

Memo

Date: April 17, 2018

To: Seam Campbell, Goochland County Public Schools

From: Deborah Jonas, Director, Regional Educational Laboratory Appalachia and Stephanie Nunn, Goochland County Partnership Lead, Regional Educational Laboratory Appalachia, SRI International

Re: Findings on early literacy summer learning programs

Goochland County Public Schools (GCPS) is seeking information about evidence-based early literacy summer learning programs. GCPS staff expressed concern that literacy assessment results from students in kindergarten through grade 2 indicate that substantial numbers of children may be struggling with early reading. GCPS is interested in supporting students from historically disadvantaged student groups, such as students who are Black and economically disadvantaged. These student groups are at increased risk of losing some of their achievement gains during the summer when they are not in school (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2007; Kim, 2004; Meyer, Princiotta, & Lanahan, 2004). Therefore, GCPS staff are interested in ways the district can support students' literacy development during the summer through innovative opportunities that can be offered outside of traditional summer school programs (for example, library programs, bookmobiles, summer online/learning games, summer camps) with demonstrated effectiveness for improving early literacy outcomes.

This memo describes the available evidence base for four early literacy summer programs and indicates where additional reviews would be helpful to determine their effectiveness.

Key findings

Two summer programs, KindergARTen Summer Camp (which served urban children from low-income households exiting kindergarten) and Teach Baltimore (which served children from low-income households in kindergarten and first grade) have evidence demonstrating a causal impact of program participation on student literacy skills with or without reservations according to WWC standards. The evidence for both programs comes from studies in Baltimore City, an

urban district. The majority of students participating in both studies were from low-income households (90 percent and 85 percent of students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch) and were Black (77 percent and 96 percent). The results of these studies may or may not generalize to Goochland County, which houses a rural school district (according to the federal definition used for the Rural Education Achievement Program).

REL Appalachia (REL AP) staff identified evaluations of additional programs, although definitive causal evidence is not available for these programs. REL AP staff would need to carry out additional reviews to determine whether these programs have evidence that meets moderate or promising evidence in accordance with Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) evidence standards.

The remainder of this memo describes the methods, more detailed results, and potential options for providing additional information to GCPS.

REL AP's process for identifying evidence-based programs

REL AP staff examined the WWC website and searched for relevant literature using ERIC and Google to identify evidence-based early literacy summer programs.

REL AP staff used the following keywords and search strings to search ERIC and Google:

- Early literacy summer program
- Elementary school summer reading program
- Elementary school summer reading curriculum
- Summer school literacy curriculum decoding
- Summer, early literacy, elementary decoding, word recognition, reading comprehension
- Early literacy extracurricular

Preliminary findings on evidence-based early literacy summer learning programs

REL AP staff identified four interventions that target early literacy outside of school hours. Two of these met WWC standards: KindergARTen Summer Camp met WWC standards without reservations and Teach Baltimore met WWC standards with reservations (table 1).

Table 1. Summary of findings on summer early literacy programs from WWC

Intervention Name	Reference	Program Description	Author Summary of Findings	WWC/ESSA Evidence Level
KindergARTen Summer Camp	Borman, G. D., Goetz, M. E., & Dowling, N. M. (2009). Halting the summer achievement slide: A randomized field trial of the KindergARTen summer camp. <i>Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 14</i> (2), 133-147. Retrieved from: https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ855770	<p>KindergARTen Camp is a 6-week summer enrichment program in literacy and the fine arts. Class sizes were limited to 10 students, with the pacing of the morning literacy block determined by student needs. Activities included field trips and different themes. The camp was run by college student interns who worked with certified teachers and participated in weekly professional development workshops with the teachers and other experts. Instructors also participated in a four-week training program on curricula/instruction, assessment, classroom management, parent involvement, and team building before the summer camp began.</p> <p>The study analyzed learning outcomes of students from high-poverty schools in Baltimore, Maryland who were randomly assigned to a treatment group ($n = 93$) or control group ($n = 35$). Some 85 percent of children in the study sample received free or reduced-price lunch and 96% were Black and urban.</p>	<i>From the abstract:</i> “This experiment offers evidence concerning the causal effect of the program on 5 measures of students' literacy achievement. We found treatment effects during the summer months that were of both practical and statistical significance on the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and the Word List A assessments. In addition, results from surveys of KindergARTen Camp students, parents, and teachers revealed strong satisfaction with the program.”	A preliminary review suggests that the ESSA evidence level for this intervention cannot exceed “Promising” because this is not a multisite study as described in the non-regulatory guidance for ESSA .
Teach Baltimore	Borman, G. D., & Dowling, N. M. (2006). Longitudinal	“The Teach Baltimore Summer Academy program begins with 3 weeks of preservice training, in which the volunteer instructors receive training in reading curricula, lesson	<i>From the abstract:</i> “Employing a randomized field trial, this 3-year study explored the effects of a	A preliminary review suggests that the ESSA evidence level for this

