

## The Impact of Summer Learning Loss on Literacy

Over the past several decades, researchers have demonstrated that there is a seasonal aspect to student learning (Cooper et al., 1996; Cooper, et al., 2000; Alexander et. al, 2001; Downey et al., 2004; and Alexander et al., 2007). During the school year, students learn at similar rates. Over the summer, however, those students who do not have access to learning opportunities fall behind (Alexander, Entwisle, and Olson 2001; Downey, Broh, and von Hippel 2004; and Alexander, Entwisle, and Olson 2007). For literacy skill development in particular, this issue serves to further intensify the achievement gap. All students lose math skills over the summer, but summer disproportionately impacts the literacy skills of lower-income students. In contrast with higher-income peers who make gains, low-income students experience substantial loss in reading skills, creating a three-month gap on average (Cooper et al., 1996). These losses are also cumulative. Smaller gaps between peers in elementary years can significantly increase over successive summers, resulting in a more pronounced achievement gap by high school (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2001).



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## Effects of Poor Reading Achievement

The serious risks that summer poses for low-income youth has consequences that extend beyond the classroom, lowering chances of high school graduation and workforce success (Annie E. Casey, 2010). This data presents serious risks for low-income children who are among the least proficient readers (Annie E. Casey, 2010).

## Evidence that Effective Programming Works

The good news is that summer learning opportunities have proven effective in addressing this gap (Cooper, et al., 2000). A 2011 report by RAND demonstrated not only the possibility of mitigating losses, but even of achieving gains during the summer. Moreover, summer learning has a lasting impact beyond the following school year, continuing for at least two years after program participation (McCombs, 2011). Summer reading interventions have also shown the greatest impact on low-income children (Kim and Quinn, 2013).

## The Impact of the Right Assessments

Evidence suggests that merely providing more books and encouraging children to read does not have a strong impact on poor readers (NRP, 2000; Kim, 2008). It is important, then, to find solutions that will work. In order to do so, assessments are a critical tool that helps to identify which students need support; to develop curriculum and activities that will make an impact; and to demonstrate program effectiveness.

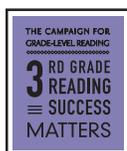
» **Early Prediction.** Early identification of literacy challenges is critical for future academic success, which makes the need for effective assessment tools essential.

One study found that poor readers at the end of the first grade run the risk of long-term academic challenges, with students having an 88% possibility of remaining poor readers in fourth grade if their reading skills were poor in first (Juel, 1988).

## » Tailored Curriculum and Program Effectiveness.

Assessments not only help to identify those students most at risk, they are an important tool to develop a tailored curriculum to target specific skills and to determine the impact of a program on student outcomes.

Research has demonstrated clearly that quality summer learning opportunities contribute significantly to third-grade proficiency. This has, however, also created the need to understand better which interventions are most effective, and for which populations. Data from assessments allows programs to understand their own impact, and also contributes more broadly to knowledge in the field about the way in which specific features—such as program design and implementation, staff training, curriculum and activities, teacher-student ratio, and dosage—impact literacy skills for low-income youth.



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## Summer Learning Systems and Data Management

Over the past several years, the National Summer Learning Association's (NSLA) work within local communities has demonstrated the need for strong cross-sector summer learning systems to support the work of individual summer learning systems. While programmatic quality is an essential component to preventing the erosion of literacy skills, it is through robust systems that communities are able to collaborate, engage champions, leverage resources, share data, establish quality standard and tools, and build community-wide awareness of needs and opportunities.

For assessments, a strong community-wide summer learning system plays a critical role in allowing data to be used in the most effective way possible, and to track longitudinal data over multiple years. When a system can demonstrate impact through effective assessment, it can also serve as a catalyst that allows for greater coordination of efforts and resources among community stakeholders.



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Effective summer learning systems have a process for data sharing, collection, and analysis across summer learning stakeholders, and they track data on scope, scale, access, quality, and outcomes within the community.

