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Scholastic Summer Solutions

Translating Research into Practice

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THE SUMMER READING IMPERATIVE

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on students' reading achievement. Data from the 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicate that only 33% of fourth-graders and 31% of eighth-graders performed at or above the NAEP Proficient level (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). The average student reading test scores in Grades 4 and 8 were comparable to student performance in 1992.

Increasingly, district administrators are turning to summer learning initiatives to accelerate academic recovery efforts. Indeed, a meta-analysis of 41 studies of Grades K–8 classroom and home-based summer reading programs concluded that summer learning initiatives can significantly improve student reading test achievement (Kim & Quinn, 2013: Kuhfeld, 2023).

TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

Scholastic Education Solutions (SES) recognizes that schools do not have time to waste as they consider paths to accelerate student learning. That is why SES incorporates eight research-based practices into its summer offerings:

1. Offer Evidence-Based Code-Focused and Meaning-Focused Instruction

Code-focused (phonological awareness, letter/word fluency, morphological awareness, phonics knowledge, decoding skills, and sight word recognition) and meaning-focused instruction (content knowledge, literacy knowledge, vocabulary, language structure, verbal reasoning, theory of mind, and writing) are the two most significant predictors of skilled reading (Duke & Cartwright, 2021; Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Scarborough, 2001).

LitCamp: Each lesson centers on a read-aloud of an engaging authentic text, followed by whole-group, small-group, and independent learning activities focused on vocabulary, literacy/language structure, verbal reasoning, and writing that reinforce essential skills and extend comprehension. Bunk Builder Kit resources support critical phonemic awareness, decoding, word-reading, and sentence-writing skills.

Scholastic Scholar Zone Summer: The curriculum includes short, engaging fiction and nonfiction texts that immerse students in close reading and support fluency development. Read-aloud texts develop comprehension skills, build background knowledge, and connect students with diverse texts and relatable characters. Exciting cross-content magazine articles enrich knowledge and spark discussions that elevate speaking and listening skills.

My Books Summer: Take-home book packs include Weekly Reader Summer Express Workbooks, which have more than 100 skills-based pages and activities to reinforce reading, writing, and phonics skills.

2. Make Instruction Responsive

Children obtain literacy skills at different rates because their experience and knowledge vary (Darling-Hammond, 2018). Data show that instruction is more effective when it uses assessments to measure students' response to instruction (Lai & Schildcamp, 2019).

LitCamp: The program includes word-reading skills assessments that allow teachers to pinpoint students' strengths and weaknesses and adjust instruction based on student needs. LitCamp assessment rubrics can be used as observational tools to help teachers focus on and evaluate important milestones in the developmental literacy continuum.

Scholastic Scholar Zone Summer: The evaluation tools on the digital platform allow teachers to assess students on an ongoing basis, providing teachers and administrators with metrics to differentiate instruction.

My Books Summer: The program includes a Summer Reading Journal where students can record and rate the books they read. Parents and teachers can use the rating option to engage students in conversations about a specific literary quality or interest in the topic.

3. Foster Equity and Belonging

Research shows that school belonging is a powerful predictor of reading achievement (Hughes et al., 2015; Korpershoek et al., 2020; Reynolds et al., 2017). Data indicate that students learn best when they can relate what happens in school to their cultural contexts and experiences and when they feel like they belong in their learning environment.

LitCamp: LitCamp lessons build empathy and belonging by connecting teachers and students through campfire songs, read-alouds, drama, vocabulary, writing, and storytelling. The program includes culturally relevant texts that reflect student interests, spark engagement, and put students on the path to becoming lifelong readers.

Scholastic Scholar Zone Summer: The program includes diverse magazine articles that inspire students to learn about their own identity as well as the identities of others, building empathy and understanding.

My Books Summer: With Self-Select Online, students can choose from 2,000 cross-cultural and thematic books and 400 digital titles, promoting ownership of their reading journeys and providing opportunities for them to connect to their daily lives.

4. Promote Student Well-Being

Data strongly show that children's well-being and ability to manage their emotions and relationships influence reading achievement (Yu et al., 2023). Because students learn most when they feel safe and supported, and learning is impaired when they are traumatized or overcome with emotions, research strongly supports teaching students social and emotional skills—not just academic ones (Osher et al., 2011).