Intervention Name	Reference	Program Description	Author Summary of Findings	WWC/ESSA Evidence Level
	<p>achievement effects of multiyear summer school: Evidence from the Teach Baltimore randomized field trial. <i>Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis</i>, 28(1), 25-48. Retrieved from: https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ750483</p>	<p>planning, and classroom management. Two days after training ends, the 7-week summer program begins. The Teach Baltimore day begins with a breakfast for all students. After breakfast, instructors provide 3 hours of intensive reading and writing instruction. In addition to using phonics-based instructional materials, Teach Baltimore instructors help students develop vocabulary and reading comprehension skills through engaging read-aloud activities. At the conclusion of the morning session, staff members serve lunch to all program participants. After lunch, students participate in physical activities, hands-on math and science projects, and educational games, and arts and crafts, and enrichment activities. Students also learn new skills and knowledge through weekly field trips to museums and participation in cultural events offered throughout the Baltimore community. Instructors integrate these outings with classroom activities and help students extend their experiences beyond their classrooms and neighborhood...Teach Baltimore has three main goals: a) prevent summer learning loss, thereby promoting the academic achievement of children from high-poverty communities, with a particular emphasis on reading; b) transform collegiate volunteerism into a focused and effective commitment; and c) create a successful prototype that can be replicated easily and cost-effective." (Borman & Dowling, 2006; p. 28–29). The sample for this study included 686 kindergarten and first grade students from 10 high-poverty, urban schools in Baltimore City.</p>	<p>multiyear summer school program in preventing the cumulative effect of summer learning losses and promoting longitudinal achievement growth...Multilevel growth models revealed no intention-to-treat effects of assignment to the multiyear summer school program. However, student attendance patterns at the voluntary program were variable across the 3 years that the intervention was offered. Maximum likelihood mixture models, which estimated the effects of the treatment for compliers, revealed statistically significant effects on learning across all three literacy domains tested for those students who attended the Summer Academy at an above average rate across two or more of the three summers that it was offered. Relative to their control-group counterparts, treatment compliers held advantages of 40% to 50% of one grade level on the final posttests."</p>	<p>intervention cannot exceed "Promising" because this is not a multisite study as described in the non-regulatory guidance for ESSA.</p>
Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL)	Chaplin, D., & Capizzano, J. (2006). Impacts of a summer learning program: A random	Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL) program is "a summer program designed to improve academic skills, parental involvement, academic self-perceptions, and social behaviors among low-income children and families" (Chaplin & Capizzano, 2006, p. ii).	<i>From the abstract:</i> "The study found that children in the BELL treatment group gained about a month's worth of reading skills more than their counterparts in	This study meets ESSA's "Promising Evidence" level because it is a well-designed and well-

Intervention Name	Reference	Program Description	Author Summary of Findings	WWC/ESSA Evidence Level
	<p>assignment study of Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL). Washington DC: Urban Institute. Retrieved from: https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED493056</p>	<p>“For academic activities, students are clustered in groups of approximately 15 children with each cluster taught by 1 teacher (usually a regular teacher from the public school system) and one experienced teaching assistant (generally an Americorps volunteer or college student). Each week students receive approximately eight hours of literacy instruction (two hours per day, four days a week), four hours of math instruction (one hour a day, four days per week) and 6.5 hours of community time (0.5 hours, four days a week and a Friday 1/2 day field trip). In addition, every Friday students attend a speaker series where they hear from and ask questions of prominent citizens in their community” (p. 4)</p> <p>“In 2005, BELL based its literacy intervention on a new curriculum—Summer Success: Reading—published by Houghton Mifflin. Additionally, to ensure that their program continued to provide a culturally relevant learning experience and assisted in developing social skills and values, they continued to use the multicultural literature they used with the VLF [Voices for Love and Freedom] curriculum. BELL’s 2005 literacy approach also included phonics instruction aligned to the recommendations of the National Reading Panel.” (p. 5)</p> <p>In this study, all students entering grades 1–7 at five sites in Boston, New York City, and Washington, DC, were eligible to apply for the BELL summer program, but the program focuses its recruiting efforts on low-income minority students who are academically challenged and not receiving special education.</p>	<p>the comparison group during the summer. This is a modest, yet notable increase in reading skills for a six-week program. The study also found evidence of positive impacts on the degree to which parents encouraged their children to read. No impacts were found on academic-self perceptions or social behaviors.”</p>	<p>implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias. The authors report statistically significant positive effects on reading and no significant negative effects. The study does not meet WWC version 3.0 standards because the outcomes data in the randomized control trial (RCT) that does were not collected in the same manner for both intervention and comparison groups. See attached evidence template for additional information on the ESSA evidence rating.</p>
Children’s Defense Fund Freedom	Philliber Research Associates (2008). Evaluation of the	“The Kansas City CDF Freedom Schools® Initiative provides a six-week summer program for young people	“Reading abilities of Kansas City CDF Freedom Schools scholars significantly improved over the	This study does not meet WWC version 2.0 standards . Additional