- Richmond's ability to demonstrate progress after their initial launch of a grant-funded intervention resulted in increased investment from local funders.
- In Kansas City, positive results from assessments prompted the district to make a greater commitment to summer learning. This also led the district to require a standard assessment to be used across all programs to allow for better comparison of results community-wide.
- The impact of having reliable data in Marvell-Elaine has been increased investment from funders and a greater collaboration from both the district and other partners.

### Building Collaboration around Data

Because schools are required to track data, they are often one of the best resources for understanding the impact of summer learning on students. One challenge providers often face is how to build relationships with districts that allow for effective sharing of data. A few best practices include the following:

**» Work with the district to develop a clear policy around data sharing.** Schools have an obligation under federal law to safeguard confidential student data, and thus are not obligated to provide it. Ask the district if they have a statement about data sharing. If not, work together to develop a governance committee—which should include not only IT specialists, but a wide variety of community members—to get more systematic about how, with whom, and for what purpose data are shared. This not only allows for the development of a specific data-sharing agreement, but can also minimize challenges that arise with changes in district leadership.

**» Approach the district with a clear sense of purpose.**

Develop a well-articulated statement about your goals and how your work supports school-year learning. Be clear about what it is you want and how you will use the data. Rather than asking a district to provide any and all student information, make a specific ask that is clearly connected to a demonstrable purpose. For example, if you want to identify students for program participation, ask the school to provide a list of youth who are most at-risk to target for outreach. Establishing credibility in using data responsibly may open the door for further sharing of data around common goals.



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**>> Develop capacity for data management.** Often programs do not have policies about data nor do they have in-depth knowledge of federal regulations regarding encryption of emails, data storage, and other aspects of data management. Additionally, many programs do not have adequate staff capacity or training to analyze and interpret data. Training staff and developing clear policies are important steps in building trust that data will be treated appropriately.

**>> Engage local funders.** Funders often have a vested interest in understanding the impact of their investment, and may be tracking data from a number of programs. This often places key funders in the community in a strategic relationship to broker relationships between districts and programs, and encourage sharing of information to further mutual goals.



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BOSTON SUMMER LEARNING PROJECT, BOSTON, MA



## When District Data Isn't Available.

One challenge often experienced by programs is the difficulty in getting data from districts. Even if districts are willing to share data with programs, it is often not available in time to be useful for program planning, or in a format that allows for easy analysis. Some ways to address this include:

**Conducting pre- and post-program data at the program level:** This can happen in conversation with the district about which test they use, and what may be appropriate.

**Richmond Public Library's summer program model was initially designed and piloted through a grant-funded partnership with Virginia Commonwealth University. Through this relationship, they selected assessment tools that were aligned to the program design.**

**Approaching a local funder to hire a researcher:** This might serve not only to increase local district capacity around data so that it can be used and shared more effectively, but also to create a sense of shared purpose between summer providers and schools.

**In Kansas City, the local campaign community worked with the Kansas City Area Education Research Consortium (KR-AERC), a local university-based research consortium, to collect and analyze summer learning data.**

**Marvell-Elaine worked with The University of Arkansas at Fayetteville to gather information and to enhance service and reporting of activities in the community.**

## Settings for Summer Literacy Instruction

While the demand for summer learning opportunities is high (51% of households not participating in summer programs said they would if one was available to their child or children), there are not enough formal opportunities available for all youth. In addition to the problem of access, many families experience barriers to participation, including the cost of formal programs, which in 2015 was an average of \$280 per week (*Afterschool Alliance, 2015*). Low-cost solutions—both at home and in the classroom— not only help meet demand, but have proved effective if proper supports are provided (*Kim, 2008*).

Literacy skills taught over the summer often occur either within classrooms or at home (*McCombs et al., 2011*). Classroom settings can be formal or informal, but include those that are shaped by teachers who develop learning activities (*Connor, Morrison & Katch, 2004*), and either focus on remediation or preparation in the skills needed for success in the following academic year (*McCombs et al., 2011*). Literacy instruction in the home often focuses on providing access to a variety books and fostering a desire to read (*Allington et al., 2010; Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Heyns, 1978*).

