Articles From:

Dr. Richard Allington & Anne McGill-Franzen
“Closing the Reading Achievement Gap”
“Summer Reading Loss and What to Do”
“Lost Summers: Few Books and Few Opportunities to Read”

The Washington Post
“Active Summer, Active Minds”

Educational Leadership
“What At-Risk Readers Need”

Coalition for Evidence Based Policy
“Evidence Summary for Annual Book Fairs in High-Poverty Elementary Schools”

American Reading Company
Summer Set-Back Research

Your Summer Reading About Summer Reading Loss
A past president of the International Reading Association and one of the most renowned experts in effective research-based reading models, Dr. Richard Allington will discuss research that illustrates how we can teach every child to read and create real readers in our classrooms. We have access to everything we need to make this goal a reality in every classroom, for every child. But will we take the steps necessary to change how students spend time in our schools? Are we up for it? The students are waiting!

**What Really Matters in Educating Students**

To help teachers acquire a fuller understanding of the complexity of Response to Intervention designs, literacy researcher and best-selling author Dr. Richard Allington offers clear recommendations to guide classroom teachers in designing RtI programs.

As a respected speaker and expert on the subject Allington describes the “What” of RtI, and American Reading provides the “How” with ACTION 100 and 100 BOOK CHALLENGE.

**Presented by American Reading Company**

**And Co-sponsored by the Rochester Area Literacy Council**

For more information, please contact:

**Jeannie Cassidy**

Account Manager, American Reading Company

585-721-1665 | jeannie.cassidy@americanreading.com
# How Does ACTION 100 Score on Dr. Richard Allington’s Rubric for Evaluating Reading Intervention Designs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 Points</th>
<th>4 Points</th>
<th>3 Points</th>
<th>2 Points</th>
<th>1 Point</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-to-1 tutorials</td>
<td>1 to 3 groups</td>
<td>1 to 7+ groups</td>
<td>Uses standard texts with little pupil/text matching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always has pupil/text matches</td>
<td>Mostly has pupil/text matches</td>
<td>Uses standard texts with little pupil/text matching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triples daily reading volume</td>
<td>Doubles daily reading volume</td>
<td>No increase in reading volume</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert reading teacher provides instruction</td>
<td>Certified teacher provides instruction</td>
<td>Teacher aide, assistant, or volunteer provides instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused on meaning and metacognitive development</td>
<td>Some focus on meaning and metacognition</td>
<td>Focused on skills development in isolation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy access to interesting texts and student choice</td>
<td>Easy access to interesting texts; some student choice</td>
<td>Standard texts with no student choice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well coordinated with classroom lessons</td>
<td>Some coordination with classroom lessons</td>
<td>Standard texts with no coordination with classroom lessons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring of student progress is frequent and full—running records, QRI, oral and silent reading comprehension</td>
<td>Monitoring of student progress is sporadic but full</td>
<td>Monitoring of student progress is narrow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

40 Points = Very well designed  
35 Points = Well designed  
30 Points = Design could be improved  
25 Points or fewer = Not well matched to research

ACTION 100 Earns: Very Well Designed!
Every day every child...

Reads something they choose.

Reads something accurately.

Reads something they understand.

Writes about something that is meaningful to them.

Talks to peers about their reading and writing.

Listens to a fluent adult read aloud.
The Six T’s of Effective Literacy Instruction

In a ten-year study of exemplary literacy instruction, here's what matters:

TIME:
How much time is spent actually reading? Effective teachers have students do more guided reading, more independent reading and more reading in Social Studies and Science. In many exemplary classrooms, children are reading and writing for half the day! “Stuff” does not dominate instructional time. (This includes test-prep worksheets, copying definitions, and after-reading comprehension worksheets.)

TEXTS:
Children have books they can actually read with a high level of accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. All children are not, therefore, in the same book. “Onesize-fits-all” contradicts everything that we know about effective teaching. “Simply put, students need enormous quantities of successful reading to become independent, proficient readers.” Motivation for reading is dramatically influenced by reading success.

TEACHING:
Wonderful teachers don’t “assign and assess,” they provide “active instruction.” Explicit demonstrations of cognitive strategies are modeled. The excellent point is made that worksheets can be completed only by children who already know what to do; children don’t acquire knowledge from a worksheet - they need teaching. Children don’t acquire strategies from questions at the end of the chapter either. Commercial programs typically provide no useful information on explicit instruction, simply a definitional model. Expert teaching fosters strategies that transfer from structured practice to independent use.