Intervention Name	Reference	Program Description	Author Summary of Findings	WWC/ESSA Evidence Level
Schools	<p>Kansas City CDF Freedom Schools Initiative. Accord, NY. Retrieved from https://www.issueab.org/resources/9198/9198.pdf</p>	<p>in kindergarten through the eighth grade. The CDF Freedom Schools program is designed to have a positive impact on educational enrichment, cultural appreciation, character development, parental support, leadership, and community involvement” (Philliber Research Associates, 2008, p. 1).</p> <p>“Host organizations, usually churches, are responsible for managing the schools. A Project Director oversees each school and is the liaison between the school and the host. Site Coordinators manage the daily operation of the schools and supervise the college-aged interns who work directly with the scholars.</p> <p>Mornings in CDF Freedom Schools are dedicated to reading enrichment. After breakfast, the scholars gather for a half-hour of Harambee, the opening, which includes the reading of a story often by an outside member of the community. There are two sessions of Integrated Reading using literature which has a strong Afrocentric orientation. This, plus the learning activities prepared by the interns, are designed to engage the scholars and motivate them to want to read. The morning ends with DEAR time (Drop Everything and Read) when scholars read silently to themselves (p. 3).</p>	<p>summer. Reading abilities of scholars improved more than similar students not in the Kansas City CDF Freedom Schools program; the reading abilities of students not enrolled in any academic summer program declined. Gains in reading were greater for: older scholars in Level III (sixth through eighth graders); girls; scholars from lower income families; scholars who attended multiple years; and scholars attending schools that implemented the CDF Freedom Schools model best. Parents report that their children demonstrate: greater love of learning; greater appreciation of their culture; greater conflict resolution skills; greater acceptance of responsibility; and greater social adjustment. Parents of comparison students do not report similar growth” (p. 1).</p>	<p>reviews could determine whether the program meets ESSA’s “Promising Evidence” or “Demonstrates a Rationale” evidence level.</p>

Additional resources

REL AP staff identified two summary reports about summer learning and out-of-school programs that may be of interest to GCPS. Below are the summary report citations, abstracts, and excerpted findings about interventions focused on improving early literacy outcomes.

Terzian, M., Moore, K.A., & Hamilton, K. (2009). *Effective and Promising Summer Learning Programs and Approaches for Economically-Disadvantaged Children and Youth*. Washington DC: Child Trends. Retrieved from <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/documents/effective-and-promising-summer-learning-programs.pdf>

- *From the abstract:* “This White Paper summarizes findings from an extensive literature review that was conducted to identify the most promising models and approaches for meeting the needs of low-income children, youth, and families during the summer months. Special attention is paid to summer learning programs that serve diverse, urban low-income children and youth. Data on program participation suggest that children and youth who would stand to benefit the most from summer learning programs (i.e., children and youth who are economically disadvantaged, have low school engagement, and/or exhibit problem behavior) are the least likely to participate. This paper focuses on summer learning programs, as opposed to recreational, wilderness, or child care programs. Summer schools that focus on remediation are also not reviewed. Five types of summer learning programs are reviewed: (1) Educational/Cognitive; (2) Youth Development; (3) Career Development; (4) Health and Fitness; and (5) Multi-element. Experimental and non-experimental studies, as well as informal evaluation reports and papers reporting practitioner insights, were reviewed to identify effective and promising summer learning practices. Program impacts from experimental evaluations were identified for outcomes ranging from math and reading achievement to an increased likelihood of employment. Drawing from a limited number of ten experimental evaluations, we found that reading achievement gains were achieved for a handful of programs, whereas math achievement was less often a program focus and impacts were less consistent. Few impacts were found on high school completion, college enrollment,

