

# CODE

Council of Ontario Directors of Education

The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat



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# Do I Have to Go Home Already?

A Report on the 2011 Summer Literacy Learning Project in Ontario Schools

Council of Ontario Directors of Education in partnership with the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat Ontario Ministry of Education

The lead researchers for the 2011 Summer Literacy Learning Project are Dr. Janice Aurini (University of Waterloo) and Dr. Scott Davies (McMaster University). Drs. Aurini and Davies developed the research protocol and analyzed the data used to determine the 2011 primary research findings.

A grant from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council provided the funds to hire research assistants. This additional support helped district school boards to undertake STAR testing and collect and report student data.

### **A Note About the Title**

During one of the 2011 Summer Literacy Learning Program site visits a teacher commented that one of her greatest successes was hearing children telling their parents *“I want to come tomorrow”* and *“Do I have to go home already?”*

When composing the report the authors could not think of a better title than using the words of a 2011 summer literacy learning student. Summer learning is about enjoyment, being connected, feeling confident and maintaining and achieving new knowledge and skills.

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- Huron Perth Catholic District School Board
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- Lakehead District School Board
- Lambton Kent District School Board
- Limestone District School Board
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- Northwest Catholic District School Board
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# Executive Summary

In 2010 and 2011 the Council of Ontario Directors of Education, in partnership with the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat and with support of the lead researchers, coordinated Summer Literacy Learning Projects for selected district school boards.

As in the previous year, the 2011 Summer Literacy Learning Project (the subject of this report) was designed to study and document the effects of a summer literacy program on the reading levels of identified primary students, while offering these young learners an engaging and teacher-instructed experience.

The 2011 project included two major components: a qualitative and quantitative research study, and a summer literacy instructional program designed for students in grades 1, 2 and 3. It's important to note that both the 2010 and 2011 projects were conducted for a particular population; their mandate was not to encompass a representation of Ontario children but instead to serve students in need of early literacy intervention. Educators in participating boards invited students they deemed to be struggling with early literacy, and who would benefit from a summer literacy program. This sample of Ontario students appeared to be more academically and socially disadvantaged than their June 2011 classmates, with the latter forming a representative control group for the research project.

Secondary and qualitative findings in 2011 were very similar to the previous year's study. Once again, teachers and parents alike outlined specific examples of how students gained academically, while noting the summer program's reinforcement of literacy skills, positive social interactions and healthy



"I would like to see a longer program. They were excited about what they learned and have done in the program. They learned a lot. They looked forward to coming everyday...they loved reading buddies and said they had great teachers." – parent

lifestyles. In addition, many teachers discussed how the program's structure presented them with unique opportunities for professional development and collaboration while enhancing their approach to teaching.

For 2011, the levels of parent participation and formalized communication between teachers and parents were significantly increased, with a number of district school boards offering greater opportunities for parents to be more involved in the program, including helping their children with literacy learning and connecting with other parents. Secondary findings also revealed notable improvements in children's literacy skills and confidence, connections to community groups and the promotion of physical activity and healthy food options.

#### Primary research findings of the 2011 Summer Literacy Learning Project

- ◆ Students attending French language summer programs narrowed literacy gaps with their peers, taking into account prior academic and social characteristics. This level of effectiveness represents a successful continuation of last year's French language program.
- ◆ Students attending English summer programs recorded learning gains and narrowed achievement gaps with their peers. *This represents significant progress over last year's English programs.*
- ◆ Increased confidence in the reliability of the Summer Literacy Learning Project results.

As outlined in this report, participating district school boards offered a range of organizational structures, including the duration and scheduling of the program along with hours of instruction. Each board, however, was required to offer a minimum of 45 hours of literacy instruction and to include a recreation component. In addition, full participation in the research protocol was mandatory.

Overall, *the 2011 Summer Literacy Learning Project once again provided opportunities for an enriched summer learning experience for students with limited literacy skills.* 2011 students not only decreased their learning losses, they also recorded summer learning gains and narrowed achievement gaps between themselves and their peers. This represents significant progress over the 2010 results, and boosts confidence in the Summer Literacy Learning Project.

The program's improved effectiveness was likely due to several factors: many district school boards could draw on at least one year of experience when mounting their 2011 summer program; a number of boards shared their knowledge about best practices for summer programs; and CODE and the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat provided more guidance in 2011, most notably in their recommendations that programs be at least 3 weeks in length and overseen by experienced educators.

In summary, the effectiveness of the 2011 summer programs bodes well for the future.

In addition to the project's research findings for 2011, a range of recommendations and considerations are also included in this report:

- Funding and extending the Summer Literacy Learning Project for 2012.
- Extending the 2011 research protocol to guide ongoing development of evidence-based policy.
- Offering pilot projects for summer numeracy learning.
- Developing a research and program planning guide.
- Providing more summer learning opportunities for Aboriginal students.
- Increasing parent involvement and participation in summer programs.
- Requesting that district school boards review their process for inviting students.
- Supporting more opportunities for teachers to acquire literacy and math teaching skills and expand their repertoire of instructional strategies.

In 2011, district school boards once again fully supported the project and were committed to its success. Parents, teachers and students alike have indicated that they would benefit from participating in a 2012 Summer Literacy Learning Program.



# Background to the 2011 Summer Literacy Learning Project

*“Research conducted by Johns Hopkins sociology Professor Karl Alexander and his colleagues shows that low-income youth suffer significantly from a loss of academic skills over the summertime. And the losses pile up, contributing to an achievement gap that can make the difference between whether students set out on a path for college or decide to drop out of high school.... It helps us to realize how important summer learning – or the lack of it – is to academic achievement.”*

(Source: National Summer Learning Association,  
“Summer can Set Kids on the Right – or Wrong – Course”  
[www.summerlearning.org](http://www.summerlearning.org))

## Why a study on summer literacy programs?

The impact of summer learning loss on student achievement, along with closing the gap for students with lower levels of literacy skill development, continues to generate widespread interest. Despite this fact, an initial scan of the literature on summer learning loss would seem to indicate that to date there have been few, if any, major Canadian research studies to determine either the variables that support summer learning, or the degree to which students would benefit through participation in a teacher-instructed summer literacy program.

## Beginnings

In the spring of 2010, the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (“CODE”) was contacted by Mary Jean Gallagher, Chief Student Achievement Officer and Assistant Deputy Minister, Student Achievement Division, to coordinate the organization of a Summer Literacy Learning Project (the “project”) for grades 1, 2 and 3 students in selected district school boards.

The resulting research stemming from the 2010 Summer Literacy Learning Project found that many Ontario students suffered from learning loss during the summer months, particularly those with prior academic problems and from disadvantaged social backgrounds. It also found that summer programs could reduce these losses and, in some cases, narrow achievement gaps.

## Funding

The 2011 project was, once again, funded and supported by the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat as a research-based initiative to support the maintaining and/or increasing of literacy achievement levels for primary school students.

## Key strengths and findings of the 2011 study

Both the 2010 and 2011 findings had several strengths: the samples were large, the measures of summer learning are of high quality, and they have a rich variety of variables. It appears that with the exception of the U.S. Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS), they are the largest samples of this kind collected explicitly to measure summer learning.

The vast majority of Summer Literacy Learning Project children were tested two weeks before and after the summer months; as well, the data contain an unusually rich array of additional measures, including baseline academic variables like prior grades and attendance along with family demographics and activities. (Source: lead researchers Drs. Aurini and Davies). Building on the previous year's study, the 2011 project provided further data on the impact of summer learning programs, while offering invited students a rich summer learning experience.