TALK:
There's more of it. It's more conversational than interrogational. Discussion is purposeful and personalized, not scripted or packaged. Thoughtful classroom talk focuses on making children's thinking visible and building understanding.

TASKS:
Leaving behind low-level worksheet tasks, effective teachers demonstrate greater use of longer assignments, tasks that integrate several content areas, and substantive work with more complexity. Exemplary teachers provide “managed choice” with students working on similar but different tasks.

TESTING:
Student work is evaluated based on effort and improvement. Rubrics shift responsibility for improvement to the students so “luck” doesn’t play a part. Most effective teachers use almost no test-preparation materials feeling that good instruction is what makes the difference. (Other data, by the way, bears this out.)

“In the end it will become clearer that there are no “proven programs,” just schools in which we find more expert teachers - teachers who need no script to tell them what to do…Are we creating schools in which every year every teacher becomes more expert?"

Closing the reading achievement gap.
Richard L. Allington & Anne McGill-Franzen
University of Tennessee

There is an enormous reading achievement gap between children from low- and middle-income families in the U.S. The gap at the end of eighth-grade is about 3 years. Schools have implemented a number of actions intended to close that achievement gap. However, these efforts have had little success over the past two decades. We suggest that this lack of success is likely due to the fact that few schools have implemented any actions to address a major contributor to the reading achievement gap – summer reading setback.

The rich/poor reading achievement gap. What we know is that approximately 80% of the reading achievement gap between children from low- and middle-income families stems from summer reading loss. In general, then, it is not ineffective reading instruction during the school year that creates the 3-year reading gap at eighth-grade. The achievement gap is created by what children from families of differing incomes do during the summer months. Stated at its most basic level, children from low-income families don’t read during the summer but children from better-off families do. This phenomenon was first discussed by sociologist Barbara Heyns some 35 years ago.

Limited access to books in low-income communities and in schools serving these communities. A primary reason low-income children do not read during the summers is their limited access to books. There are few books in the homes of low-income families. Even the schools poor children attend have far fewer books available than the schools attended by more advantaged children. Schools serving children from low-income families also have the most restrictive book lending policies, seldom allowing books to go home over the summer months. Public libraries are non-existent or operating with restricted hours. Finally, few stores in the neighborhoods where low-income children live make children’s books available.

Enhancing poor children’s access to books. Recently, there has been a small flurry of research activity addressing the hypothesis that children from low-income families experience a summer setback because of limited access to books they can read and they want to read. These studies vary on the age of the children involved, the length of the study, and the procedure used in selecting the books for children. In general, the findings of these studies indicate that providing children from low-income families with books to read over the summer has a small positive effect on their reading achievement. We say small, but these effects are large enough to eliminate summer reading setback and narrow the reading achievement gap.

There are several features of studies of effective voluntary summer reading programs.
• Projects that give books to poor children instead of simply lending books have demonstrated better reading achievement outcomes.
• Having students self-select the books to read is more powerful than assigning books to be read.
• The numbers of books that children must read to stem summer reading setback declines as students mature. Primary grade students benefited when 12 books were made available for summer reading, while 6th grade students benefited when they read 5 or 6 books over the summer.
• Longer-term studies, that is projects that take place over several summers, produce more consistent reading achievement gains than shorter-term studies that take place during a single summer.
• Annual cost of the summer book distribution program depends on the number of books distributed to each student but has averaged between $50 and $75 annually per child.
• Children from low-income families benefit more from summer book distribution programs than do children from more advantaged homes.

Summer book fairs study. In our work we conducted book fairs annually for three consecutive years in 17 high-poverty and high-minority schools. The participants were enrolled in first and second grade when we began the book fairs. At each book fair we offered approximately 500 different books that the children could choose from. Children received a box of the books they had selected on the final day of school.

When the children (both the treatment and the control group children) returned to school at the end of the summer we interviewed or surveyed them about their summer reading practices. We also collected their scores from standardized reading assessments at both the beginning and the end of the project.

