 717-8205*

p16wilson@wideopenwest.com

SUMMER READING PROGRAM AND POETRY WITH PARENTS

**BADGER MOUNTAIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
RICHLAND, WA**

Badger Mountain Elementary School is on a mission to improve students' reading skills at all grade levels and to guide parents to encourage students' literacy learning. The Action Team for Partnership (ATP) and teachers are particularly focused on students who are in reading intervention programs and families who have not been actively involved. This year, the ATP implemented two reading-related activities to address these goals.

Poetry with Parents was held in April, which is National Poetry Month. To encourage attendance by previously less engaged parents, the ATP featured students who were in reading-intervention and extra-help programs for literacy skills. Teachers chose two poems for each grade level, K-5, and made copies for students. They taught the students choral reading skills in the Learning Labs. Then, they scheduled Poetry with Parents on a Friday evening. In the school library, students and parents had dinner of roll-up sandwiches, cookies, and water, and prepared to enjoy poetry together.

The Reading Specialist spoke with families about the importance of reading at home, and introduced the Summer Reading Program (see below). Then, each grade-level group of students presented their poems, showing their skills of fluency, pronunciation, and expression in reading.

Proud parents took photos and videos, laughed, and applauded. The ATP chairman noted, "This was a night just for the students who needed reading-intervention assistance to shine!" At the end of the evening, families chose a free book to take home, donated by a local reading organization.

The Summer Reading Program aimed to reduce the "summer slide" in reading often experienced by students who struggle with

reading at school. After obtaining approval from the principal and legal approval from the district, the ATP identified two neighborhoods in which many of these students lived. They designed a weekly reading program to be conducted in the students' communities. At a "buy one, get one free" book fair at the school year's end, students and parents donated new and used children's books for the summer program.

Two teachers volunteered each week to bring a cart of high-interest books into the neighborhoods. Apartment-complex managers were very cooperative, providing access to Community Rooms for the program. Each Wednesday, the teachers shared stories in a read-aloud period and prompted students' participation with interesting questions. Parents and grandparents also came to listen and read with their children. Some were Spanish speakers who were learning English. They enjoyed time when their children read to them.

After 45 minutes of story time, discussions, and reading for pleasure, teachers helped students choose books to read during the week. Students who attended at least five weeks received a free ice cream coupon. At summer's end, teachers were able to give away six books to each student. The Summer Reading Program strengthened students' positive attitudes about reading and maintained students' connections with teachers. Attendance grew as students and their families shared their appreciation for these sessions with others in their neighborhoods. Through these programs, Badger Mountain is supporting its high-needs readers and is showing that reading is fun in school and under the sun.

Wendy Gosselin
ATP Chairman
wendy.gosselin@rsd.edu

SUMMER READING VAN

GROVETON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

Summer reading can be a challenge for students in any school. To meet this challenge and keep kids reading all summer long, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at Groveton Elementary School developed and implemented the Summer Reading Van.

There is no public library within walking distance for many families that send their children to Groveton, and many families do not have cars to drive to the nearest library. Additionally, many parents work multiple jobs and do not have a great deal of time to take their children to a library. Eleven years ago, Groveton's ATP solved this problem with help from a local car dealership. The educators reasoned that if families couldn't get to a library, then a library would get to them.

Each year, teachers at Groveton take the lead in organizing and outfitting the Summer Reading Van. The educators order books or collect donated books from community partners.

The next step—the hardest part of the project—is to find a van that will travel to students' neighborhoods with the books. In the past, a local car dealership loaned a van to the school for this purpose. Unfortunately, the dealership closed this year and it seemed that the Summer Reading Van would stop traveling. However, a parent volunteered the family van and the program continued as usual.

Teachers organize books into bins and contact apartment managers and other authorities to get permission for the Summer Reading Van to travel to gated or otherwise restricted communities. Then, it's time for the fun part—delivering books to children.

Each week, the Summer Reading Van starts at the elementary school and makes its scheduled neighborhood stops. Teachers read aloud to students and give tips to parents about supporting reading fluency and comprehension at home. In addition to children's books, there are books for parents

on child development, child psychology, and tips for supporting children's reading and writing.

The two teachers who run the van keep track of the books in the various bins and books that are borrowed by students or parents. They want to help students find books they want to read. Students can borrow up to three books at a time and must return books in order to borrow more. Unlike the librarians in a traditional library, the leaders of the Summer Reading Van give students Popsicles to celebrate the summer and to motivate them to come again.

The Summer Reading Van has resulted in many positive reading behaviors. Students have had easy access to good books to read during the summer. Many parents have received tips to encourage their children to read at home. Some families appreciate the Summer Reading Van so much that they incorporate its arrival into their busy schedules. One parent explained, "Our family has made the Groveton Summer Reading Van part of our summer schedule for the past three years. ...I think the reading van is a big asset for our daughters, school, and community. The reading van is fun and I am thrilled to have my daughters excited about reading."

Teachers, too, benefit from the program. They enjoy traveling into different neighborhoods to build connections and relationships with families over the summer. One teacher shared, "I can't believe how excited the students are to see their teachers in their neighborhoods! It's great to see how students are outside of school and to help them see reading isn't just something to do at school."

Carrie Powers
ESOL Teacher/ATP Chair
carrie.powers1@fcps.edu

Type 4

READING