For the most part, the 2011 findings were closely aligned with the conclusions from the 2010 research study; however, the size of the 2011 study was larger and examined in greater detail the variables that influence the success of summer learning programs. *The most notable change for 2011 was the degree of success students experienced in closing the gap and increasing literacy achievement levels.* In the 2011 study, summer students gained on average two months of literacy skills over their peers who had comparable academic and social profiles. This was a significant change from the 2010 study, which minimized summer learning loss but generally did not raise achievement levels. The quantitative component of the 2011 project aimed to evaluate whether improved designs translated into these enhanced literacy gains.

## What this document does

*Do I Have to Go Home Already? A Report on the 2011 Summer Literacy Learning Project* presents the reader with an opportunity to understand how the 2011 project may provide the impetus for ongoing learning support to minimize summer learning loss. Designed to highlight the successes of the most recent program, this document distills the important information and insights offered by parents, teachers and administrators, and reports on the findings by the lead researchers and their team. It also provides a glimpse into the future for summer 2012 while describing possible scenarios for expansion and refinement.

This report does not provide a comprehensive picture of the research findings detailed in the *Summer Literacy Learning Technical Appendix 2011*. While the *Technical Appendix* is not attached to this report, it is available by contacting the Council of Ontario Directors of Education office at (905) 845-4254 or by emailing your request to Janet Godber at [Janet@OPSOA.org](mailto:Janet@OPSOA.org).



"Keep up what you're doing...My daughter said she will read more now throughout the summer. She thoroughly enjoyed it. It assisted my child with an identified need. There was an excellent teacher: student ratio. It was very comprehensive, and a good balance between literacy, physical activity and socialization. Thanks for all you did for the kids. Excellent program!" – parent

# The 2011 Summer Literacy Learning Project

*“I have been blessed to be able to teach in this summer program. While I have been teaching for 20 years...spending time with these children has opened my eyes to things I need to change within my own program. It has inspired me to change who I am as a teacher and has given me new ideas.”*

– teacher

Note: throughout this report, the 2011 Summer Literacy Learning Project (the “project”) refers to both the research component and the classroom program. The Summer Literacy Learning Program (the “program” or “SLLP”) refers to classroom instruction, teacher professional development, connections with parents and community involvement.

The *purpose* of the 2011 project remained unchanged from 2010:

- (a) Examine and determine the effects of the program on the reading levels of identified primary students; and
- (b) Offer the program in identified district school boards for primary students.

The *objectives* of the project are to:

- 1. Determine if participation in a teacher instructed program impacts on summer learning loss and narrows the gap for selected students;
- 2. Monitor and evaluate individual student growth over the course of the program;
- 3. Provide a meaningful, interesting and quality summer literacy program for primary students; and
- 4. Make recommendations and outline considerations for future implementation of the program in 2012.

As in 2010, the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat provided funding to district school boards to participate in the 2011 project, which was once again coordinated by CODE. The number of summer literacy learning classes allocated to district school boards was based on the estimated number of primary students attending day school programs. District school boards

received \$15,000.00 for each organized class participating in the research study and program.

Teachers and principals were encouraged to invite primary students experiencing literacy achievement gaps, and who may have social and economic challenges to school achievement. District school boards involved in the 2010 project were once again approached to take part. All invited boards committed to the 2011 project.

In 2010, six district school boards declined to participate or withdrew from the program. These same district school boards were approached again the following year; all responded positively to the invitation and joined the 2011 program. In total, the 2011 program included 37 district school boards, 31 English language district school boards and 6 French language district school boards. One English language district school board withdrew during the program.

The 2011 project featured two major components; *research* and *student learning*.

## Research:

Of critical importance to the study was the development of a research protocol, which included testing of the grades 1, 2 or 3 students who would be participating in the learning program over the summer months of 2011. Lead researchers of the 2010 study, Dr. Scott Davies and Dr. Janice Aurini, were again asked to undertake a comprehensive study of summer learning, including the variables that lead to increases in student achievement outside of the regular school year.

For 2011, Drs. Davies and Aurini refined the 2010 protocol used to collect and analyze reliable data from both pupil participants and student control groups. For example, ethics and research approval were obtained earlier in the year to support the 2011 research protocol. In addition, district school boards were asked to identify students who would benefit from participating in the program, and to test students on the STAR assessment platform and submit relevant data on report card marks, attendance and where appropriate, GB+ (French language district school boards) and DRA and PM Benchmarks (English language district school boards).

A parent questionnaire was again used to obtain background and context on each student participant and their family; this questionnaire was also distributed

to the student control group. The return rate for the parent questionnaire was over 50% – a figure that is substantially above the standard for most research projects. (Source: Lead researchers Drs. Aurini and Davies)

Research assistants supported district school board contacts and regional leads, with the boards collecting and then reporting their student data on an Excel spreadsheet. Taken together, this information provided the data for researchers to analyze and arrive at the conclusions leading to the recommendations in this report.

## Student Learning:

The second component of the 2011 project required district school boards to develop and implement engaging summer literacy programs for invited students. To this end, the 2011 program:

- Provided a program for pupils who would benefit from this opportunity.
- Built on what was learned from 2010 by increasing parental involvement and community connections.
- Assisted selected district school boards, based on EQAO data, to increase student achievement and close achievement gaps.
- Identified the components of a successful program and encouraged district school boards to build regional networks and share best practices.
- Reported the research and program findings to the Student Achievement Division.
- Examined learning rates in summer literacy programs and achievement gaps among various groups of students.
- Provided the basis for recommendations for 2012.



“The confidence of the students increased. The first shared reading we did they were quite nervous and quiet. The last shared reading we did, they didn’t want to stop. They were focussed and asked for more time [to read independently].” – teacher

# Comparative Overview of the 2010 and 2011 Summer Literacy Learning Projects

Figures and information are based on available data provided by district school boards and includes only those students participating in the research study.

	2010 Project	2011 Project
Number of District School Boards (Eng)	24	30
Number of District School Boards (Fr.)	4	6
Number of Classes	55	73
Results of the Summer Literacy Learning Project	Results indicated that students participating in the program generally minimized levels of summer learning loss. In a few cases, achievement levels increased. Students gained confidence and were more involved in reading.	Results indicated minimized levels of summer learning loss, increases in literacy learning and narrowing of achievement gaps for a majority of students. Students also became more confident and more engaged in reading.
Timelines of Presentations to District School Boards	Program details including STAR testing information was presented to district school boards in late spring. Regional lead support was not available until May.	Program details including STAR testing information were presented to district school boards in early spring. Regional leads and research assistants contacted district school boards in early spring.
Testing Platform	STAR testing	STAR testing
Hours of Instruction	Daily hours of instruction varied from two hours daily to one district school board offering five hours a day. The majority (11 district school boards) operated a summer learning program for three hours per day.	Daily hours of instruction varied from 1.5 hours daily to three district school board offering all-day combined recreation and literacy programs. The majority (25 district school boards) offered summer learning programs as follows: seven district school boards at 4-5 hours per day; twelve district school boards at 3-3.5 hours per day; six district school boards at 2-2.5 hours per day.

