Summer Learning Report-2019
Rochester Public Library
Prepared By
Tolley Reeves Ed.D
Assistant Director
INTRODUCTION

Summer reading programs have long been used in the U.S. to promote lifelong reading in children and teens. Public libraries encourage participation in these programs to reduce summer learning loss (Utah State Library Division, 2019). Summer learning loss is also known as summer slide or setback, wherein student achievement scores tend to be lower after summer than at the end of the previous school year (Quinn & Polikoff, 2017). This is more pronounced for historically under-served groups, such as children living in poverty or children from English-language learning households (Atteberry & McEachin, 2016). Reading programs in libraries and schools have demonstrated effectiveness at helping students retain important reading skills over the summer (Kim & Quinn, 2013).

ABSTRACT

This report provides background, program description, results summary and recommendations developed by Rochester Public Library (RPL).

RESULTS SUMMARY - LITERACY AIDES

- RPL hired 20 Literacy Aides who worked at 10 library branches and Central Library with elementary-aged children from July through August 2019.
- The total contacts made by Literacy Aides for the summer of 2019 was 31,989.
- Literacy Aides made 10,296 contacts directly related to literacy through reading and learning support to children at their assigned sites. They read stories, played educational games, worked with children on puzzles, activity sheets, creative story writing, arts and crafts and computer assistance all of which increased their reading and comprehension skills.
- One literacy aide was permanently hired by RPL.
RPL LITERACY AIDES

The Literacy Aide position was created by RPL in 2008 in response to an increase in library use by students after school. Part-time Literacy Aides are funded year-round at eight branches, supported by the City of Rochester and private support. Literacy Aides help children develop literacy skills. RPL has several Literacy Aides who have continued to accept progressive RPL employment while attending higher education.

RCSD LITERACY AIDES

The RCSD funded 20 seasonal Literacy Aide positions deployed in the public library branches and Central Library. The Literacy Aides participated in a one-day orientation session on July 3, 2019, conducted by the MCLS Children’s Services Consultant, Tonia Burton. The orientation included:

- Organizational Structure & Relationship with RCSD
- Why Summer Learning is so important
- What does a Literacy Aide do?
- Diversity in Children’s Literature
- Statistics, Tracking, and Surveys
RCSD LITERACY AIDES
We find the program to be mutually beneficial for the following reasons:

- The program provides meaningful engagement opportunities for children in grades K-6 by having dedicated reading, sharing and play time with older student role models.

- Literacy Aides receive training and ongoing supervisory support, often providing a first employment opportunity that builds skills, responsibility and confidence.

- Working in libraries and with City departments demonstrates to students possible career paths in Early Childhood Development, Education and Library Science.
RCSD LITERACY AIDES

Literacy Aides are an invaluable part of summer learning support, as noted by several site supervisors:

Lori Frankunas, Site Supervisor, Phillis Wheatley Community Library stated that both Raeona and Supreme were very helpful in the children's area. The kids loved them! Raeona stood out as a Literacy Aide. She had a very positive attitude and is a great role model for the kids. We were lucky to have a Page position open and we were able to hire Raeona. She continues to be a joyous presence in the library.

Paul Tantillo, Site Supervisor, Charlotte Branch Library stated that Charlotte's Literacy Aides Anthony and Jasika were self starters. Anthony stood out for his great rapport with kids, enthusiasm and sense of fun. Jasika distinguished herself by her calm, kind dependable nature, and by her considerable artistic abilities. We enjoyed them both!

Bruce Tehan, Site Supervisor, Arnett Branch Library stated that Arnett's Literacy Aide Rachel, has always been a terrific Arnett Branch reader and patron growing up, who proved to be equally terrific at helping young patrons hone their reading skills and develop a love of libraries.
During the summer, Action for a Better Community, Inc (ABC) provided a six-week program to 40 employed youth through the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). ABC used the imagineYOU Media Lab and Teen Central to conduct their summer programming. There were two youth teams: EPIC (Equipping Performing and Inspiring in the Community) and AIMM (Adolescents Inspiring through Multi Media). The EPIC team created an original theater piece titled “The Struggle”, which they performed in the Kate Gleason Auditorium (complete with sets, costumes and props) themed around issues and challenges they face in their communities.

The AIMM team utilized the digital lab and equipment to produce a short film titled “Storm of Pain”, a photography project known as Photo Voice. They also created a social media campaign in conjunction with their short film. Their projects were also themed around issues facing youth in their communities.

Youth were provided with job readiness training and utilized the computers in Teen Central to complete resumes, search for jobs, and career exploration. ABC was able to serve a hot lunch to the youth at the library through the Foodlink summer meals program.
RAISING A READER

Raising A Reader is a national, evidence-based early literacy and parent engagement program for reading readiness from birth to age four. The program provides resources for caregivers to help children develop early literacy skills. Since 2012, RPL has provided engagement directly to parents through childcare providers and distributed developmentally appropriate reading materials in a range of languages for families to bring home from their daycare setting, without cost for loan or loss of items.

Based on surveys of 87 families that participated in the Raising a Reader, significant positive changes for families were reported in the following areas:

- Quality and frequency of home reading habits and routines
- Increase in child and adult engagement during book sharing
- Library visits/community engagement

The amount of families meeting at least five indicators of high quality book sharing habits after participation rose by 41% (from 27%-68%)! For example, there was a 100% increase in the number of times per week children asked to look at books with their parents or other adults in the household. Compared to before RAR, after completing the program families reported:

- Visiting the library more often
- Having a home reading routine
- Having more books in their homes
- Spending more time looking at books with their children

In addition, there were reported improvements in the quality of parent-child reading behaviors, such as letting children turn pages or choosing what to read, talking about new words, asking questions, and using voices for different characters.
ENGLISH AS A NEW LANGUAGE

During the summer, Evanna DiSalvo, New Americans Librarian created an Easy Reader Book Club for English as a New Language learners. Three titles were selected, and participants had the opportunity to read aloud and discuss questions. The primary goal of the book club was to create a community of practice among its peers.

DiSalvo notes that throughout the summer we had people attend our tutoring sessions who were visiting family in Rochester. They were eager to take advantage of the opportunity to learn while they were here. We helped visitors from Puerto Rico, Mexico, Bania, China Algeria, and India improve their English.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUMMER 2020

- RPL will not seek funding from RCSD for Summer 2020
- Rochester Public Library will recruit, interview and train Literacy Aides in June 2020.
- Provide literacy aides with a pre/post survey to evaluate learning experiences.
- Conduct an exit meeting to solicit feedback to plan for the upcoming year.

CONCLUSION

Summer offers a unique opportunity for students to connect with learning in ways that may be very different from school. With such a short period of time, Rochester Public Library works to generate impact and maximize their time to keep youth actively engaged in learning.

RPL has been a natural partner for RCSD, with facilities, professional staff and enthusiasm to support student learning outside the classroom.

RPL’s management and staff wish to express sincere gratitude to RCSD and City of Rochester for their continued support of our literacy initiatives and look forward to the continued dialogue on how best to serve the interests of children and families in the City of Rochester.
REFERENCES