### Enrollment-Based Summer Learning Opportunities

Enrollment-based programs are held for several consecutive weeks of the summer the months, have a focused literacy component built into the curriculum, require participants to register, and often track attendance over the course of the program. While some formal programs are offered at no cost, many programs include a fee and/or a selection process by which students are included for program participation. Enrollment-based programs assess students through both formal and informal evaluations.

Many formal programs integrate both qualitative and quantitative assessments to better understand the unique components that contribute to student success (*Hanover Research, 2013*). Common ways that enrollment-based programs assess their program effectiveness using quantitative measures include: pre- and post-testing, standardized test scores, and report cards. Qualitative measures of program success often include data from surveys and questionnaires from stakeholders (*Hanover Research, 2013*).

» **Energy Express** is a six-week summer program in West Virginia serving first through sixth grade students in poor, rural communities. Their vision is to “create a print-rich environment that makes reading meaningful in the lives of children.” Students spend 3½ hours per day engaged in a variety of activities connected to a weekly theme to help develop reading and writing skills. They assess program success both through the **Woodcock Johnson Test of Achievement** (which has consistently shown at least 70% of children maintaining or increasing scores), and through community service projects completed by the students.

» **Hasbro Summer Learning Initiative** serves low-income youth in first through twelfth grades, with a focus on preventing summer reading loss by offering literacy supports. In addition to using DIBELS for pre- and post-program testing, there is often a culminating event that provides a showcase of student learning over the summer, which has included videos, camping expeditions, and performances.

### Drop-in Summer Learning Opportunities

Drop-in summer learning programs refer to those settings in which educators provide resources, curricula, and activities to facilitate literacy skills, but do not require a formal registration and enrollment process. These programs operate on a regular basis, but do not have a formal enrollment and selection process for participation, and are usually offered at no cost to participants.

One strategy that some drop-in programs have used is having measures for qualitative data to track program efficacy. In these cases, it is often helpful to track data in an ongoing way in order to capture the variety of students who participate over the course of the summer.

» **The California Library Association and the California Summer Meal Coalition** have been working together over the past several summers to pair library activities with serving summer meals. The **Lunch at the Library** program takes place at a number of libraries across the state, each of which are required to collect weekly data through surveys of program participants. Results of the survey indicate a high awareness by participants with regard to accessing library resources, including books, computers, and information, in addition to the library summer reading programs. A significant number of participants also reported feeling safe, happy and good about themselves.

» **Rahm’s Readers Summer Learning Challenge** is a free drop-in program run by Chicago Public Libraries in partnership with the Museum of Science and Industry. Youth age 5-13 are eligible to participate by tracking their daily reading, as well as “discover” and “create” activities. Incentives are offered for meeting various goals. Research conducted by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago used standardized testing as a way to evaluate the progress of program participants. The students who were most engaged in the program saw a significant impact on their performance, often performing better on tests than peers from similar backgrounds.



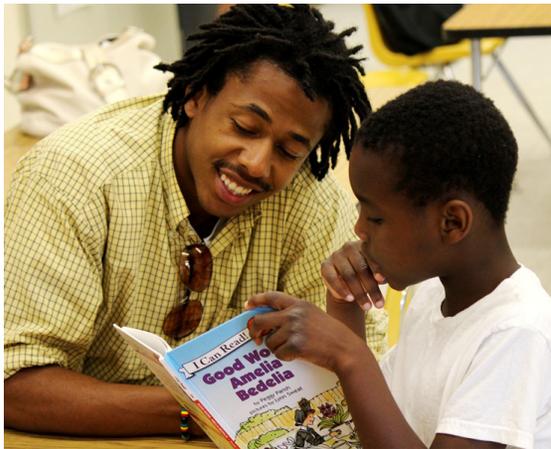
# 51%

of parents surveyed reported that they wanted summer learning experiences for their children.