	2010 Project	2011 Project
Recreation Component Per Day	District school boards included a recreational component in the program. Twelve district school boards offered one hour or less of recreation, and nine district school boards offered two or three hours of recreation. One full day program (7.5 hours) included four hours of recreation.	District school boards included a recreational component in the program. Sixteen district school boards offered 0.5 to 1 hour of recreation, six district school boards offered 1.5 to 2 hours of recreation and four district school boards offered 2.5-4 hours of recreation. One full day program (7.5 hours) included four hours of recreation. Three district school boards combined literacy and recreation but did not specify time allocations.
Duration of SLLP	District school boards were required to offer the equivalent of a two-week, half-day program, at least 30 hours of literacy instruction (seven district school boards operated a four or five week program [18 to 29 days], and sixteen district school boards ran a two or three week program [8 to 15 days]).	District school boards were required to offer the equivalent of a three-week, half-day program, at least 45 hours of literacy instruction.  Four district school boards operated a 16-20 day program; thirteen district school boards operated 15 day programs; eight district school boards operated 14 day programs; and seven district school boards ran 10-12 day programs.
Summer Schedule	Generally all district school boards offered the program during July. Twenty-two district school boards started the program in late June or early July, four district school boards ran an August program and one district school board split the program between July and August.	In 2011 more district school boards offered the SLLP during August.  Thirteen district school boards ran August programs; Twenty one district school boards offered programs during July and three district school boards offered programs from mid July to mid August.
District School Board Coordination	Usually superintendents acted as the contact and in many cases delegated the summer program to a district school board lead; in smaller district school boards it was sometimes coordinated by a principal or teacher. In a few cases the district school board lead changed during the program making it difficult to maintain continuity.	Again superintendents acted as the contact and delegated the summer program to a district school board lead or coordinator. More district school boards supported summer literacy learning by appointing a coordinator and having him/her (or a principal) on-site during the summer program.
Number of Classes	Fifty-five classes were funded. District school boards were provided with \$20,000 for each organized class. In some cases district school boards offered additional summer literacy learning classes which were not included in the research study.	Seventy-three classes were funded. District school boards were provided with \$15,000 for each organized class. In some cases district school boards offered additional summer literacy learning classes which were not included in the research study.



	2010 Project	2011 Project
Site Visits by Regional Leads	Twenty-one on-site visits. A number of district school boards were contacted by telephone and some teachers completed a voluntary questionnaire and feedback form.	Thirty-seven on-site visits. Again (and especially in the very northern parts of the province), district school boards were contacted by telephone and email. Some teachers completed a voluntary questionnaire and feedback form. This year there was greater on-going communication with, and support by, the regional leads and contact with the lead research assistant.
Selection of Students	Teachers and principals with parent support identified grade 1 to 3 students who would benefit from a summer literacy program.	Teachers and principals with parent support identified grade 1 to 3 students who would benefit from a summer literacy program. In three district school boards, senior kindergarten students were also invited (with grades 1 to 3 pupils), and a few district school boards reported that exceptional students also participated.

(Sources:

- Site visits/reports by regional leads and teacher reports [English and French].
- Summer Literacy Learning contact chart containing clusters, boards, contacts, sites and teachers [August 2011 version].
- French site visits did not contain information about the number of teachers, hours devoted to literacy and hours devoted to recreation. French language information gathered via email is included in the above chart.)

Regional leads, teachers and district school board coordinators reported that *one significant change in 2011 was an increased level of confidence and capacity in teachers* to use effective instructional literacy strategies while offering an engaging and high-quality summer learning experience for their students – and to do so while meeting the 45 hours of literacy-instruction requirement. As with any new initiative, there were still some organizational and operational considerations to attend to in 2011. However, it was evident that the second summer of the program provided a sustained – and more intense – focus on student instruction using the lessons learned from 2010.

(Source: Site visits/reports by regional leads)



“Seeing the difference in students’ writing from day one throughout the program. The confidence that they showed was significant and they began to take risks as the weeks went by.” – teacher

# Research: Primary Findings

## Significant findings from the 2011 project:

- ◆ Taking into account prior academic and social characteristics, students attending French language summer programs narrowed literacy gaps with their peers. This level of effectiveness represents a continuation of last year's French-language program success.
- ◆ Students attending English summer programs recorded summer learning gains and narrowed achievement gaps with their peers. *This represents significant progress over last year's English programs.*
- ◆ The recurrence of many patterns of results over two years of the project boosts confidence in the reliability of the research.

## Research Aims and Methods:

The quantitative component of the 2011 research protocol had one clear aim: to evaluate whether the 2011 summer programs boosted student literacy. This evaluation required three types of data to be merged: measures of student literacy in spring and fall; report card information from district school boards; and parent surveys. Literacy gains/losses were compared between summer attendees and control groups that were comprised of the summer students' school year classmates.

The French-language component generated data on 253 children (118 summer participants and 135 controls). Among these, 115 summer participants and 116 controls had full literacy data, and 162 had matched parent surveys. The English-language component generated data on 886 summer participants and 3,469 controls, though only 1,072 students in total (342 summer attendees and 730 controls) had full literacy, report card and survey data. Nonetheless, *in both French and English district school boards, return rates for the surveys were impressive and well above industry standards.*

One addition to the 2011 English research protocol was that district school boards recorded which students were invited to the program, but did not attend. This group offered a strategic comparison to summer attendees,

since they too were deemed by their teachers to need a summer intervention. Note: this report refers to invited non-attendees as the “direct control group” and to all controls as the “full control group.” All data are summarized in the **Technical Appendix**.

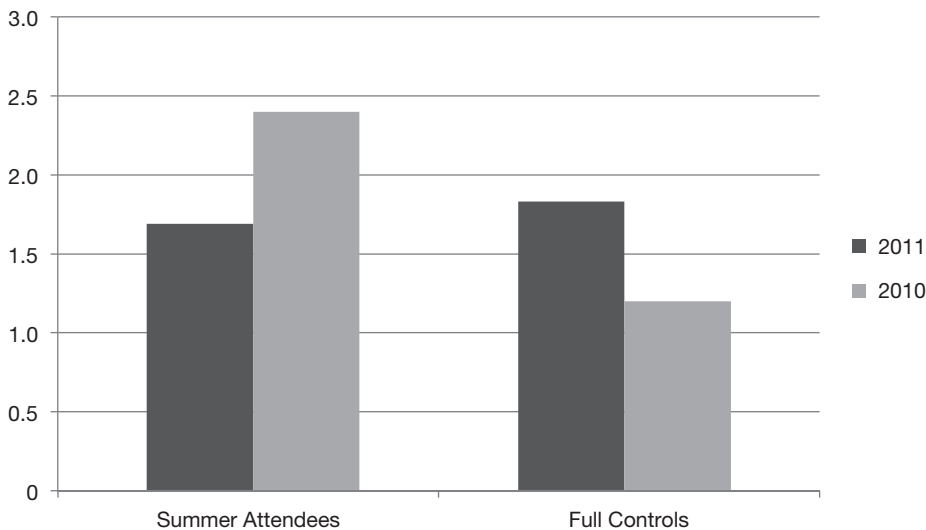
## French Language Summer Programs: A Continuing Effectiveness

Using the 30-point GB+ scale, only a few French-language students (5.5%) had summer learning losses , with a sizable minority (33%) recording zero net gains . The majority had some gains, and 18% gained three or more points. Given this broad pattern of student summer gains, the French-language district school boards recruited summer students who were disadvantaged relative to their classmates.