Outcomes of the summer books program. After completing the three-year voluntary summer book reading project the treatment children earned scores roughly .40 of a standard deviation above those of the control children as noted by the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy. This difference was statistically significant. The impact of the program was twice as large for the children from the most economically disadvantaged families when compared to all study participants. To put this effect in perspective, the summer book fair project was as effective as attending summer school in improving reading achievement but at a cost far below providing summer school. In fact, the effect size for the summer books program was larger than the effects of a school adopting any of the several school reform models promoted by the U.S. Department of Education.

Will schools continue to ignore the far-reaching impact of summer reading setback? Only time will tell. It should surprise no one that any proficiency that goes unpracticed for three months deteriorates. Hence, we have summer reading setback when children fail to read during the summer. In this era of increased accountability, school leaders and educational policy makers would be foolish to
continue to ignore the long-ranging effects of summer reading setback on reading achievement. Nonetheless, educators have ignored this evidence for 35 years.

What should educators do? Give low-income children access to books for summer reading. Consider the following:

- Strong evidence links access to books and voluntary reading activity
- Strong evidence indicates children from low-income families have restricted access to books.
- Strong evidence exists that simply supplying books to children from low-income families can effectively ameliorate summer reading setback.

Conclusion. So much current educational policy making works from an assumption that weak teaching in high-poverty schools is the reason that the rich/poor reading achievement gap exists. While low levels of teaching effectiveness are obviously important in any school, so too is the differential impact of summer reading setback. If we can effectively address summer setback with book distribution, why wouldn’t we?

In the end, as responsible educators, we must make a decision on which policy options to select for addressing the rich/poor reading achievement gap. The evidence is quite clear – the time is now to begin putting books in the hands of low-income children every summer.

For further reading:


Few students in the United States read at a desirable level. According to National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores, roughly one-third of U.S. students read at or above the proficient level, one-third read at the basic level, and one-third read at the below basic level (Rampey, Dion, & Donahue, 2009). In other words, two of every three students in U.S. schools have reading proficiencies below the level needed to adequately do grade-level work.

At the same time, studies have shown that virtually every student could be reading on grade level by the end of 1st grade (Mathes et al., 2005; Phillips & Smith, 2010; Scanlon, Gelzheiser, Vellutino, Schatschneider, & Sweeney, 2010; Vellutino, Scanlon, Sipay, et al., 1996) and that the cost of achieving this goal is substantially less than the current system of remediation, special education, and grade retention. This raises the question, Why are so few schools doing what they need to do to help their at-risk readers?

The RTI Breakthrough

Although Congress can share the blame for creating the education system we now see in almost every U.S. school, we should also recognize that in 2004, Congress provided educators with an option that just might help us undo some of the mistakes of the past and close the current reading achievement gap: the Response to Intervention (RTI) initiative.

The legislation and accompanying regulations have a dual focus: (1) to provide increasingly intensive expert reading instruction to ensure that students having difficulty learning to read are not simply getting too little or too inexpert reading instruction; and (2) to locate students who exhibit difficulties even after receiving intensive reading instruction (Johnston, in press), who will now be identified as students with learning disabilities.

Although the federal law doesn’t mention tiers of instruction, a three-tiered model has become the most common form in RTI initiatives. The first tier is the classroom reading lessons that the student receives. The second tier is additional expert reading instruction typically offered daily in a small group. The third and final tier provides one-on-one instruction, a three-tiered model has become the most common form in RTI initiatives. The first tier is the classroom reading lessons that the student receives. The second tier is additional expert reading instruction typically offered daily in a small group. The third and final tier provides one-on-one
daily tutorials. Participating in high-quality reading lessons in each of the three tiers as needed should dramatically reduce the numbers of students experiencing difficulties in learning to read.

What I like about this legislation is that it allows school districts to use up to 15 percent of a district’s total budget for special education to support the RTI process. However, the legislation makes it clear that RTI is a general education initiative; this funding is turned over to a general education team to fund the general education effort to teach everyone to read—in other words, to fund the three tiers of the RTI intervention. I also like the fact that Congress left almost all implementation decisions up to the local education agency. At the same time, this creates the possibility that in too many schools, no one will take up the responsibility of providing three tiers of high-quality, expert reading instruction.