## At-Home Summer Learning Opportunities

At-home settings refer to intentionally-crafted strategies to foster literacy skills for youth over the summer months outside of a classroom and without the ongoing support of teachers. These are usually free, and may include the following practices: end-of-school-year lessons around summer reading; pairing children to appropriate books for their reading levels; and fostering parental support for at-home reading (McCombs et al., 2011). One of the ways that communities have tracked at-home summer learning include online platforms.

» **MyON** is one example of a digital platform for literacy learning that is well-suited to at-home summer learning. The personalized literacy environment offers access to thousands of enhanced digital books, which are matched to each individual student's interests, Lexile® reading level and grade level. Students can access and complete reading and writing projects assigned by their teachers,



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and track their own progress. Embedded metrics monitor student activity and growth, with real-time reports available for individual students and in the aggregate for groups, classes, schools and districts.

» **The Arizona Summer Reading Program** provides resources for students to access books and to track their daily reading, encouraging students to read for twenty minutes a day. The program is offered through collaboration between schools, public libraries, and state and local agencies. Families participate by signing up through their local libraries, where they will receive a reading log or the option to track their reading online. Resources help parents find books that match their children's interests and Lexile® reading level.

The amount of independent reading in which children engage has a strong correlation to increased literacy skills, including both fluency and comprehension (Cullinan, 2000). Despite the variety of approaches, when the appropriate supports are provided, at-home reading interventions have proved very effective in curbing summer learning loss (Allington et al, 2010; Kim and White, 2008).



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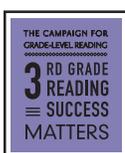
## Choosing the Best Assessment for Your Program

Because there are a wide range of summer learning environments, there is no one assessment that will work for all summer programs, nor will all programs demonstrate the same outcomes. In choosing an assessment, there are several things to consider, including:

### Dosage:

It is important to understand that programs with more intensity will make more progress. Time spent on direct instruction and increased opportunities for students to engage with words, both reading and writing, will make a difference in terms of outcomes.

In addition, exposure to summer learning over multiple summers can significantly impact outcomes. One study found that only students who attended a program consistently for two years or more saw positive effects (Borman and Dowling, 2006). Thus, while it is likely an enrollment-based program with daily literacy instruction may demonstrate stronger outcomes than a drop-in program, it may require several summers of consistent learning to achieve grade-level reading proficiency. Programs that work with the same students over multiple years will also have the benefit of knowing the needs of the students, and tailoring curricula appropriately.



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### Alignment of Curricula and Assessment Measures:

Choosing an assessment that is best suited to a particular setting requires developing a clear picture of one's program features, and ensuring that instruction aligns with what is being tested. If this is not thoughtfully considered, donors will perceive that no growth has occurred. If student growth is not aligned to the skills tested, there will be no way to measure the efficacy of the program instruction. Thus, a program that uses a test like DIBELS or AIMSweb—which assess specific discrete reading skills in addition to oral reading fluency—but offers more general literacy instruction may show growth in oral reading fluency. Such a program would, however, likely fail to demonstrate growth in the discrete subskills.

Programs must be prepared to explain which tests they are using and why they are using those tests. Donors will want to see evidence of growth, so choosing tests that align with instruction is important. If a program does not have enough time or opportunities for meaningful instruction, then they would be better off using observations, surveys, and literacy products to show donors instead of standardized tests. For example a drop-in library program could report the number of books read over the summer, show book reviews, and projects completed by students.

### Summative Assessments for Enrollment-based Programs

The following assessments can be used in enrollment-based programs as a formal measure of student achievement, and should be conducted using pre-and post-program tests.

#### DIBELS/AIMSweb

- DIBELS and AIMSweb are designed to assess phonemic segmentation, letter name, initial sounds, word-reading fluency, oral-reading fluency and a Cloze reading task to look at vocabulary and comprehension. The skills on these assessments have been determined to have “predictive validity” in terms of predicting skills needed for proficient reading on high-stakes reading tests at the third grade level.
- Both tests provide programs with the opportunity to do pre- and post-testing because these assessments are efficient, research-based, valid, and reliable.
- Many school districts use these assessments, and if they host the summer program, end-of-year data for their participants should be available from school records. If children attend a program held at a unique location and students come from various schools, gathering end-of-year data can be time-intensive, often making it easier for programs to do their own pre-testing.
- These measures have a unique advantage in that they can be used with progress monitoring probes. If a program is six weeks in length, teachers could choose to administer progress monitoring measures for those students who are most at-risk every two weeks to make sure that their instruction is having the impact needed on student learning and progress.