LitCamp: LitCamp aims to build students' literacy skills and cultivate their overall well-being through a framework called the 7 Strengths—belonging, curiosity, friendship, kindness, confidence, courage, and hope. By incorporating these concepts into the reading and writing instruction, combined with an engaging summer camp approach, LitCamp offers robust and engaging lessons that harness students' literacy skills development and promote student well-being.

Scholastic Scholar Zone Summer:
The program intentionally addresses students' well-being with BellXcel Explorers, a whole-child curriculum with lessons, STEAM enrichment, field trips, physical activities, and supporting teacher resources.

Rigorous third-party evaluations confirm that Scholar Zone's model for summer programs show growth in key social-emotional competencies such as growth mindset, self-regulation, self-awareness, responsible decision-making, and self-confidence.

Explorers by Arly is a life skills enrichment curriculum carefully designed to positively impact the culture and climate of a summer program.

Routines promote and reinforce positive behaviors with research-based practices.

Life Skills give kids an understanding of and chance to practice each life skill on its own.

Adventures blend learning and life skills with interactive experiences infused with engaging themes.

(Continued) 4. Promote Student Well-Being

Discussions guide kids through group discussions with the topic, structure, and support.

Connections foster and build relationships and community with active and simple group activities.

The middle school curriculum emphasizes leadership to foster responsibility, compassion, and capability, empowering students to be positive leaders in their communities.

My Books Summer: Students explore topics and skills related to their well-being and personal growth while reading books, which helps them become more knowledgeable, imaginative, and compassionate human beings.

5. Encourage Motivation and Engagement

Students who play a role in selecting their reading materials are more motivated to read, expend more effort to read, and gain a better understanding of texts (Gambrell, 1996; Guthrie, 2008; Schiefele, 1991).

LitCamp: LitCamp engages students in various authentic texts, including Spanish and bilingual texts, amplifying motivation, curiosity, and confidence.

Scholastic Scholar Zone Summer: Students can choose from book-club, read-aloud, and small-group titles to connect with authentic texts that increase engagement and interest in learning. The program includes engaging real-world content and cross-discipline connections, increasing engagement and interest in learning.

My Books Summer: Students have the option to self-select their books, which research indicates, contributes positively to students' reading motivation and comprehension. Additionally, each book bundle has a Summer Reading Journal to encourage reflection and foster student engagement with texts.

6. Promote Reading for Pleasure

Children who read for pleasure and are motivated to read do significantly better at school than their peers who rarely read (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003; Hiebert & Reutzel, 2010; Wilhelm, 2017).

LitCamp: The program introduces children to skills in an engaging camp environment and has been shown to significantly impact students' attitudes and beliefs about themselves as readers.

Scholastic Scholar Zone Summer: Scholar Zone's flexible curriculum connects students to engaging activities that support reading.

My Books Summer: My Books Summer encourages independent reading with books that reflect each student's identity, interests, and reading level.

7. Engage Parents and Caregivers

Family involvement in learning bridges the gap between home and school and makes the school day more relevant to students—increasing developmental outcomes for children (Weiss et al., 2006).

LitCamp: English and Spanish family guides provide tips and activities for extending the LitCamp experience into the home.

Scholastic Scholar Zone Summer: The program is designed to engage families in their children's learning. The BX Family Engagement app shares the program experience via photos, announcements, newsletters, and direct messages. Caregivers can see first-hand how their children are faring in the summer program, increasing family engagement in their children's learning,

My Books Summer: Book bundles include think sheets that provide relatable family activities. BookConnect is a tool families can use for collaborative conversations with book-specific questions and conversation prompts.

8. Offer Strong Implementation Support

Effective summer literacy initiatives involve early planning, offering well-organized curricular materials, promoting consistent attendance, building new skills, and being taught by certified educators (Schwartz et al., 2018).

LitCamp: Includes engaging student-facing instructional decks, digital planning and pacing guides, and 7 Strengths professional learning videos to support instruction and implementation.

Scholastic Scholar Zone Summer: The digital platform offers on-demand professional learning for educators, including staff tutorials and instructional best practices.

My Books Summer: The digital program guide provides educators with implementation support and family resources, ensuring robust program implementation.

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