**When Must We Begin?**

All the federal legislation says about identifying students for involvement in the RTI process is that schools must have a screening process in place. According to Scanlon and Velutino (1997), all a school needs to do to identify students who may become struggling readers is assess kindergartners’ letter name knowledge. Pearson and Hiebert (2010) note that two-thirds of entering kindergartners already know the names of the letters of the alphabet and that one-third also know the consonant sounds. It’s the one-third who don’t know all the letter names who seem most likely to become struggling readers.

So we begin screening for letter name knowledge in kindergarten to identify students at risk of becoming struggling readers. And as soon as we know which students don’t know their letter names, we begin our intervention process.

But really, how many schools have intervention programs that begin serving at-risk students so early on? Virtually none. We could know on the second day of kindergarten who is at risk of becoming a struggling reader, but we typically do nothing with this information.

If kindergarten teachers were well trained for this job, this wouldn’t be such an issue. Professional development has proven successful in helping kindergarten teachers address the needs of at-risk students (McGill-Franzen, Allington, Yokoi, & Brooks, 1999; Scanlon et al., 2010). Evidence also indicates that better trained kindergarten teachers can solve the reading problems of at-risk students at the same rate as expert tutorial programs. In fact, the evidence suggests that perhaps one-quarter of primary-grade teachers are able and willing to teach these at-risk students (Pianta, Belsky, Houts, & Morrison, 2007).

Unfortunately, that also suggests that three-quarters of our primary teachers may either not feel qualified or not feel the responsibility to teach at-risk students (Scharlach, 2008). In addition, some kindergarten teachers may believe that this work is developmentally inappropriate.

The bottom line is that most U.S. schools have no plan...
We could know on the second day of kindergarten who is at risk of becoming a struggling reader, but we typically do nothing with this information.

to provide the sorts of classroom instruction that at-risk kindergartners need. Neither high-quality, extensive professional development for kindergarten teachers nor expert tutorial instruction for at-risk kindergartners is on the agenda at this point. This means that most schools deliberately create a pool of students who will become struggling readers.

I say deliberately because, unfortunately, that's just what it is—deliberate ignorance of what we should do to address the problems of at-risk kindergartners. As Vellutino, Scanlon, Zhang, and Schatschneider (2008) note, we could change the futures of roughly one-half of the students who begin kindergarten at risk of becoming struggling readers by providing expert tutorial services; 1st grade teachers could do the same by providing expert tutorials or “very small” group lessons (with three or fewer students). In their studies of the RTI process, Scanlon and colleagues (2010) found that researchers have typically provided at least 50 30-minute tutorial sessions for at-risk kindergartners and 75–150 30-minute tutorials or very small group sessions for at-risk 1st graders. When layered on top of 90 minutes of high-quality classroom reading lessons, expert tutorials (Phillips & Smith, 2010; Vellutino, Scanlon, Sipay, et al., 1996) or very small group reading instruction (Mathes et al., 2005) result in 98 percent of all 1st graders reading on level.

Moreover, these students remain on level at least through 3rd grade with no additional support. This means that once we ensure that all students have access to sufficient high-quality reading lessons, few will meet the federal definition of students with learning disabilities or dyslexia.

It's now up to the schools to fulfill this promise in the primary grades.

What Doesn’t Work
In far too many schools, at-risk kindergartners and 1st graders receive no expert additional instruction. A shortage of money isn’t the problem. Schools already spend enormous amounts of money on a variety of approaches that don’t work.

Using Paraprofessionals
Schools probably waste more money on employing paraprofessionals in the primary grades than on any other expenditure. I say waste because a long history of education research demonstrates that although paraprofessionals certainly do provide some benefits, they don’t provide high-quality reading lessons to struggling readers (Boyd-Zaharias & Fate-Bain, 1998; Gerber, Finn, Achilles, & Boyd-Zaharias, 2001; Rowan & Guthrie, 1989). That is, paraprofessional assistance never accelerates reading progress enough to remove the struggling-reader label. Working with a paraprofessional may add two months growth in reading for a struggling reader, but that reader needs 10–15 months additional growth to be reading on level with his or her peers.

Using Computer-Based Instructional Programs
Given that federal research (Institute for Education Sciences, 2007) has illustrated that none of the computer-based reading products actually works as well as a teacher in fostering reading development, one wonders why these expensive nonsolutions are so popular in schools.