and employment. Finally, a lack of evidence was found for youth development and health and fitness outcomes due to the fact that these outcomes were rarely, if ever, evaluated. Several recommendations for practice, research, and evaluation are presented. The literature reviewed, though limited, indicates that programs leading to academic improvement include the following characteristics: making learning fun, interactive, and hands-on, delivering academic content that complements curricular standards, hiring experienced and trained teachers, keeping class sizes small, and encouraging parents to teach children how to become better readers. For disadvantaged students, making programs affordable and accessible, involving parents, and involving the community appear to be aligned with best practices. A bibliography of summer learning and out-of-school time resources is provided.”

- Findings particularly relevant for addressing GCPS’ interests are provided in appendix B on page 35 and 37. Below is a summary of findings on summer early literacy programs adapted from Terzian et al. (2009) (table 2).

Table 2. Summary of findings on summer early literacy programs adapted from Terzian et al. (2009)

	Read to Achieve Summer Literacy Day Camp	Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL)	Teach Baltimore	Voluntary Summer Reading Program	KindergARTen Summer Camp
Findings from WWC Review, version 1.0	Does not meet WWC standards because reviewers could not disaggregate it from another intervention.	This RCT does not meet WWC standards . (also see table 1 above)	This study meets WWC standards with reservations . (also see table 1 above)	na	This study meets WWC standards without reservations . (also see table 1 above)
Reference	Schacter & Jo (2005)	Chaplin & Capizzano (2006)	Borman & Dowling (2006); Borman, Overman, Fairchild, Boulay, & Kaplan (2004).	Kim (2006)	Borman et. al (2007)
Program goals	To improve literacy skills – reading comprehension, decoding, and vocabulary.	To improve academic performance, self concept, and social skills.	To prevent summer learning loss and promote academic achievement.	To improve reading achievement scores.	To boost reading achievement among low-income children.
Target population	Low-income children of color exiting grade 1 (ages 6–7)	Urban, low-income or low-performing elementary school children of color (grades 1–7)	Low-income students in kindergarten and grade 1.	Grade 4 volunteer student participants in 10 schools.	Urban, low-income, students exiting kindergarten.
Duration and dosage	7 weeks, 5 days per week, from 8 am to 5 pm (315 hours)	6 weeks, 5 days per week, 8 hours per day (240 hours)	8 weeks, instruction (including breakfast and lunch times) lasts 6 hours per day, 5 days per week (240 hours)	12–13 weeks. Dosage is unknown because children choose how often to read books that are mailed to them and they may or may not read the books that they receive.	6 weeks, 5 days per week, 7.5 hours per day (225 hours)
Intervention description	Two hours per day devoted to literacy activities that teach decoding, comprehension, vocabulary, and writing skills using the Open Court curriculum. The rest of the day includes summer camp activities, such as swimming,	Intervention components are: (a) academic instruction: two hours of literacy and one hour of math per day, four days/week; (b) parent involvement and participation; (c) two hours per day of enrichment activities and	Three intensive hours of instruction on reading and writing through read aloud/think-aloud activities and phonics-based instruction using the Open Court curriculum. This is followed by physical activities (20 minutes per	Instructor-led, reading lessons in June. 8 books mailed to students biweekly during July and August. Students are encouraged to practice oral reading with a family member and practice reading strategies during	Four days per week, almost 3 hours per day (160 minutes) on building on literacy skills and 1 hour 20 minutes per day on science and art activities. Fridays usually include field trips.

	Read to Achieve Summer Literacy Day Camp	Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL)	Teach Baltimore	Voluntary Summer Reading Program	KindergARTen Summer Camp
	organized sports, art, dance, and music. Participants go on weekly field trips.	physical education; community service projects; and group mentoring by community leaders.	day), hands-on mathematics and science projects, educational games, recreational activities, arts and crafts, and enrichment activities, such as science investigations, foreign language, music and drama, and arts and crafts.	independent, silent reading sessions.	
elected impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants achieved higher reading comprehension scores than children in a control group at 3-, 6-, and 9-month follow up (41 percent, 39 percent, and 18 percent better, respectively). Participants demonstrated better decoding abilities than children in a control group at post-test and at the 3-month follow-up, but no difference in impacts were found at the 9-month follow-up. 	<p>Compared to the control group, BELL participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved reading skills Improved reading test scores. Increased time spent reading books. Increased parental involvement. Did not improve academic self concept or social skills. Did not improve children's effort to solve math problems independently. 	<p>Experimentally-evaluated program with mixed or null findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach Baltimore participants improved reading achievement when compared to the control group but impacts were not statistically significant Improved learning across three literacy domains for Teach Baltimore students who attended at an above average rate across at least 2 of the 3 summers compared to control group counterparts. 	<p>Experimentally-evaluated program with mixed or null findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved Black students' reading scores, but not those of White, Hispanic, or Asian students. No significant impacts on oral fluency. Higher effect sizes (ESs) for reading achievement among students owning fewer than 100 books and among students with reading fluency below national norms. However ESs were small. 	<p>Experimentally-evaluated program with mixed or null findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved word list scores (a small ES of .27) Improved Developmental Reading assessment scores (a small-to-medium ES of .40) Did not improve phoneme segment skills, letter naming skills, or dictation skills.