These disadvantages included:

- Significantly lower spring literacy scores and grades in reading, writing and math.
- Far more likelihood than controls to have an IEP (Individual Education Plan) in reading (36% of the summer attendees had IEP’s compared to only 5% of the control group).
- Parents with less education, lower incomes, and higher unemployment rates.

Figure 1: Unadjusted Summer Learning, French District School Boards, 2011 and 2010



As a consequence of these disadvantages, French language summer attendees actually fell slightly behind their peers over the summer, as seen in Figure 1. In spring of 2011, participants were 2.7 GB+ points behind the controls. By the fall, they were 3.3 points behind, thus falling .6 points behind – a difference that was not statistically significant due to the recruiting of relatively challenged students to the summer programs.

Once attendees and controls’ academic and social characteristics are taken statistically into account and made more comparable, a very different picture emerges (see Table 1).

Statistical controls for spring test dates, grade levels, and district school board show that summer attendees actually narrowed achievement gaps by almost two-thirds of a GB point. Further, taking into account proportions of students with IEP’s – as well as student gender, grades and school year attendance – doubles that summer program gain to a statistically significant 1.35 GB+ points.

Adjusting for social demographics (such as parent income and education) boosts the estimated effects of summer attendance from 1.51 to 1.90 points. The magnitude of these gains can be gauged by converting them into effect sizes, which range from .57 to .72. These are quite sizeable, and can be considered medium-to-large by several benchmarks in educational research.

Overall, *the 2011 French summer programs were very effective*, as they were the previous year.

Table 1: Program Effects on Summer Literacy

	Control for test date, District school board, grade level	Add controls for gender, report card grades, attendance	Add controls for Parent Ed, Income, employment, Child age	Propensity Score Matching (average treatment effect for the treated)
French	0.65* (n=231)	1.35* (n=219)	1.51* (n=116)	1.55* (n=126) 1.90* (n=146)
English: Attendees vs Full Controls	.056* (n=2610)	.055* (n=2224)	.127* (n=589)	.122* (n=605) .127* (n=626)
English: Attendees vs Direct Controls	.071* (n=1282)	.078* (n=1183)	.207** (n=393)	.197* (n=370) .171 (n=393)

Note: French results are in GB+ units, representing differences between Fall and Spring GB+. Their mean is 1.77, sd=2.64, n=228. English results are in Grade Equivalent units, representing differences between Fall and Spring GE. Their mean is -.002, sd=.65, n=2610. Asterisks denote statistical significance (\*1-tail  $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ ).

## English Language Summer Programs: Successfully Narrowing Achievement Gaps

The English-language district school boards also recruited challenged students. Summer attendees were significantly more likely than controls to have:

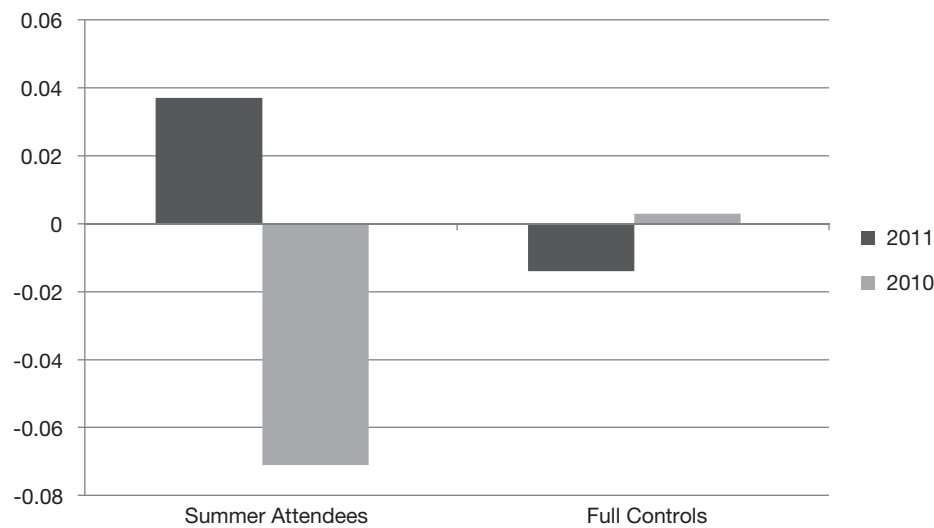
- An IEP in reading.
- Lower grades in reading, writing, oral comprehension, and math.
- Lower Spring GE scores.
- More siblings, and have parents with lower incomes.
- Entered summer programs considerably behind their peers in literacy.

Among students who completed grade one in 2011, summer program attendees began the summer more than three months behind their peers (full controls) in literacy learning. Among those completing the second and third grades, summer attendees were five months behind, representing a deficit equal to one-half of a school year. Without an intervention, such students would be susceptible to summer learning loss.



"I gained further understanding of how to improve student learning; students gained social skills such as cooperative learning, consensus building, and sharing; our Board gained through the professional development of teachers and administrators in literacy learning and planning." – teacher

Figure 2: Comparing 2011 and 2010 English Summer Learning Rates

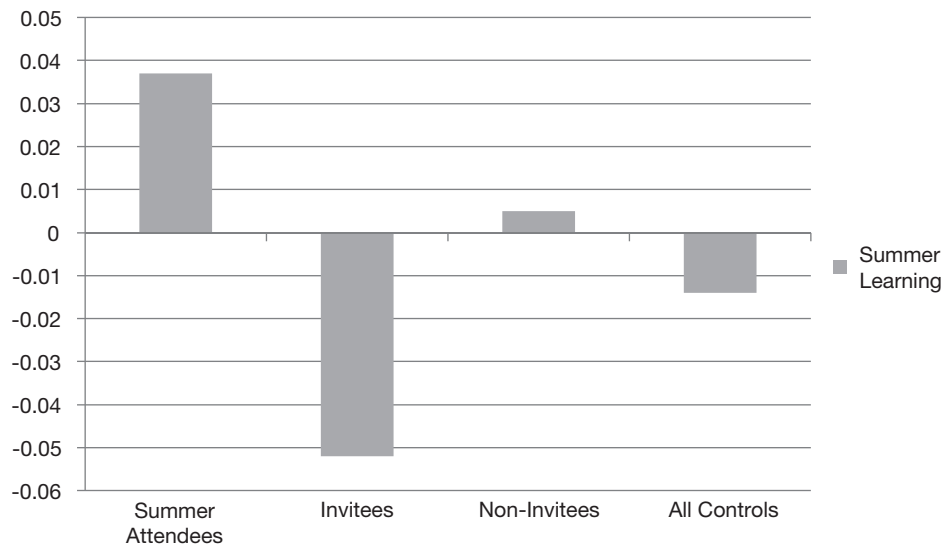


As shown in Figure 2, the most noteworthy change for the English SLLP between 2010 and 2011 was the markedly higher summer learning of the program attendees. Many summer attendees in 2010 suffered literacy loss and fell behind their peers by an average of  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a month, though the 2010 summer programs likely minimized those losses. But in 2011, summer program attendees had positive literacy gains, and gained ground on their peers. The 2011 control group did have slightly worse literacy scores than did the 2010 control group, but that decline was not statistically significant.

