

## SUMMER READING LOSS RESEARCH PROJECT

### **Summary**

The ability to read, write, and communicate effectively is essential for students to be successful in school and to become productive members of society. All South Carolina students must receive an education that provides the knowledge, skills, and experiences to achieve this proficiency in all aspects of literacy. South Carolina has identified four major challenges:

- low student achievement in reading and writing,
- literacy achievement gaps among demographic groups,
- summer loss in literacy achievement, and
- lack of critical elements necessary for high-progress literacy classrooms.

### **Demographics**

- *Target Settings:* Urban, rural, suburban
- *Target Groups Served:* Elementary students grades 1 - 4; Pilot middle school project
- *Districts Served:* 116 schools across the state; multiple districts

### **Research and Evaluation**

*What national or other research was considered during the development of this program/initiative? Describe the evidence that shows the program/initiative works.*

Students who make achievement gains during the school year often experience losses in achievement over the summer. Many researchers have identified an achievement loss across the summer season (Cooper, Charlton, Valentine, & Muhlenbruck, 2000; Entwisle and Alexander, 1992; Heyns, 1987). From a meta-analysis of 39 studies, Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay, & Greathouse (1996) estimated that achievement loss during the summer is, on average, equal to one month of instruction. Research suggests that the summer achievement loss is greatest among students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Alexander, Entwistle, & Olson, 2000; Burkham, Ready, Lee, & LoGerfo, 2004; Condrón, 2009; Cooper et al., 1996) and the negative effects of low-socioeconomic status on achievement during summer may be most pronounced during the early grades (Johnson, 2000).

In an effort to mitigate summer reading, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) has implemented a Summer Reading Program. Participating schools set up a “free” book fair for students to self-select books based on ability level and interest. This project is in response to SC Reading First program evaluations which indicated significant summer loss in most students over an extended period of time and is an attempt to reduce summer reading loss by providing access to books for students to read during the summer. In addition, research conducted by Dr. Richard Allington found the outcomes on a state reading assessment, FCAT, indicated a statistically significant effect for providing access to books for summer reading.

*Summer 2011* The project began with 19 schools with 12 of the schools participating in a formal research study being conducted by the South Carolina Educational Policy Center (SCEPC) and the Office of Program Evaluation (OPE) in the College of Education at USC using Measurement of Academic Progress (MAP) data. All of these students selected 12 books to take home for summer reading.

*Summer 2012.* During the summer of 2012, books were distributed to 32 schools for each child to select books totaling over 17,000 students with 12 books to read over the summer. We also distributed books to the Reading Recovery® students, who are identified as the most struggling readers in first grade. The formal research study continued with USC and an additional study was added for the RR students with Clemson’s Reading Recovery Training Center. Information regarding the project was presented at the 2011 American Educational Research Association (AERA) by SCEPC.

*Summer 2013.* The number of schools receiving books more than tripled this year to a total of 116 schools. About a half million books were shipped so that each student has 8-9 books to read over the summer. The elementary Palmetto Priority Schools (PPS) as well as other high poverty schools were added. In addition, the RR students also received books again this year. Both research projects will continue and a middle grades pilot project has begun. A proposal for AERA from SCEPC has also been accepted for spring 2013.

*Findings from the Office of Program Evaluation/South Carolina Educational Policy Center, University of South Carolina.* This study conducted by the OPE/SCEPE, investigated the impact on achievement outcomes for 12 schools that assess students on Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments in the fall and spring. Approximately 3,200 students in grades 1-4 (about 800 students per grade level) at these schools self-selected 12 books that were given to them free of charge at the end of the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 school years. A variety of text levels and genres were available for the students to choose from. Students were instructed to read these books over the summer and their parents were provided with suggested reading activities for the summer. Parent information letters and a calendar log to record summer reading minutes were also sent home with the children for the summer.

*Research question: Was the average summer reading achievement loss for participant students lower after implementation of the summer reading project than in the previous year? Were there differences by grade-level progression (i.e., grade in prior year to grade in next year)?* Students experienced a summer loss in reading achievement on MAP during the control summer of 2010 when they did not receive books. Those same students received books in the summers of 2011 and 2012 and not only was the summer loss prevented, but students showed achievement gains over those summers. The differences between the summer change from 2010 to 2011 and from 2010 to 2012 were statistically significant in the positive direction. Students tracked from third to fifth grade showed similar gains in the summers they received books.

*Findings from Clemson University Reading Recovery® Training Center.* Students served in Reading Recovery meet individually with a specially trained teacher for 30 minutes each day for a period of 12-20 weeks. The goal is to accelerate learning through an individually designed and delivered lesson series that closes the achievement gap so children benefit from regular classroom instruction. Clemson University is the training site for Reading Recovery in South Carolina and works in collaboration with the SCDE to continue effective statewide implementation of the program.