### Program and Community Resources:

When choosing assessments for your summer program, it is important to consider the staff capacity involved in conducting assessments and analyzing data. If a program doesn't have certified teachers or researchers to help conduct and analyze data, it may be better to opt for informal assessments, which may include measuring student attitudes toward reading, tracking number of books read, or assessing student ability to engage in conversational turn-taking. On the other hand, if you have certified teachers, it is often good to use a combination of formal and informal assessments to develop a clear picture of student progress.

Other resources should also be considered when choosing an assessment for summer programming. Thus, for example, the STAR assessment's computer-adaptive assessment may offer a time-efficient solution for summer programs, but is not well-suited to programs without easy access to computers.



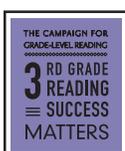
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### STAR Assessment

- STAR Early Literacy is a computer-based assessment of early-literacy skills tailored for Pre-K to third grade that focuses on:
  - » Word Facility and Skill (Alphabetic Principle, Concept of Word, Visual Discrimination, Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Structural Analysis, and Vocabulary);
  - » Comprehension Strategies and Constructing Meaning (Sentence-Level -Comprehension, and Paragraph-Level Comprehension); and
  - » Numbers and Operations (Early Numeracy)
- This computer-based assessment is often chosen by summer programs that participate as part of a network of programs. In order to compare standard measures, it is important for programs that are replicated across a city, state, or country use similar assessments to monitor progress in terms of eliminating the summer slide and making gains in student learning.

## Common Summative Literacy Assessments

	Grades/ Ages	Administration	Letter Knowledge	Phonemic Awareness	Decoding	Fluency	Reading Comprehension
Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)	K-3rd	Individually	X	X	X	X	X
Early Reading Diagnostic Assessment (ERDA)	K-3rd	Individually	X	X	X	X	X
Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP)	K-12th	Individually		X			
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)	K-8th	Individually or Group		X	X		X
Phonological Awareness Test (PAT)	K-4th	Individually		X			
Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI)	K-2nd	Individually		X	X	X	X
Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE)	K-Adult	Individually			X	X	
Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM)	K-6th	Individually				X	
Gray Oral Reading Test IV (GORT - 4)	Ages 6-18	Individually				X	X
Degrees of Reading Power (DRP)	1st - 12th	Individually or Group					X
AIMSweb Test of Early Literacy	K - 1st	Individually	X	X	X	X	X



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## Ongoing Informal Assessments in Enrollment-Based Programs

Choosing ongoing informal assessments that can guide instruction is helpful for summer programs. These are easy to give and can demonstrate strengths and weaknesses so that a teacher can address the weaknesses for remediation while teaching to the strengths. Some examples of these types of assessments includes those for beginning and advanced decoding and phonemic awareness (<https://www.reallygreatreading.com/diagnostic-decoding-surveys-beginning-and-advanced>).

### \*Assessing Phonemic Awareness

Because phonemic awareness is the foundation of reading at the oral-language level, it plays a critical role in supporting proficient reading, and is a skill that can be assessed informally. Children with weak phonemic awareness struggle with the ability to segment, blend, and manipulate phonemes (that is, the smallest unit of speech within a word). Here are some things to look for when assessing phonemic awareness:

#### Can the Child:

- Match phonemes to identify words that begin with the same sound? (*phoneme matching*)
- Isolate a single sound from within a word? (*phoneme isolation*)
- Blend individual sounds into a word? (*phoneme blending*)
- Break a word into individual sounds? (*phoneme segmentation*)
- Modify, change, or move the individual sounds in a word? (*phoneme manipulation*)

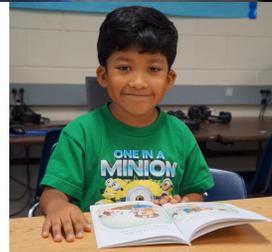
#### What grade levels are these abilities typically achieved?