Figure 3 shows that the direct controls suffered a significant learning loss, suggesting that without an intervention, children similar to the summer attendees are susceptible to learning loss. The 2011 English SLLP managed to generate literacy gains and narrow literacy gaps, despite recruiting comparable students. Figure 3 also shows that attendees gained an average of 0.4 months on the full control group over the summer, and almost 1.0 months on the direct control group.

As shown in Table 1, once student academic and demographic measures are taken into account, the estimated gain grows from 1.2 to 2.0 months of learning. The estimated effect sizes range from .23 to .32, comparable in magnitude to many well-known interventions for student achievement gaps.

Figure 3: Comparing Summer Learning in English Boards



This improved effectiveness was likely due to:

- Many district school boards drawing on at least one year of experience when mounting their 2011 summer program
- Several boards sharing their knowledge about best practices for summer programs.
- CODE and LNS providing more guidance in 2011, particularly recommending that programs be at least three weeks and overseen by experienced educators.

Overall, the effectiveness of the 2011 English summer programs bodes well for the future.



“What’s great is the kids love to come, they’re having fun. It shifts their perspective of school.” – parent

# Qualitative Benefits: Secondary Findings

*“One of our greatest successes was the fact that our students loved coming to our program, they loved to read and parents stated they found an improvement, not only in their reading and writing but in their overall self-esteem. By the end of the program the students considered themselves ‘readers’...We had two students who rarely went to school during the regular school year. Both students came everyday! It was really exciting!”*

– teacher

The 2011 program feedback collected during 37 site visits with 40 teachers strengthened and extended findings from last year. Again this year the response from teachers and parents was extremely positive, and provided *evidence to suggest that children benefited emotionally, socially, physically and cognitively from the summer program.*

Teachers discussed improved literacy, heightened student and parent engagement, and professional development. Overall, parents and students were enthusiastic about the program, with parents learning strategies to support their child’s literacy development. In addition, the program gave children an opportunity to develop new skills and confidence in a safe and fun environment; they truly enjoyed the one-on-one time with teachers and the hands-on or recreational activities that incorporated an implicit literacy focus.

Factors cited as being beneficial (particularly for district school boards implementing the program for the first time in 2011) were:

- The April regional planning sessions.
- More lead-in and preparation time.
- Sharing of best practices.
- Recommendations and advice from CODE and the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat.



Feedback from teachers this year suggests that the programs had greater continuity and focus. Teachers discussed how the program allowed them to work closely with parents, share literacy strategies and communicate on a daily basis. These benefits were most apparent among programs that institutionalized parental communication and participation.

(Source: Comments from teachers and board coordinators during site visits and included in teacher reports.)

The response from parents, teachers and students has been positive. In a few situations, teachers used a variety of strategies to address attendance, resource and behavioural challenges; however their comments suggest that these areas can be at least partially anticipated before the program begins. In the case of newer programs, some of these challenges will be naturally resolved through: gaining currency with parents; gaining experience and a fuller repertoire of compensatory strategies; developing a toolkit of activities; linking with community sponsors/partners; and collating materials.

In other cases, district school boards could (re)consider new strategies for recruitment, student selection and site selection. In particular, these latter challenges may be minimized through additional guidelines and recommendations.



“Hosting a summer school program has extended a bridge to parents who have kids who are struggling at school. Many of the parents in our program are very interested in helping their children but didn’t necessarily know how. Seeing parents come and pick up their child every day allowed us an opportunity to discuss with them the ways they can help their kids become better readers.” – teacher

## Students: Literacy Skills, Engagement and Confidence

Teachers and parents observed noticeable improvements in children's literacy skills and levels of confidence; several teachers gave specific examples that included increased reading levels, sight vocabulary, risk taking and ability to share reading strategies with others. As one teacher explained, her greatest success was watching children go from a "fear of reading or making a mistake" to a "sense of pride in their attempts to figure out the text".

Several teachers also discussed heightened student engagement. Beyond gaining literacy skills, *one of the greatest benefits described was how children felt "successful"*. As one teacher noted, some children had "stopped asking or trying" and that the program provided them with a "safe" learning environment; she also witnessed that students would "become engaged, ask questions, build confidence, help each other..."

Teachers described how *some children did not want to leave at the end of the day*; these students would ask for more time to read independently, and sought permission to take additional resources and books home. Parents shared these changes with teachers, and reported an improvement in their children's vocabulary and desire to read and write. Teachers also noted that the program kept children in the routine of school by learning throughout the summer months.

Overall, many children started to redefine themselves as readers, and teachers witnessed a wholesale change in children's attitude about school in general. *As one student commented to his teacher, "I am beginning to enjoy this reading thing."*



"Every child left believing they were readers. All of the children walked away with literacy gains in one way or another and with an increase in confidence." – teacher

## Parents: Engagement, Communicating Literacy Strategies and Building Goodwill

The program generated opportunities for teachers to communicate with parents regularly, and generated positive parental engagement and support. The constant interaction with parents afforded teachers the opportunity to show them how to assist their children with literacy or other skills connected to academic achievement (e.g. helping their children with homework, or engaging in simple activities at home that reinforce positive reading behaviours).

Going beyond informal communication, however, in 2011 many more district school boards formalized this interaction with parents. Teachers made regular phone calls, held information sessions, created handouts and communicated specific strategies to parents through directed activities. One district school board, for example, sent a book bag home every night that included a book that the child had read during guided reading. Parents were asked to comment on this activity nightly on a form that was sent home.

Another board initiated a parent program that occurred at the same time as the student instructional program. After dropping off their son or daughter, parents joined with other parents in learning about shared areas of interest that included how to support their children's reading, and how to communicate with their school.

Yet another district school board handed out a daily newsletter to parents. As a teacher in the program noted, "When asked 'how was your day', students often have a hard time explaining [what they accomplished that day]. The letter helped provide parents a springboard 'Oh, I see you wrote in a journal today. What was yours about?'" Another program sent an information sheet home on "what good readers do" along with reading strategies to help parents stay actively involved.

The widespread adoption of formalized communications was evident in 2011, and represented a positive addition to many summer programs. *Overall, the response to the program was overwhelming.* Several parents expressed deep gratitude and noted specific changes in their children's attitude toward school and reading, and in their overall self-confidence.

## Teachers: Professional Development and Collaboration

Similar to last year, the structure of the program presented a range of professional development opportunities. It was evident that district school boards had utilized the strategies and recommendations generated in early communications and the April planning sessions. Specifically, teachers discussed team teaching and planning, problem-solving, coordinating with teachers from other schools, sharing resources and cooperatively strategizing optimal literacy approaches. The role of the district school board lead/coordinator in facilitating professional development activities for teachers of the 2011 program was significant.

## Challenges

### Attendance

While many teachers discussed high levels of support (as exemplified by waiting lists to participate in the program), a few teachers cited attendance as one of their greatest challenges. The feedback suggests that the seed for poor attendance was planted long before the program started. Despite the “camp” theme, for example, some parents still viewed the program as “summer school”. Evidence of low parental interest was often apparent early on. Also noted were the difficulties in executing some pre-planned activities due to poor attendance, which in turn compromised the morale of both students and teachers.

Teachers compensated for these challenges by making a concerted effort to (re)connect with parents. In some cases, teachers spoke directly to these parents at drop-off and pick-up times on the days their children did attend; some sites decided to put up a schedule to communicate upcoming activities and the importance of children’s attendance. Teachers frequently reminded parents that attendance was important.