Note: Information about findings from WWC reviews is not provided in the Terzian et al., (2009) report but comes from REL AP staff's review of the WWC.

Beckett, M., Borman, G., Capizzano, J., Parsley, D., Ross, S., Schirm, A., & Taylor, J. (2009).

Structuring out-of-school time to improve academic achievement: A practice guide (NCEE #2009-012). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED505962>

- *From the abstract:* “Out-of-school time programs can enhance academic achievement by helping students learn outside the classroom. The purpose of this practice guide is to provide recommendations for organizing and delivering school-based out-of-school time (OST) programs to improve the academic achievement of student participants. The five recommendations in this guide are intended to help district and school administrators, out-of-school program providers, and educators design out-of-school time programs that will increase learning for students. These recommendations are: (1) Align the OST program academically with the school day; (2) Maximize student participation and attendance; (3) Adapt instruction to individual and small group needs; (4) Provide engaging learning experiences; and (5) Assess program performance and use the results to improve the quality of the program. The guide also describes the research supporting each recommendation, how to carry out each recommendation, and how to address roadblocks that might arise in implementing them. The scope of this practice guide is limited to programs that (1) serve elementary and middle school students; (2) are organized by or conducted in partnership with a school or school district; and (3) aim to improve academic outcomes.”
- “Table D1. Studies of OST programs that met WWC standards with or without reservations” (page 46) may be of particular interest to GCPS because it provides information about programs that had positive academic effects (see table 3 for a summary of findings on out-of-school time early literacy programs adapted from Beckett et al., 2009).

Table 3. Summary of findings on out-of-school time early literacy programs adapted from Beckett et al. (2009)

Program name and reference	Program type	Program length	Sample size (analysis)	Sample characteristics	Academic assessment measure	Study design and WWC review findings
KinderARTen Borman, Goetz, & Dowling (2008)	Summer	6 hrs per day, 5 days per week, 6 weeks	98	Kindergarten; urban, children from low- income households, low- performing schools, largely non-White	Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), word lists, Developmental Reading Assessment, dictation	Randomized controlled trial (RCT) Meets WWC standards without reservations (see tables 1 and 2)
Summer Reading Day Camp Schacter & Jo (2005)	Summer	9 hrs per day, 5 days per week, 7 weeks	118	Grade 1; urban, children from low-income households, largely non- White	Gates-MacGinitie and SAT 9 Decoding and Comprehension	RCT Does not meet WWC standards (see tables 1 and 2)

Summary and next steps

- REL AP staff identified relevant evaluation studies and summary reports to support GCPS’ understanding of the evidence base for early literacy summer learning opportunities.
- There is evidence of positive impact on early literacy for two programs, both studied in Baltimore, Maryland. The evidence is based on WWC standards version 1.0. No existing information is available to determine whether the programs qualify as meeting strong or moderate evidence of impact under ESSA. ESSA standards require a multisite study, and these two studies did not qualify.

The next steps will depend on GCPS interest.

- GCPS may decide that the information in this memo and associated conversations are sufficient to meet current needs. If so, REL AP staff will not take any additional steps on this project.

- REL AP staff can work with GCPS, if interested, to provide additional information or support on identifying or implementing evidence-based early literacy summer learning opportunities. For example, REL AP staff could:
 - Provide specific details about the evidence available for one or more programs in this memo, such as describing whether the study’s evidence aligns with the ESSA standards or WWC standards version 3.0.
 - Provide support to help GCPS apply the information in this memo to local development of an early literacy summer learning opportunity tailored to meeting the unique needs of GCPS.
 - Provide support to develop and implement an evaluation if GCPS decides to adopt a new approach to summer learning.

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