And it isn’t just computer-based reading lessons that are ineffective. On the website of the federal What Works Clearinghouse (http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc) only one of the 150-plus commercial reading programs listed received a “strong evidence” rating.1 Four other programs were rated as having “possible evidence” of their effectiveness. Only 20 had any evidence that they improved any aspect of the reading process (reading rate, phonemic segmentation, and so on), but these programs had no evidence that they improved actual reading achievement.

Using Core Reading Programs
One reason that struggling readers receive fewer high-quality reading lessons is our fixation on one-size-fits-all core reading programs. The What Works Clearinghouse found no research that supports their use. Connor (2009) noted “an overreliance on the core curriculum” in her study of Reading First classrooms. In addition, Dewitz, Jones, and Leahy (2009) pointed out that although core reading programs do offer the same needed sets of skills and strategies, the way those programs are implemented in schools rarely matches how researchers implemented those skills. For example, no researcher attempted to teach a skill, such as finding the main idea, in a single week; rather, researchers typically scheduled many consecutive weeks of main idea lessons to foster growth of that ability. However, few comprehension skill or
strategy lessons in core programs last for more than one week.

The same could be said for the vocabulary or decoding lessons that core reading programs offer. Yes, they mimic the research in name, but the substance of the research—the instructional method—is left hanging out to dry.

In addition, a study of core reading programs in Florida found that approximately one in four students failed the FCAT [the state reading assessment] regardless of program, and the majority of these failures were in high-poverty schools. Obviously, mandated core programs did not provide sufficient support to teachers of low-achieving poor children. (McGill-Franzen, Zmach, Solic, & Zeig, 2006, p. 84)

Core reading programs fail for three reasons:

They require little actual reading. Across the six core reading programs that Brenner and Hiebert (2010) studied, students needed to spend only 15 minutes per day reading. That leaves 75 minutes of every 90-minute reading period for students to engage in something else. Most often, this other activity is skill lessons or workbook page completion. If we wanted to design reading instruction that was highly ineffective, this would be a good plan. If we added in some time for test preparation, we could make the lessons even less effective (Guthrie, 2002).

They don’t promote high-success reading. “High-success reading” typically refers to independent reading or reading with 98 percent accuracy or better, reading phrases with expression, and reading with 90 percent comprehension (Betts, 1949). Hundreds of studies demonstrate the power of Betts’s advice, but two recent studies point out just how crucial high-success reading is.

One study of struggling readers who were also second language learners noted that the key factor in how much progress students made was the number of texts each student read at 98 percent or higher accuracy (Ehri, Dreyer, Flugman, & Gross, 2007). The researchers also noted that students who worked with teachers, as opposed to paraprofessionals, read far more of these high-success texts and therefore were far more likely to make accelerated progress in reading.

O’Connor and colleagues (2002) provided tutoring to struggling 6th graders. These students were typically reading at the 3rd grade level or below, and about half had been identified as having disabilities. Half of these 6th graders were tutored using classroom texts—for instance, the 6th grade core reading texts or 6th grade social studies texts. The other half were tutored using reading materials matched to a 3rd grade reading level.

The researchers observed few gains in students who were tutored using classroom texts and accelerated gains in students tutored with materials at their reading level. Texts that students can read at a high level of accuracy spur reading development. Any school plan that does not put high-success texts in struggling readers’ hands all day long is not only ignoring the research but also creating and perpetuating large numbers of struggling readers.

They don’t offer self-selected reading. Core reading programs don’t provide any opportunity for students to select what they want to read. Everyone reads the same stories, often those that don’t violate some set of state or school district guidelines for content (Ravitch, 2003). Self-selected reading activity seems to be about twice as powerful at generating reading development as teacher-selected reading (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Lindsay, 2010).

What Schools Should Do Start in Kindergarten on Day One

The one-third of entering kindergartners who don’t know all their letter names are likely to become the one-third of 4th graders reading below the basic level. Therefore, schools should begin...
by ensuring that these kindergartners participate in additional high-quality reading lessons. These could be provided by reading specialists or other more expert reading professionals (Scanlon et al., 2010) or by classroom teachers who have received substantive professional development in teaching young students to read (McGill-Franzen, Payne, & Dennis, 2010). We must structure our schools so that what we know on the first day of school no longer predicts the NAEP scores that students will earn five years later.