## Addressing a Wide Range of Student Needs

Some programs enrolled exceptional students with identified behavioural needs. While teachers attempted to address these needs, they explained that the inclusion of exceptional students required additional support for both students and themselves.

Similar to attendance challenges, student needs can be largely anticipated in advance and potential invitees evaluated based on the program's parameters and goals. As in the first year of the program, teachers of 2011 classes having students with identified exceptionalities noted that these wide-ranging needs impacted on the potential benefit of the program and opportunities for learning.

## Transportation

A few teachers discussed transportation challenges that either prevented students from enrolling, or contributed to poor attendance. One teacher attributed a decline in 2011 parental involvement to the increased number of bussed-in students, noting that "parent involvement was not as present this year as last year. Most of our students were bussed, which meant that we did not see the parents." One district school board purchased bus passes (with board – not project – funds) for some families so that parents could accompany their children to and from the program.

These challenges were most apparent in less populated/rural district school boards, and were cited as factors in decreasing participation. During the April meetings, some district school boards noted these limitations, but recognized the challenges (financial or otherwise) associated with transportation. Half-day programs also prevented some families from participating.

## Physical Plant

Some sites were not air conditioned, and this proved to generate additional challenges for both teachers and students (especially considering the tremendously hot summer of 2011). One site did not have a home-base school, and some schools were under construction during the summer. Fortunately, many of these challenges appeared to be limited to a handful of sites.

# Planning a Successful Program

*“Every child left believing they were readers. All of the children walked away with literacy gains in one way or another and with an increase in confidence.”*

– teacher

## Early Planning/Co-Planning

Teacher training in June proved to be a tremendous asset. District school boards that provided time for teachers to plan together had programs that were optimally laid out, well organized and sufficiently resourced. These programs’ goals were also articulated more effectively through information nights and hand-outs that improved parental engagement and children’s attendance. Beyond participation, these programs were also able to create resources that facilitated literacy goals and expectations. One program, for example, posted a “success criteria”, daily schedules and examples of “modelled writing” (e.g. anchor charts and graphic organizers) so parents and students understood the goals of their participation. Another held an evening of in-service by a special assignment teacher, and sent home a newsletter at the beginning and end of the program to communicate its activities and goals.

### Early Planning = More Literacy Strategies

Early SLLP planning also gave teachers the opportunity to develop and present activities that expanded the range of children’s literacy strategies, since struggling readers may use only a handful of the options available to them. The impressive range of these on-site activities and experiences included:

- ◆ Taekwondo.
- ◆ Development of special themes or activities such as insects, hatching chicks, and making ice cream.
- ◆ Fun activities such as flashlight reading in the gym.
- ◆ High-quality trips and visitors.

## Ongoing Planning and Debriefing

Ongoing planning and debriefing has been essential to the overall success of the program. One site, for example, included time for daily group planning (60 minutes in the morning) and debriefing sessions (30 minutes in the afternoon) with the teaching and library staff. These meetings allowed the group to collectively plan, problem-solve and develop a more consistent plan and outlook. Another program brought teachers together for an entire Saturday, and provided 2 hours of planning at the end of each week.

## Experienced Primary and Summer Program Teachers

The inclusion of experienced primary teachers who understood literacy skills required for young learners was critical to the success of the program, the selection of resources, and the development of literacy strategies. These individuals were also valued for their enthusiasm and dedication to the program and its students. Teachers also discussed the benefits of working with staff who had taught in the program last year. The regional leads provided several examples of exceptional programs, and not surprisingly these programs were led by knowledgeable, experienced and enthusiastic teachers.

## District School Board Leads

A dedicated and involved district school board lead was necessary to the successful development and implementation of the programs. These individuals shaped the planning of the program, communicated best practices, and were on site and available throughout the summer program. In particular, district school board leads provided critical daily support for teachers, they problem solved, and they encouraged continuity across sites. Some teachers made specific references to the importance of district school board leads/coordinators, referring to them as “essential” to the operation of the program.

## Formal Communication with Parents

While all district school boards made a concerted effort to connect informally with parents, several district school boards formalized this communication through:

- Information nights (before, during or near the end of the program).
- Information letters.

- Posting or sending home weekly schedules.
- Regular phone calls.

Formalized communication was also seen to effectively communicate the importance of the daily/nightly activities and improve attendance.

## Formal Parental Involvement

Formal communication and formal parental involvement go hand in hand, a factor which contributed to the success of the programs. As in 2010, several programs made a concerted effort to formalize parental involvement; one, for example, featured a half-hour parent-involvement program at the beginning and end of the day to communicate effective literacy strategies. Moms, dads and grandparents were encouraged to participate in this activity. These district school boards also sent activities home for parents to work on with their children, and often accompanied them with a form or other options that allowed parents to provide feedback.

Common practices included:

- Activity bags.
- Sending home reading materials (with the expectation that children would read that story to/with his/her parents).
- Formally communicating specific ways parents can help with their children's literacy and academic achievement.

One program sent home an assigned book along with a weekly reading log for parents to complete. Other programs asked that parents volunteer their time and participate in various aspects of the program, such as a read-along.

Institutionalizing parental participation allowed teachers to communicate specific literacy strategies while giving parents specific tools to help their children. It also helped bridge home-school relationships and best practices, and provided teachers with a mechanism to encourage best practices at home.

## Small Student Teacher Ratios with Qualified Staff

Teachers noted the benefit of having small student-teacher ratios. Some programs hired several qualified teaching staff, and these teachers noted how this arrangement was a tremendous resource for students. Specifically, this



arrangement allowed for more one-on-one time with each student for individual reading and direct instruction, teacher student conversations and follow up, the sharing and development of multiple strategies and experiences, and the ability to collaboratively tackle student needs. Overwhelmingly, teachers noted the benefits of increased one-on-one time and small group activities, particularly for the most challenged or reluctant readers in the program.

## Full Day Programs

Discussing the benefits of a full-day program, teachers noted how the additional time allowed them to balance classroom work with a recreational component. Beyond contributing to the camp theme, recreation often included a literacy component (e.g. having children write and perform a puppet show).

Several teachers of half-day programs argued that a full-day program would have afforded them more time to work one-on-one with students on literacy skills and comprehension, and embed literacy within crafts, drama and physical fitness activities. Teachers also discussed how a half-day program limited the inclusion of some students – for example, some families were unable to pick-up their children at noon.

## Promoting Physical Activity and Healthy Food Options

Many programs (particularly full-day programs) were filled with afternoon and/or weekly recreation to keep children moving throughout the summer. These activities were not only of benefit physically; they also added to children's overall enjoyment and contributed to the program's camp theme. Many programs also included healthy meals (children were often included in the meal planning) as teachers helped children learn how to make their favourite foods healthier. Several teachers noted that recreation and meal planning presented novel opportunities for promoting literacy skills.

## Connecting to Community Groups

Like 2010, several programs effectively connected with local community groups, such as the YMCA. These resources provided children with additional recreation, healthy snacks and other activities, and were seen to contribute to the camp theme important for children's enrolment and enjoyment of the program.

# Recommendations

*“What’s great is the kids love to come, they’re having fun. It shifts their perspective of school.”*

– parent

*“I gained further understanding of how to improve student learning; students gained social skills such as cooperative learning, consensus building, and sharing; our district school board gained through the professional development of teachers and administrators in literacy learning and planning.”*

– teacher

## Recommendation 1: Expand Summer Literacy Learning Programs.

The 2011 program again offered evidence that *disadvantaged students who experience greater challenges in literacy also suffer from summer literacy loss.*

Research findings from both 2010 and 2011 also suggest that quality summer literacy programs can:

- Minimize these summer literacy losses.
- Increase levels of literacy achievement.
- Close literacy gaps in comparison to more advantaged students.

