

## June 2014 Trustee Tip of the Month Summer Reading Program Benefits

Last year 145,681 children participated in Summer Reading Programs at public libraries across Kentucky. A Summer Reading Program is an excellent way to promote your library and build partnerships in your community. But beyond that, why do we do Summer Reading Programs? What benefit do they have for the children who participate?

One of the biggest reasons for a public library Summer Reading Program is to combat a phenomenon known as **summer slide**. During the school year middle-income and low-income children acquire reading skills at the same rate. However, over the months of summer vacation, low-income children lose reading skills, while middle income children steadily gain reading skills. Low-income children return to school in the fall with their reading skills 3 months behind the other children. The reading losses experienced by low-income students over the summer aren't made back up during the school year. They are cumulative year to year. By 6<sup>th</sup> grade as much as 80% of the reading skills gap between children from low and middle-income children can be attributed to summer slide.

The public library is the perfect place to fight summer slide. Studies have shown that regardless of other activities, the best predictor of reading skill loss or gain over the summer is whether or not a child reads. In fact, reading over the summer has been shown to be just as effective at maintaining reading skills as summer school and far less expensive.

Your library can help reduce summer slide in your community by engaging low-income children in your Summer Reading Program. Some best practices for Summer Reading Programs are:

- Children who spend approximately **11 minutes per day** reading score in the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile in reading skills, while children who spend **38 minutes per day** reading score in the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile.
- Children make gains in reading skills after reading just **5 books** over the summer. Libraries should keep this in mind when they set the completion target for their program. Try to set a target that will be attainable for the struggling readers who need the program the most and still reward the kids who will read 5-10 books over the summer anyway.
- Reading motivation improves when incentives take the form of **praise and reading related rewards** like books or bookmarks.
- Children are more likely to read when they are allowed to choose their reading material. During the school year, children are very restricted in what they are allowed to read. It is important that during the summer children be given **free choice** in what they read.
- **Get caught reading.** Children are more likely to read if they see adult role models choosing to read in their free time. Enroll parents in your adult summer reading program along with their kids.

**Schools and libraries both win when they work together** to promote and implement Summer Reading Programs. Schools can encourage enrollment and completion of the program and libraries can help schools keep students reading over the summer and make them ready to continue learning in the fall. During the school year children focus on comprehension, fluency, and technical improvement of reading skills. Public library Summer Reading Programs are unique in that they celebrate enrichment, enjoyment, and sharing a love of reading.

The 2014 Summer Reading Conference will be November 3 & 4 at the Marriott Griffin Gate Resort in Lexington, KY and is a great way for staff to learn more about summer reading and its benefit for all ages. For more information please contact Heather Dieffenbach at [Heather.Dieffenbach@ky.gov](mailto:Heather.Dieffenbach@ky.gov)