- Phoneme matching: The middle of kindergarten
- Phoneme isolation – Initial (first) sound: The middle of kindergarten
- Phoneme isolation – Final (last) sound: Late kindergarten or early first grade
- Phoneme isolation – Medial (middle) sound: Late kindergarten or early first grade
- Phoneme blending: Late kindergarten or early first grade
- Phoneme segmentation: First grade
- Phoneme manipulation – Initial (first) sound: First grade
- Phoneme manipulation – Final (last) sound: First grade
- Phoneme manipulation – Substitution: Middle to end of first grade or early second grade

(<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/phonemic-awareness-assessment>)



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## Formative Assessments in Enrollment-Based Programs

The use of formative assessments—those conducted during the learning process—gives teachers feedback so they can adjust their instruction to maximize learning. Doing these assessments throughout the summer session, based on the curriculum taught, gives teachers an opportunity to support the student’s learning by reviewing, repeating, and giving more opportunities for meaningful practice in order to help in areas that have not been mastered. They can include informal assessments that are designed to show a student’s learning based on instruction and the information covered. These are typically teacher-made during summer programs. If you are using a specific summer curriculum, it may come with assessments at the end of each unit of study.

### 1. Incorporating vocabulary and oral language goals within a formal summer learning setting

The use of writing samples can be beneficial during summer learning. Administration of these informal assessments are generally conducted by giving children 20 minutes in which to write, and asking them all to write to the same prompt. Use of one prompt will enable teachers to compare the quality and quantity of samples. Then teachers can come up with specific writing skills to work on during the summer school session and teach to those specific writing skills. They can compare the application of the skills taught to the writing of students by administering a prompt mid-session and/or at the end of the session. Teachers will be looking for growth in skill used throughout all written work, but the pre-post samples can give specific information as to the incorporation and application of skills taught throughout the summer.

## 2. Choosing vocabulary words to teach in a formal summer learning setting

Choosing words that students will encounter with frequency within literature and academic content areas is one way to think about how to select vocabulary. Isabelle Beck's work on the three tiers of word learning can be a useful tool as a guide for which words to choose. Beck describes:

» **Tier One: Easy Words.** These are the basic words most children know already—Sight words and words that describe things in their environment—such as chair, table, boot, shoe.

» **Tier Two: Academic Words.** These are words that children will encounter as they read and learn new content. For example, children may know chair but they may not know throne—a fancy chair for a king or queen, or ice skate—a shoe on a blade. These are words that expand the vocabulary and build background knowledge and concepts at the same time.

» **Tier Three: Specialty Words.** These are specific words needed to understand a particular story or concept, but don't need to be mastered and incorporated into the child's speaking and writing vocabulary. For example, a child may need to know what luminous means just to understand a description of the sun sparkling on the water ([https://www.aea267.k12.ia.us/system/assets/uploads/files/76/which\\_words\\_to\\_teach.pdf](https://www.aea267.k12.ia.us/system/assets/uploads/files/76/which_words_to_teach.pdf)).



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## Informal Assessments

Informal assessments can be conducted in a variety of summer learning environments. Enrollment-based programs that have certified staff may conduct these in conjunction with more formal pre-post testing assessments. In addition, however, these are well-suited to programs that have no certified staff, or as a component of drop-in or at-home learning interventions.

### 1. Choose Goals for Oral Language Development.

Oral language creates the foundation for literacy and supports listening and reading comprehension, as well as writing. If students cannot say a word, they won't be able to write it. Therefore setting goals around oral language development during the summer is a valuable contribution to literacy development. While there is much to do in terms of oral language development, one of the weaknesses seen in children from low socio-economic backgrounds is a lack of exposure to words and conversational turn-taking.