*District school boards, parents and teachers strongly support the program, and see many benefits. In 2011 several boards expressed strong interest in the program, and requested additional funding to offer more sites to ensure that all struggling readers could be included.*

Other research suggests that *disadvantaged students who participate in summer literacy learning over several years are less likely to drop out of secondary school and more likely to select appropriate pathways during their school careers.*

By reducing summer learning loss and building pupil confidence, an effective summer literacy program can enhance and strengthen student success in school – particularly among the most disadvantaged students.

It is therefore recommended that:

**As an important strategy to support students who are most vulnerable to summer literacy loss, the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat expand and fund the 2012 Summer Literacy Learning Project and invite identified district school boards to implement Summer Literacy Learning Programs that best meet the needs of their students and communities.**

**Considerations:**

- Additional sites could be allocated through increased funding and through a re-examination of site selection, as some 2011 district school boards experienced higher-than-average demand.
- District school boards, particularly those with high-demand or transportation issues, could consider expanding their programs to a full day.
- A 2012 research study can guide further evidence-based policy discussions and direction on summer learning, and help support future programs for students with greater challenges to literacy development.

**Recommendation 2: Support an extended version of the research protocol to guide the ongoing development of evidence-based policy.**

The research protocols for the 2010 and 2011 projects have charted summer learning processes for students in primary grades. For two years, they have provided snap-shots of literacy losses and gains, documented improvements over time and identified continuing challenges. However, *many key research questions remain unanswered.*

It is unclear whether literacy gains are retained over time, or whether students benefit most from interventions over successive summers. Further, it is not known whether numeracy has comparable processes of summer learning losses and gains, and whether summer interventions have similar impacts. Of importance is: identifying the particular attributes of programs that affect children's success; strategies that can most effectively impact summer learning; and how more students and parents can be engaged in the program, particularly those from families facing greater social challenges.

It is recommended that:

**As part of the 2012 Summer Literacy Learning Project, an extended version of the research protocol be supported to guide evidence-based policy development.**

### **Considerations:**

- Use the 2011 research protocol to guide the 2012 project and consider a process to follow up on 2011 participants.
- Consider extending the 2012 protocol to include the pilot projects on numeracy.
- Examine the possibility of inviting 1 or 2 interested boards to participate in a study to identify explicit and consistent criteria for student eligibility. The aim of this study would be to rigorously identify aspects of programs that are particularly effective.

### **Recommendation 3: Consider six summer learning pilot projects in numeracy.**

*“As teachers become more familiar with which ideas are more complex for students and why, they are better able to ensure that their instruction is at the appropriate developmental level for students, and that it challenges students’ mathematical concepts in appropriate ways. This minimizes the likelihood of students developing mathematical misconceptions.”*

– Small, M. (2009) *Making math meaningful to Canadian students, K-8*. Toronto, ON: Nelson Canada

*Research indicates that summer learning loss in mathematics can be equal or greater than losses in literacy* and is just as worrisome a problem. Generally, most summer programs focus on literacy only, and teachers express greater levels of confidence in providing intervention strategies for literacy. As part of the summer numeracy strategy, teachers of selected district school boards will be offered an opportunity to participate in a three- or four-day intensive workshop on teaching numeracy. These workshops will be connected to, and supported by, the summer numeracy pilot programs. Summer numeracy programs can be part of an effective strategy for addressing numeracy development and loss of math skills over the summer.

It is recommended that:

**As part of the 2012 Summer Literacy Learning Project, the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat consider six summer learning pilot projects in Numeracy to determine if student participation in a teacher-instructed Summer Numeracy Learning Program impacts on summer learning loss and narrows the achievement gap for selected students.**

**Considerations:**

- One numeracy pilot project could be offered in each of the six regions (according to regional office boundaries).
- Numeracy pilot projects could focus on primary students and/or junior level students.
- Pilot projects could be designed to increase student competency in skill development, math achievement, open-ended problem solving and mathematics efficacy.

Increasing teacher capacity to focus on math learning for elementary pupils could also be an essential component. In partnership with a Faculty of Education(s) and linked to the numeracy pilot projects, summer workshops on teaching numeracy could be offered for teachers in each of the six pilot boards.

**Recommendation 4: Develop and distribute to participating district school boards a comprehensive Project and Program Planning Guide and organize Regional Sessions for collaborative planning and follow up.**

During the 2011 program, primarily at the beginning stages of implementation, district school boards requested clarification as to the expectations, criteria and requirements for the program and research protocol. Specifically, a number of district school boards asked as to: the number of hours per day; the number of weeks; the curriculum expectations for the program; and frequently the process for STAR testing and collection of student data.

It is recommended that:

A more detailed summer literacy learning research Project and Program Planning Guide be developed and made available to participating district school boards. This Guide will be an integral part of the April Regional Planning sessions. For 2012, follow up sessions in October will also be organized to offer teachers and district school board leads opportunities to share successful practices, and discuss how to extend summer learning for both teachers and pupils into the regular school-year program.

### **Considerations:**

- Encourage early planning and provide program teachers with an opportunity to plan together and develop resources early. Early planning also allows the district school board/school to effectively advertise and communicate the program and expectations to parents and students.
- Develop a comprehensive Program and Planning Guide to assist district school boards to anticipate implementation challenges and find solutions that work best for them. Based on learning's from 2010 and 2011, there is significant information now available to support district school boards in organizing and offering programs.

### **Recommendation 5: District school boards strengthen parent involvement and build links to the community.**

Parents reported that the 2011 program provided opportunities for their children to fortify academics and build social skills, and very clearly indicated their hopes that the project would continue for 2012. Parents further stated that they supported the program as it *kept their children in the routine of school and increased both their self-esteem and motivation to continue learning*. They also noted that the program offered opportunities to converse with teachers regarding their child's learning levels and future needs. The 2011 program expanded the range of parent-teacher connections, with some district school boards offering opportunities for parent-focused sessions and programs during the SLLP. Strategies to meet with parents, offer them information on the program and communicate on an ongoing basis were extended.

In 2011, parents in some district school boards were very significant summer-learning partners, and formalized communication was more evident. In many cases, community organizations directly supported the program by providing breakfast, offering recreation programs, inviting students to join field trips and opening libraries and recreation facilities to summer literacy students.

It is recommended that:

**As part of the 2012 Summer Literacy Learning Program and in the Summer Numeracy Pilot Project, district school boards develop strategies to involve parents and community supports, and to build mutual trust and cooperation that can enhance academic achievement and continue into the upcoming school year.**

### **Considerations:**

- Formalize communication and involvement with parents through a variety of activities and outreach; several district school boards have materials in place that could be a tremendous resource for other district school boards.
- District School boards review parent engagement practices that worked well during the summer program. Schools could consider these helpful practices as possible additions to their plans for parent engagement.
- Ensure parents are highly informed early about the program and how they can participate. (e.g. getting their children to the program everyday)
- Continue to include recreation and healthy meals and snacks.
- Encourage the continuation and expansion of community connections and activities outside of the school grounds.