**So What Will It Be?**

We can create schools where teachers use a one-size-fits-all core reading program, where we fill up students’ days with worksheets and test-preparation sessions, and where nonexperts in reading instruction are expected to work with large numbers of at-risk readers—and then we can blame the students or their parents for their struggles.

Or we can begin by acknowledging that at-risk readers need more expert reading instruction than we have been providing. We can figure out how to fund this and then get on with it. Only then will struggling readers become on-level readers. Only then can we look ourselves in the mirror and say, “We’ve done everything we could.”

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**References**


Lindsay, J. (2010). Children’s access to print material and education-related outcomes.
Findings from a meta-analytic review.
Naperville, IL: Learning Point Associates.


Richard L. Allington is professor of literacy studies at the University of Tennessee and past president of the International Reading Association and the National Reading Conference. He is the author of What Really Matters for Struggling Readers: Designing Research-Based Programs (3rd ed.; Allyn and Bacon, 2011); railingt@utk.edu.
HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Intervention:** Annual book fairs to provide summer reading to students in high-poverty elementary schools over three years, starting at the end of first or second grade.
- **Evaluation Methods:** A well-conducted randomized controlled trial.
- **Key Findings:** Increase in students’ reading achievement by 35-40% of a grade level, three years after random assignment.
- **Other:** A study limitation is that its sample was geographically concentrated in two Florida school districts. Replication of these findings in a second trial, in another setting, would be desirable to confirm the intervention’s effectiveness across various settings where it might normally be implemented.

I. The Top Tier initiative’s Expert Panel has identified this intervention as Near Top Tier

The Panel finds that this intervention meets the “Near Top Tier” evidence standard, defined as:

*Interventions shown to meet all elements of the Top Tier standard (i.e., well-conducted randomized controlled trials... showing sizable, sustained effects) in a single site, and which only need one additional step to qualify as Top Tier – a replication trial to confirm the initial findings and establish that they generalize to other sites.*

II. Description of the Intervention:

The Annual Book Fairs intervention provides students in high-poverty elementary schools with books to read over the summer, for three consecutive summers starting at the end of first or second grade. The goal is to prevent summer learning loss – specifically, the well-established tendency for low-income children’s reading achievement to fall relative to their more advantaged peers during the summer break. A number of studies have found that the loss is sizable, and may help explain the substantial and persistent reading achievement gap between more and less economically-advantaged students in the United States [e.g., Cooper et. al, 1996, Alexander et. al, 2007].

In the spring of each school year, students attend the fair, located in their school building, where they can order from among 400-600 books in a variety of genres (e.g., pop culture, series books, science). At each fair, students pick 12 books to keep as their own, which are delivered to them on the final day of school.

The study does not report the exact cost of the intervention, but indicates it was low – the main cost being that of supplying the students with 12 free books per year (which suggests a total three-year cost of $175-$225 per student).

III. Evidence of Effectiveness:

This summary of the evidence is based on a systematic search of the literature, and correspondence with leading researchers, to identify all well-conducted randomized controlled trials of this Annual
Book Fair intervention. Our search identified one such trial.\(^1\) What follows is a summary of the study design and the program’s effects on the main outcomes measured in the study, including any such outcomes for which no or adverse effects were found. All effects shown are statistically significant at the 0.05 level unless stated otherwise.

**Overview of the Study Design:** Randomized controlled trial of the Annual Book Fairs intervention in 17 high-poverty Florida elementary schools.

This was a randomized controlled trial of 1,713 first and second graders from 17 high-poverty elementary schools in two large school districts in Florida. Students were randomly assigned to (i) a group that received the Annual Book Fairs intervention, or (ii) a control group that did not.

Approximately 89\% of the students in the sample were either African American or Hispanic, and more than 65\% were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

**Effects of the intervention approximately three years after random assignment (i.e., when most students were in fourth or fifth grade):**

Compared to the control group, students in the Book Fair group –

- Scored higher on Florida’s state-mandated test of reading achievement by 0.14 standard deviations, which equates to about 35-40\% of a grade level.\(^2\)
- Reported reading more often during their summer breaks (the effect size is unclear, because the study used an index of reading frequency that does not lend itself to ready interpretation).