#### Some questions to ask are:

- Does the child ask questions to gain information?
- Does the child answer questions?
- Does the child use complete sentences when speaking?
- How long are the child's sentences when speaking?
- Does the child use varied vocabulary when sharing ideas?
- Does the child enjoy listening to stories and hearing books read?

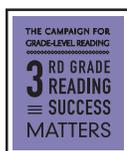
#### Activities that support oral language goals:

- Dialogic reading of storybooks encourages interactions between reader and students.
- Modeling complete sentences when talking can support children by enhancing the quality of their oral responses.
- Games—memory and other simple games—encourage conversational turn-taking between the participants.
- Structured instruction with words teaches students to use words in networks and families.

**For example: Connecting the word UNITY to words like friendship, cooperation, and harmony allows the child to learn related words within a semantic meaning "family."**

- Knowledge webs of vocabulary words teach children to connect strands of knowledge and put the knowledge into complete sentences.

**For example: If students are learning about bats, they can also learn the words nocturnal, mammal, echolocation, and cave.**



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## 2. Use a Survey to Count the Number of Books Read.

- Encourage children to read books independently, with partners, and in book clubs.
- Have children set reading goals for themselves.
- Count every book the child completes.
- Create a simple survey for children to complete, asking whether they enjoyed their book, why, and would they recommend it to others.
- Create a class “Reading Tree.” For each book that is read, the child posts a leaf on the tree with his name and the title of the book. If a group of three children read a book together, they can add three leaves to the tree. When the teacher reads a book to the class, that is also added to the reading tree. By the end of the summer, the tree will be filled with leaves, and the children will feel like readers and will have had the benefit of goal-setting around reading many books.

## 3. Choose a Curriculum or Computer Adaptive Program with Built-in Assessments.

There are many web-based products on the market that use computer adaptive technology to both teach and assess literacy skills. Popular platforms include myON, Raz-Kids and i-Ready. These and similar platforms often include vast digital libraries of book organized by topic and reading or Lexile level. Students can select books based on their interests and take quizzes on the platform to assess their reading level and comprehension before, during and after reading. Student logins can be portable (used at home, school or anywhere) or just used in a center-based program. These platforms typically enable reporting of time spent reading and quiz scores (including reading level) back to school sites and are a great tool for assessing formal, informal and at-home summer reading efforts.

Assessments are a critical component in achieving reading proficiency at grade-level. Clear and effective assessments are used to:

- Identify students who are most in need of literacy interventions
- Customize literacy instruction and activities for maximum impact
- Provide a clear picture of the program’s features that contribute to student achievement.

Yet assessments provide a number of ongoing challenges for summer providers, who often have trouble gaining access to district data on student achievement, and who lack clarity about which assessments are sensitive enough to accurately progress over the summer. In addition, assessments may be time-consuming and expensive. In order to find appropriate literacy assessments, summer learning providers will first need to develop a clear picture of their programs (such as staffing, students served, curriculum, and the length of program) as well as the type of resources available (including whether or not there are trained staff to administer tests and analyze data; if computers are available; if district data is available and accessible; or programs can gain access to students before the program for pre-testing).

Once programs are able to identify and incorporate effective assessments, however, the impact is significant. In the first place, students benefit as programs are better able to evaluate, refine, and adopt practices that contribute to stronger program outcomes, and to identify more clearly the students most in need of opportunities. Beyond the benefits to program quality, communities as a whole often experience significant improvement across summer learning systems. Having and using data well can contribute to collaboration among summer learning stakeholders, better sharing of resources, and increased investment in summer learning opportunities for young people community-wide.



### TIPS FROM COMMUNITIES on Collecting and Using Data

**“Keep it simple and manageable!”**  
Richmond, VA

**“Establish relationships with  
school district personnel, teachers,  
and literacy specialists who  
are trained in assessments  
and data collection.”**  
Marvell-Elaine

**“Use Assessment to demonstrate  
that summer learning works.”**  
Kansas City



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# DECISION TREE