## Recommendation 6: Increase participation of Aboriginal students in Summer Literacy Learning Programs.

*Supporting Aboriginal students and families is key to the Ontario, First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework as identified in Strategy 2.2 “Provide additional support in a variety of areas to reduce gaps in student outcomes.”*

– Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework (2007)  
Aboriginal Education Office, Ontario Ministry of Education.

In 2010, at least two district school boards expressed interest in organizing a summer literacy class to support primary-level Aboriginal students. However, these district school boards reported that although some students who identified themselves as First Nations did attend, they did not attract many Aboriginal students to the program, and in some cases attendance was quite irregular. District school boards said again in 2011 that they were not as successful as they had hoped in engaging Aboriginal students to attend the program.

As it is likely that a program that connects with Aboriginal students will be most successful if it reflects their community, is located in a “place they are familiar with” and acknowledges “who they are,” it is recommended that:

**During summer 2012, the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat and the Aboriginal Education Office support and fund identified district school boards and Friendship Centres so they can work together to offer a Summer Literacy Learning Program in seven locations throughout Ontario.**

### Considerations:

- Aboriginal students with the support of their parent(s) are more likely to attend a program at a familiar place such as a Friendship Centre.
- Friendship Centres and district school boards already have a working relationship, and will be able to successfully connect a program both to their communities and their schools.
- Many Friendship Centres already have Best Start programs which could provide a continuum of learning for Aboriginal summer literacy learning students. There are seven Friendship Centres in Ontario supporting Aboriginal families.



- A qualitative study comparing Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal families' parent and student engagement with the Summer Literacy Learning Program could be considered. The aim of this study would be to develop program innovations that can best serve particular populations.

### **Recommendation 7: District school boards review their student invitation process.**

During some of the program visits, teachers indicated that additional support for exceptional students participating in the program was important. They suggested that more training, smaller pupil-teacher ratios and specific literacy materials and resources would be helpful in summer literacy classes with exceptional students. Teachers also indicated that these additional components would assist them to offer effective literacy instruction to all the pupils.

Students with learning gaps in literacy and who meet the goals of the program are the expected participants; however, for district school boards that wish to include exceptional students the requisite resources and supports are needed both for teachers and students, accordingly it is recommended that:

**As part of the 2012 Summer Literacy Learning Project, district school boards refine the criteria for inviting students to participate in the research component and summer literacy learning program, and provide supports and resources for participating exceptional students.**

#### **Considerations:**

- The summer literacy program focuses on students who would benefit from summer literacy learning and would obtain a boost to literacy achievement.
- District school boards ensure that the required supports are in place for exceptional students who participate in the program.
- Leads/coordinators to clearly outline to teachers, principals and parents the vision, outcomes and organization of the program.

## **Recommendation 8: Support more opportunities for teachers to acquire literacy and math teaching skills and expand their instructional strategies.**

In 2011, it became even more evident that teachers with a sound foundation in literacy learning (including curriculum and instructional practices) are essential to a quality program. It was apparent in this year's program that teachers who are excited, knowledgeable and committed to literacy learning offer the most engaging and educationally sound programs.

Opportunities for professional development, planning and preparing for the program and networks among educators are important to its success. The summer learning environment can also provide some flexibility for students in the areas of recreation and individual/group activities – but *its primary focus must always be on literacy learning and minimizing summer learning loss.*

District school board leadership is essential to ensuring teacher professional development and it is recommended that:

**Strengthened teacher capacity be part of the 2012 Summer Literacy Learning and Summer Numeracy Pilot Projects with the inclusion of professional development activities, planning opportunities, shared teacher learning and identifying best practices.**  
(See Recommendation #2)

### **Considerations:**

- Professional development opportunities concerning high-quality, compelling literacy instruction and student engagement should be undertaken by district school boards in the spring of the year.
- Teachers who have both the interest and the ability to instruct a program should be made aware of opportunities to teach summer students.
- District school boards foster a collaborative approach to providing a program that can include partnerships with the local recreation organizations, secondary school students and Faculty of Education volunteers and early childhood educators.

## **Recommendation 9: District school board leadership is necessary for successful implementation.**

The 2011 parent and teacher surveys indicated that the program was more successful when, very early on in the process, district school boards identified an instructional lead to oversee the organization of the program, and that he or she liaised with the Superintendent of Education assigned responsibility for this initiative. The regional leads also indicated that having a consistent contact at the district school board level was extremely helpful in terms of the research component, program organization and student instruction.

In district school boards that did not identify a lead contact, but left the responsibility to individual teachers or day-school elementary principals instead, it was apparent that the research component and the structure of the program presented more challenges. It was also noted that smaller and more rural district school boards faced a greater challenge in assigning a lead for the project. Some smaller district school boards also indicated that the superintendents responsible for elementary education already had a number of initiatives that required their involvement and attention.

Solutions to the challenges of programming, student attendance and parent concerns were best handled when a district school board lead was present. It is recommended that:

**District school boards early on in the process of implementing the program identify a superintendent responsible for overseeing and initiating summer literacy learning along with a district school board lead/coordinator to provide direction, support and continuity for teachers, parents and principals.**

### **Considerations:**

- District school boards employ or assign a Superintendent of Education and/or a district school board lead/coordinator to organize and support the program(s) and inform CODE of the names of these individuals by February 15.
- Funding provided to district school boards be flexible enough to hire appropriate and qualified leads (including individuals who are not currently employed by district school boards) to oversee and support the development of a quality literacy program. (note Recommendation #1)

# The 2010 Summer Literacy Learning Project Report

If interested in learning more about the 2010 project, refer to the Ontario Ministry of Education website at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/research/summerliteracy.pdf>. The completed 2010 report including technical data is available by accessing this website.

## Conclusion

Summer literacy loss is a pervasive problem, particularly for disadvantaged students, and the data suggests that summer learning loss is widespread.

The 2011 project was coordinated, organized and facilitated using many of the successful practices identified during the summer 2010 project; many of the same recommendations that were arrived at in 2010 are outlined in this report. The 2011 research study and instructional program, however, was larger in size and more intensive than in 2010, and the primary and secondary findings indicated that a high quality of literacy instruction was evident during the 2011 program.



“Most parents were very interested and involved in the program. They saw the value in having their children attend and in keeping up with the daily recommendations that we provided.” – teacher

Results of the 2011 project indicated that:

- Students attending French language summer programs can be seen to have narrowed summer learning gaps between themselves and their peers once their academic and social characteristics were taken into account. This level of effectiveness for the French language programs represents a continuation of their success last year.
- Students attending English language summer programs not only lessened their summer learning losses; they recorded summer learning gains and narrowed achievement gaps between themselves and their peers. *This represents significant progress over last year's English programs.*
- The recurrence of many patterns of results over both years of the project boosts confidence in the reliability of the research protocol.
- The program had considerable positive benefits that included student engagement, professional development for teachers, building partnerships with parents and making links with the community.
- It fostered positive social interactions for students, reinforced positive learning habits, provided recreational opportunities and encouraged healthy lifestyles.

One of the most significant findings this year was that *the 2011 project not only minimized summer learning loss, it also helped close the achievement gap for a majority of students.*

District school boards fully supported the programs and were committed to their success, often overcoming implementation challenges relating to timelines, research, communication and staffing requirements. It would be accurate to report that parents, teachers, students and district school boards look forward enthusiastically to a 2012 program.







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