

SUMMER LEARNING ACADEMIES (SLAs)

Summary

The goal of SLA is to reduce the effects of the summer learning loss and improve academic achievement of our lower socio-economic students by providing a high-quality summer program.

SLA began in 2011 as a way to provide high-quality, relevant, fun, learning experiences for students during the summer. Title I schools in our district identify students not working on grade level or who are in danger of failing. Students are invited to participate in the seven-week program that is staffed with the best teachers in the district. Teachers complete a lengthy application process and must be recommended by their principal. SLA students participate in high-energy, hands-on, inquiry based, differentiated lessons. Students are provided with individualized instruction every day. Class size is limited to 12 students. Students are surrounded by high-interest, age-appropriate reading materials. Intense, structured reading instruction is provided constantly throughout the program. Students participate in field trips, enjoy visits from children's book authors, and strive to earn various badges for demonstrating leadership/character traits. The SLA staff members use every opportunity to recognize students for their hard work in an effort to promote a positive perception of learning.

At the conclusion of the program, students are given ten books that they can take home to use as they establish their own library.

SLA is truly a wonderful learning environment for students, parents, teachers and the community. During the Family Literacy Night, parents are given information regarding helping to improve their child's reading skills. The District's Parenting Liaison visits homes and models simple mini-lessons for parents.

This team approach to reducing the summer learning loss has truly benefited the children of Spartanburg School District Two. With a theme of "Outperform, Outsmart, Outachieve", our children rise to the occasion!

Demographics

- *Target Settings:* Rural, urban, suburban
- *Target Groups Served:* : Low-achieving students in first grade through sixth grade who have been identified as at-risk are served by SLA - over 200 students from Title I schools are selected to participate.
- *Districts Served:* Spartanburg School District Two

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.

There is a wealth of research on the effects of summer learning loss. Richard Allington has written much about the effects of this dilemma especially in the area of reading. The National Summer Learning Association concludes that on average, children from low-income families lose nearly three months of grade-level equivalency during the summer months each year. In particular, in the area of reading, children from average socio-economic families, hold their own, but the children from poor families lose reading and spelling skills. The study also confirmed that summer learning programs have a significant positive effect for children primarily due to the high level of engagement during months that disadvantaged students typically are not academically engaged.

LA students completed NWEA's Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test during the spring and again at the conclusion of the seven-week summer program. On average, of the 225 students that participated during the 2013 program, there was an increase of 2.16 on the Reading portion of MAP and 3.45 on the Math portion of MAP. For the subsequent Fall administration of MAP, SLA participants demonstrated additional growth on the average of 2.5 on the Reading portion and 3.5 on the Math portion.

It has been noted that many of the SLA participants have demonstrated a higher level of motivation during the regular school year than previously demonstrated.

SLA students complete reading logs documenting every 15 minutes of reading. During the seven-week program, students read over 365,000 minutes. This is time that many of these students would have otherwise spent watching television or playing video games. Reading and documenting the time spent reading helped students to create a habit of daily reading that will hopefully carry over into their subsequent school years and assist with developing life-long readers.

Resources

- *Annual Cost:* \$250,000
- *Funding Sources:* Title 1 funds, District Funds
- *Staffing Needs:* 21 teachers, 10 teaching assistants, art teacher, PE teacher, 2 Directors
- *Infrastructure/Equipment Needs:* Approximately \$20,000 is used for supplies and field trips.
- *Partner Organizations:* Numerous community members volunteer their time to read with students during the program. The Upstate Family Resource Center provides food, clothing and/or financial assistance for utilities for the families of the SLA students.

Contact Information

Kim Ashby

Director of Elementary Schools, Spartanburg School District Two

864.515.5132

www.spartanburg2.k12.sc.us