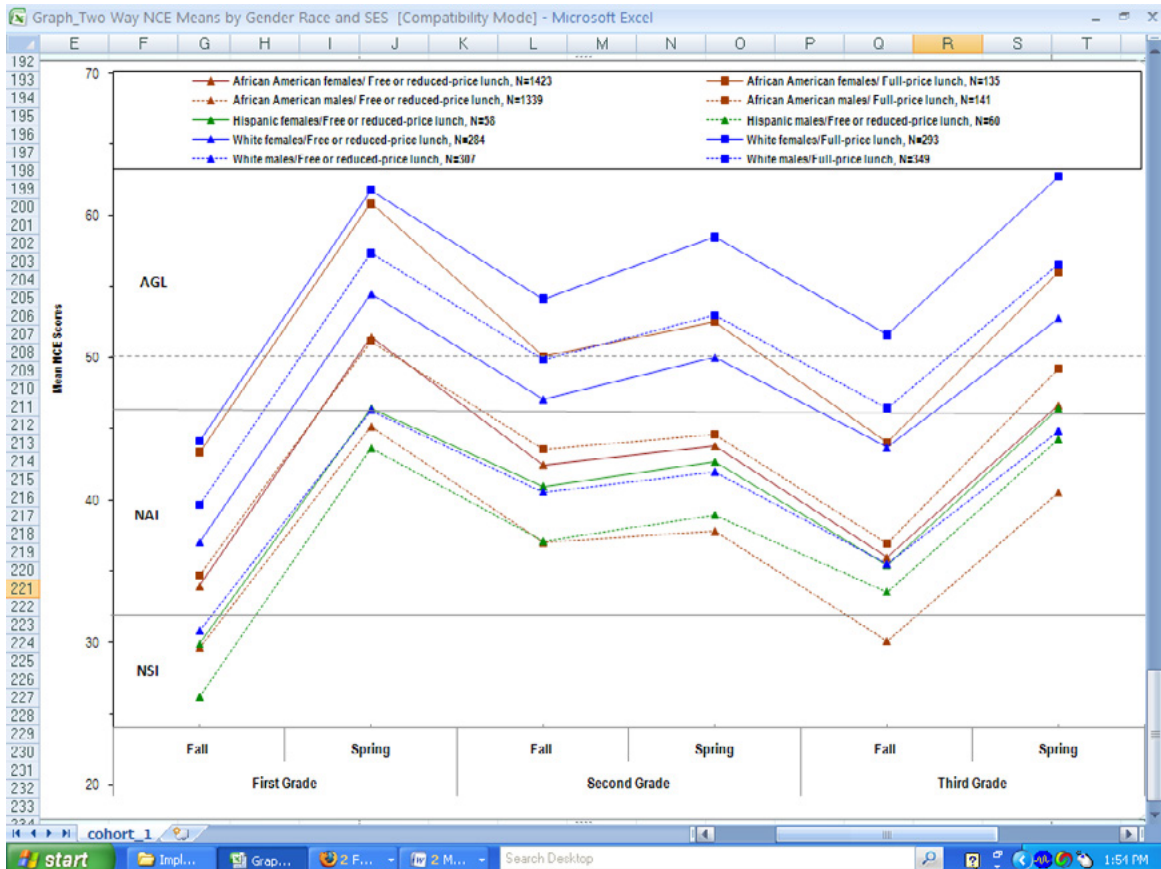
*Research question: What progress do children identified as at-risk make during the summer when provided with 12 leveled texts?* Books were distributed to all of the RR students (@ 2,000) in over 150 schools and 21 districts. The text leveling system used in RR and the running records procedures to determine a student's Text Reading Level have been shown to be a valid and reliable assessment (Denton, Ciancio & Fletcher, 2006). All participants were assessed using this measurement at two points in time: at the end of first grade and again during the first week of second grade. Data were collected by the International Data Evaluation Center (IDEC) at The Ohio State University, a web-based data entry system. Data reveal that 45.3% of all children increased in Text Reading Level; 17.5% of all children maintained their Text Reading Level. The remaining 37.1% had an overall text reading loss less than one text level or -.9. While this is a loss, it is still considerably less than the loss reported in the existing literature when children do not have access to text.

## **Resources**

- *Annual Cost:* \$50/child,; approximately \$3.1 million
- *Funding Sources:* Funding from Reading EIA and Lottery Funds for the books and research projects. A total of \$75/child was allocated for the first two years and \$50/child for year three.
- *Staffing Needs:* Team leader, plus literacy specialists and technology coaches
- *Infrastructure/Equipment Needs:* Age-level children's books
- *Partner Organizations:* SC Department of Education, Reading Recovery Training Center at Clemson University, University of South Carolina

## **Contact Information**

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## Why Can't I Skip My 20 Minutes of Reading Tonight?

**Student "A"**  
reads **20 minutes**  
each day

3600 minutes in  
a school year

**1,800,000 words**



90<sup>th</sup> percentile

**Student "B"**  
reads **5 minutes**  
each day

900 minutes in  
a school year

**282,000 words**



50<sup>th</sup> percentile

**Student "C"**  
reads **1 minute**  
each day

180 minutes in  
a school year

**8,000 words**



10<sup>th</sup> percentile

By the end of 6<sup>th</sup> grade Student "A" will have read the equivalent of 60 whole school days. Student "B" will have read only 12 school days. Which student would you expect to have a better vocabulary? Which student would you expect to be more successful in school...and in life?

(Nagy & Herman, 1987)