**Discussion of study quality:**

- The study had low-to-moderate sample attrition and a reasonably long-term follow-up: Outcome data from the state reading assessment were collected for 79\% of the Book Fair group and 76\% of the control group at the three-year follow-up.
- The Book Fair and control group students in the three-year follow-up sample were similar in their observable characteristics (i.e., demographics and pre-program reading ability).
- The study evaluated the Annual Book Fairs intervention as delivered in 17 high-poverty public schools, thus providing evidence of its effectiveness under real-world implementation conditions.
- The study measured outcomes using Florida’s state-mandated reading assessment – the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) – whose reliability and validity are well-established. The test primarily measures passage and word comprehension.

\(^1\) Our search identified one other randomized controlled trial of a book fair program, but we do not summarize the trial here because that program differed substantially from the intervention described above. For example, the book fair in that program was provided at the end of fourth grade (as opposed to first through third grade) and one time only (as opposed to three consecutive years).

\(^2\) Specifically, the average annual gain in reading achievement for U.S. students during fourth and fifth grades on seven nationally normed tests is 0.36 and 0.40 standard deviations respectively (see Bloom, Hill, Black, and Lipsey, 2008, referenced at the end of this summary). The difference in achievement between Book Fair and control group students, shown above, is 35-40\% of these annual gains.
The study appropriately obtained parental consent for their children to participate in the study prior to random assignment.

A limitation of this study is that students in the Book Fairs group were dropped from the study sample at the three-year follow-up if they were no longer enrolled at one of the 17 schools conducting the book fairs (on the rationale that they probably did not receive the full intervention). By contrast, control group students were dropped only if they moved out of the school district entirely. This problem – an “intention-to-treat” violation – has the potential to undermine the equivalence of the Book Fairs and control groups. However, in this case, it appears to be at most a limited problem since students in the Book Fairs group who left their school often transferred to one of the other 17 schools providing the book fairs, and so were included in the final sample. As a result, the Book Fairs and control groups had similar rates of sample retention at the three-year follow-up (79% and 76% respectively) and remained similar in observable pre-program characteristics, as noted above.

A second study limitation is that its sample was geographically concentrated in two Florida school districts. The Top Tier initiative’s Expert Panel believes that replication of the above findings in a second trial, conducted in another setting by the same or other researchers, would be desirable to confirm that the program is effective in other settings where it would normally be implemented.

IV. Summary of the Intervention’s Benefits and Costs:

If taxpayers fund implementation, what benefits to society can they expect to result, and what would be their net cost? The following table provides a summary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits To Society</th>
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<td>An increase in students’ reading achievement by 35-40% of a grade level, three years after random assignment.</td>
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<th>Net Cost To Taxpayers</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost was not explicitly reported, but consists mainly of supplying each student with 12 free books per year (which suggests a total three-year cost of $175-$225 per student).</td>
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</table>

V. References:

Main study

Ten Principles for Looking at Reading Lessons

1. Nothing is better than reading and writing to develop students’ reading and writing.

Do kids read for at least one hour each school day? Do kids write for at least one-half hour each day? Do most kids read at home evenings, weekends and over the summer?

2. Most reading should be easy reading (high accuracy/good comprehension). An 80/20 ratio (easy to harder) seems about right.

Do all students have texts of appropriate complexity? Is most reading high success reading? Across day? Do they choose some of the books they read in school?

3. Students do not develop comprehension strategies by answering questions after reading.

Are active comprehension strategies explicitly modeled on a daily basis? In content subjects as well as reading sessions? Is literate conversation modeled? Do students write daily to foster understanding?

4. Students do not develop composing strategies from red ink corrections (nor from just writing).

Are composing strategies explicitly modeled in front of students on a regular basis?

5. Students do not develop decoding strategies from drills or dittoes (nor from just reading).

Are useful decoding strategies explicitly modeled on a regular basis? Is decoding instruction linked to spelling/composing? Is daily coaching of decoding strategies in context offered?

6. Students benefit from an integrated, content-oriented reading/language arts curriculum.

Are the interrelationships between the language arts obvious in the curriculum students experience each day, each week, each year? For instance, is the decoding strand linked to the spelling/composing strand? The composition strand to the comprehension strand? Do each day’s instructional activities exhibit linkages? Do students learn useful content during their reading lessons?

