

*“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for.”*

*- President Barack Obama*



*Rtl –  
Teaching  
Every  
Child*



Dr. Richard Allington

**ARCTalks**  
ideas worth sharing



## **Summers: The source of the rich/poor reading achievement gap.**

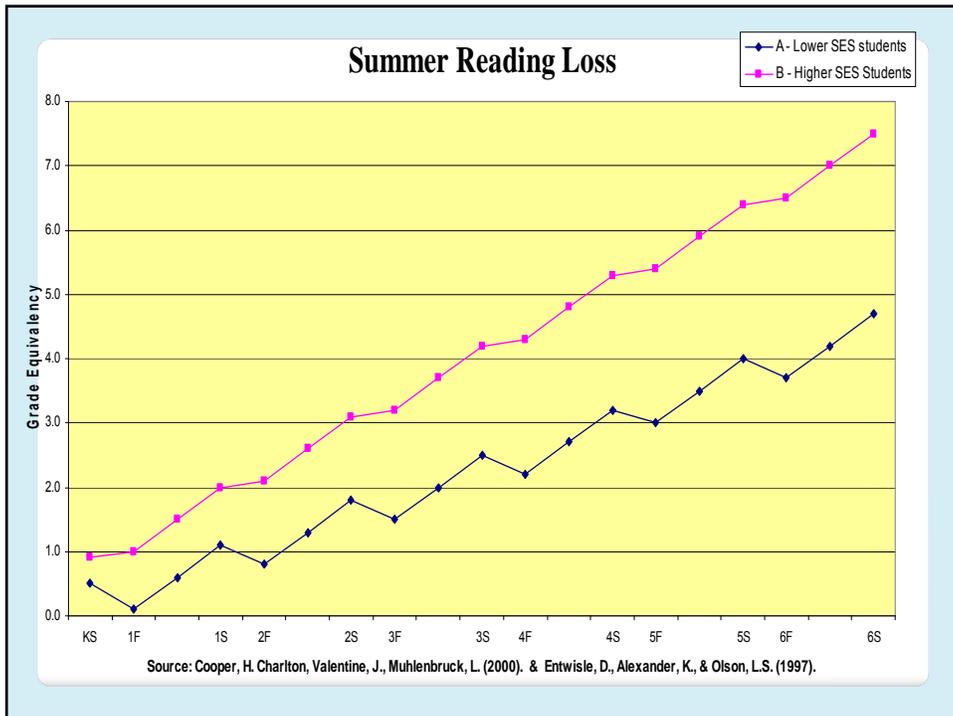
Richard L. Allington, Ph.D. and Anne McGill-Franzen, Ph.D.

University of Tennessee

- **The Black/White reading achievement gap is 50% smaller today than it was in 1980.**
- **The rich/poor reading achievement gap is almost 50% larger today than it was in 1980.**

**Succeeding/Failing...**

- We now know much about why the rich/poor reading gap has been widening.
- We now know precisely how summer reading loss works to disadvantage poor children.



- We've actually had information on summer reading loss for almost 40 years!
- But we have largely ignored it until recently.

**Summer reading loss...**

- Heyns, (1978) conducted longitudinal study, grade 6-7:
  - Achievement growth similar during school year
  - Achievement inequalities form/widen during summer vacation

**37 Years ago we knew...**

- "The differential progress made during the four summers between 2nd and 6th grade accounts for upwards of 80% of the difference between economically advantaged all-white schools and the all-black and Puerto Rican ghetto schools." (Hayes & Grether, p. 64)

**30 years ago we knew...**

- Alexander, Entwisle, Olson (2007) follow cohort from K to 9:
  - "the achievement gap across social lines widens over time for reasons have nothing at all to do with schools." p. 11

**And today...**

### How large is the rich/poor gap?

- By 12<sup>th</sup> grade the gap is 4+ years.
- Low-income 12<sup>th</sup> graders read as well as middle income 8<sup>th</sup> graders.
- And 50% of low-income have already dropped out of school by 12<sup>th</sup> grade!

### SES matters

- It is children from low-income families who are most likely to experience summer reading setback.
- But also struggling readers from any family income level.
- Actually, any child who doesn't read over the summer months.

- **Students from low-income families typically lose 2-3 months of reading development on average every summer.**
- **Students from middle-income families average about 1 month reading gain every summer.**
- **Creates an annual 3-4 month gap every year.**

- **That annual 3-4 month gap means students from low-income families fall behind roughly 1 year every 2 1/2 to 3 years...**
- **By 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade kids from low SES families have lost 2+ years of reading proficiency during the summer months!**
- **Regardless of the school they attend!**

- **Almost two-thirds of free-lunch children own no books of their own (Binkley & Williams, 1996).**
- **The number of books in a home is a good predictor of education outcomes. Better than family SES (Evans, et al, 2010).**

**Access is critical...**

- **Poor kids rely on school libraries because they live where:**
- **There are no bookstores**
- **No books for sale anywhere**
- **Even newspapers hard to find**
- **Limited access to public libraries.**

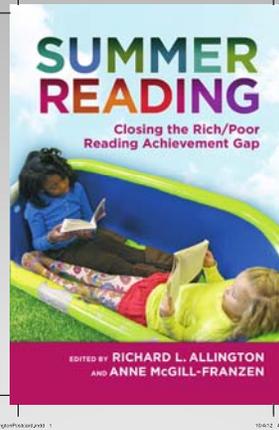
**Print poor neighborhoods...**

## What about public libraries...

- Some low-income neighborhoods have public libraries but these libraries are more often rated “child unfriendly” than libraries in other neighborhoods (McGill-Franzen, et al, 2003; Neuman, 2009).

## We can, but will we?

- Put books in their hands all summer long.
- Help them find books they can read and books they really want to read.
- We can close the rich/poor reading gap but to do so we have to begin to worry more about summer reading activity.



Look for our latest book, *Summer Reading*, from Teachers College Press.

### Other models for summer books...

- Schools around the nation (and in Canada also) have designed their own summer books initiatives.
- Open the school library during the summers.
- Empty the school library and classroom bookshelves of books every summer.
- Give kids 3 books and then provide an exchange evening two or three times each summer.
- Provide a bookmobile to visit poor neighborhoods.

### Poor kids need summer books...

- Some partnered with community libraries to provide books to kids.
- Some conducted Series Summer Schools where kids selected a series to read in summer school.
- Others found financial resources in their communities to fund book distributions.

### Where there is a will...

- **In other words, where there is a will, they find a way.**
- **Do children from low-income families in your community have books to read every summer?**
- **Books they really want to read?**

- Questions?
- Concerns?
- Ideas?

- [www.teachersread.com](http://www.teachersread.com)