7. Some students need access to larger amounts of more intensive expert instructional support and enhanced opportunities to read and write with instructional support.

Do lower-achieving students (e.g. Title 1, learning disabled) participate in instructional support efforts that substantially increase the amount of reading and writing they do each day? Are most instructional groups restricted to 2-3 students? Is expert instruction provided? Is personalized instruction provided?

8. Thoughtful literacy is the new goal for reading and language arts instruction.

Basic literacy/minimum competence will no longer suffice.

Do daily school assignments emphasize summarizing, organizing, synthesizing, comparing, analyzing, creating, and presenting texts? Is discussion of texts a daily event? Are students asked to make connections between texts they have read?

9. Developing independent, engaged readers and writers is critical to developing thoughtful, lifelong learners. Easy access to books is critical support for fostering independent reading activity.

Do classrooms have large and enticing supplies of books and magazines nicely displayed and available to read at school and home? Are there many texts that can be read successfully by the lowest-achieving students? Is the school library open weekends and summers?

10. Access to consistently high-quality classroom instruction is more important than the sort of parents students have or the special programs they attend.

Good classroom instruction is absolutely central to student achievement. Do not expect either parents or special programs to solve students’ literacy learning problems. Is every classroom providing all students with appropriate instruction?
Summer Reading:
Closing the Rich/Poor Reading Achievement Gap

Edited by Richard L Allington and Anne McGill-Franzen
Foreword by Gerald G. Duffy

“Summer Reading shows us how to make voluntary reading programs work, especially for low-achievers. This could be the foundation of a reform movement that stands a chance of closing the achievement gap between rich and poor that haunts American schools.” —P. David Pearson, University of California, Berkeley

“Few interventions hold such promise for narrowing the growing reading achievement gap between low- and high-socioeconomic-status students. This book draws attention to this worthy topic and offers ways to channel that attention into concrete policies and practices. As a scholar focused on issues of equity in literacy education, I will definitely have a copy of this book on my shelf.” —Nell K. Duke, University of Michigan

“The solution to the problem of the achievement gap in literacy development is right here: Simple, obvious, and supported by massive evidence.” —Stephen Krashen, professor emeritus, The University of Southern California

“Give a copy of this book to every parent, teacher, school administrator, and policymaker you can find and urge them to read it.” —Peter Johnston, The University at Albany, State University of New York

Summer reading loss accounts for roughly 80% of the rich/poor reading achievement gap. Yet far too little attention is given to this pressing problem. This timely volume now offers not only a comprehensive review of what is known about summer reading loss but also provides reliable interventions and guidance.

Written by acknowledged experts and researchers on reading, remedial reading, and special education, this collection describes multiple models of innovative summer reading and book distribution initiatives. It also provides research-based guidelines for planning a successful summer reading program, including tips on book selection, distribution methods, and direction for crucial follow-up. Most important, the authors clearly show how schools and communities can see greater academic gains for students from low-income families using the methods described in this book than from much more costly interventions.

Chapter 1. Summer Reading Loss
Chapter 2. Interventions That Increase Children’s Access to Print Material and Improve Their Reading Proficiencies
Chapter 3. What Have We Learned About Addressing Summer Reading Loss?
Chapter 4. The Importance of Book Selections: Enticing Struggling Readers to Say, “I Want to Read That One!”
Chapter 5. Taking to the Streets! One Principal’s Path to Stemming Summer Reading Loss for Primary Grade Students from Low-Income Communities
Chapter 6. Making Summer Reading Personal and Local: One District’s Response
Chapter 7. Where Do We Go from Here?
Appendix A. Evidence Summary for Annual Book Fairs in High-Poverty Elementary Schools

Richard L. Allington is a professor of literacy studies at the University of Tennessee and past president of the National Reading Conference and the International Reading Association. His books include No Quick Fix, The RTI Edition. Anne McGill-Franzen is professor and director of the Reading Center at the University of Tennessee. Both authors are recipients of the International Reading Association Albert J. Harris Award for research on reading and learning disabilities.

Contributors: Richard L Allington, Lynn Bigelman, James J. Lindsay, Anne McGill-Franzen, Geraldine Melosh, Lunetta Williams

Language and Literacy Series


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