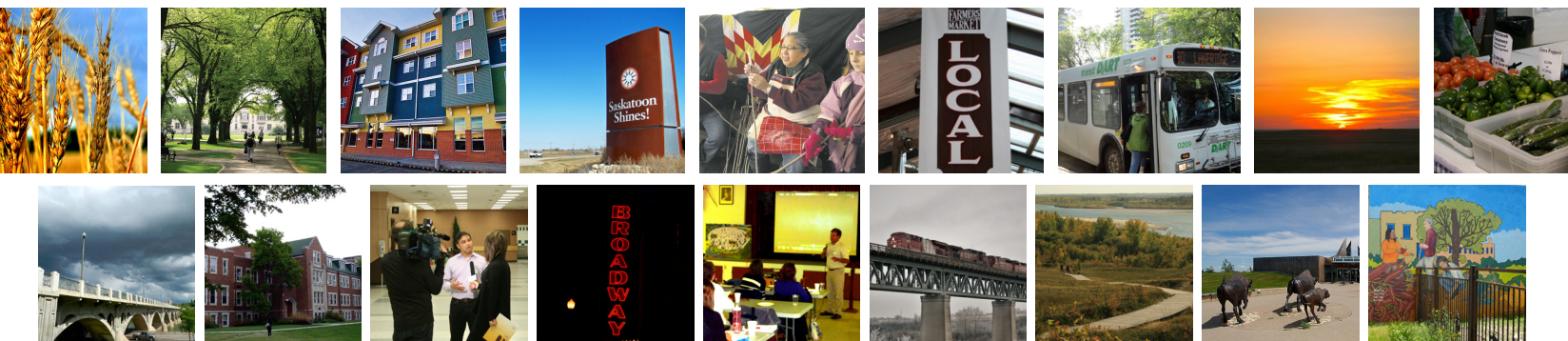




Saskatchewan Summer Literacy: An Evaluation of Summer Reading Programming in Saskatchewan Public Libraries

**Tyler Schwark, Rahul Waikar, Suresh S. Kalagnanam, and
Isobel M. Findlay**



Community-University Institute for Social Research

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SASKATCHEWAN SUMMER LITERACY:
AN EVALUATION OF SUMMER READING
PROGRAMMING IN SASKATCHEWAN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

TYLER SCHWARK, RAHUL WAIKAR, SURESH S. KALAGNANAM, AND
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SASKATCHEWAN

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ABSTRACT

There is a strong relationship between literacy and academic success. Without being able to read, comprehend, and communicate, students will struggle with their education. To address literacy needs and promote a literate population, the Ministry of Education in cooperation with Saskatchewan public libraries has committed to developing a coordinated provincial strategy and evaluation around the activities and outcomes of the yearly Summer Reading program. The goals of this research project, with the support of the Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR) and in conjunction with the Summer Reading Evaluation Committee drawn from the public library systems, are to achieve the following:

- Facilitate the creation of a methodology to evaluate the Summer Reading Program across the province.
- Develop a set of baseline program data of public library summer reading practice in the public library systems.

The Summer Reading Evaluation draws qualitative and quantitative data from a variety of datasets including these: website analytics, digital tool dashboards, demographic information and public library reporting. The development of the Evaluation is based on a robust literature that shows that public libraries are “well positioned to provide children with the opportunity to read more over the summer months, helping to address the problem of summer learning loss” (Gross Gilroy Inc., 2006). As an initial step to developing an Evaluation and strategic framework for development of summer programming, CUISR and the Provincial Library and Literacy Office (PLLO) contracted in 2013-2014 to create an initial set of input data by developing a questionnaire/tool for Saskatchewan. The baseline program data was developed based on half-hour interviews with twelve public library coordinators across the province. Data collected pertained to the following aspects: (1) program funding and expenditures, (2) prizes and incentives, (3) resources, (4) tours and performers, (5) program coordination, (6) programmer time, (7) mandate, and (8) coordinator reflection.

This report suggests several possible methodologies to evaluate the outcomes of the summer reading program, including quantitative data analysis, experimental methodology, and the social return on investment (SROI) analysis. The recommendations in this report are expected to help identify the necessary measurements for inputs, outputs, and outcomes for summer reading programs.

INTRODUCTION

There is a strong relationship between literacy and academic success. Without being able to read, comprehend, and communicate, students will struggle with their education. The importance of literacy and reading has resulted in the commissioning of numerous studies over the years, especially exploring learning preferences and patterns of children. These studies have noted that literacy rates amongst children decline in the summer months (Graham, McNamara & Van Lankveld, 2011; Mraz & Rasinski, 2007). This phenomenon has come to be called “summer literacy or learning loss”—estimated in one meta-analysis to equal as much as a month of instruction (Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay & Greathouse, 1996)—and a loss especially damaging to “less advantaged children” including those with learning disabilities, those facing socio-economic disadvantage, and second-language learners (Graham et al., 2011, p. 575). Effective summer learning programs represent one important strategy to reduce the impact of the learning loss (Graham et al., 2011).

To promote effective programming the Ministry of Education’s Provincial Library & Literacy Office, in cooperation with Saskatchewan public libraries, has committed to developing a coordinated provincial strategy and evaluation around the activities and outcomes of the Summer Reading program. “Reading programs, as the name implies, emphasize reading” (Fiore, 2007; p. 89). However, they are not restricted to children reading books. Instead, they have evolved to include a number of different mechanisms, all devoted to encourage and enhance reading, such as book-related craft, story-telling, and author visits (Gross Gilroy, 2006). Moreover the focus of the reading programs has shifted such that they are not simply designed to create a nation of literate citizens but also to result in educational consequences (Fiore, 2007). This may be interpreted to mean that summer reading programs are now designed with a view to enhancing student academic performance.

Since formal establishment in 1977, province-wide summer reading programs in Saskatchewan have been run and coordinated annually by the Saskatchewan Library Association (SLA, 2014). All ten Saskatchewan public library systems in the province host summer activities to encourage children to get involved in the reading program in order to maintain, and even improve, their skills over the summer months. In 2005 a partnership with the Toronto Dominion Bank (TD) and Library and Archives Canada (LAC) was established for summer reading programs across Canada: TD Summer Reading Club (SLA, 2014). Each year TD/LAC contracts with a market research company who collects national data about the TD summer reading program. The prepared TD report records participants’ gender and age, where programming took place, attendance numbers, and perceived improvement in reading level among many other factors. Across Canada, 289,512 children (46% girls and 54% boys) took part in the 2013 TD Summer Reading Club (Haris/Decima, 2014). This represents an increase of 73,200 or approximately 34% from 216,312 at the inception of the TD partnership program in 2005.

The research conducted by the Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR) in conjunction with the Summer Reading Evaluation Committee drawn from the public library systems provides an in-depth

review of the resources being used for Summer Reading in Saskatchewan. The goals of this research project are to do the following:

- Facilitate the creation of a methodology to evaluate the Summer Reading Program across the province.
- Develop a set of baseline program data of public library summer reading practice in the public library systems.

This research report begins with a literature review of summer reading programs, followed by a methodology section. Subsequently the report develops suggestions for a research methodology to facilitate evaluation of Saskatchewan Summer Reading programs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public libraries have been providing summer literacy development or library reading programs for more than a century (Fiore, 2007). Over this time the value of these programs as a catalyst in literacy development has become undeniable. The importance and impact of these types of programs, whether instituted by the library, schools, or government, is well documented through numerous studies involving a variety of demographics, and focusing on those at risk of literacy loss (Fiore, 2007; Graham et al., 2011; Lauer, Akiba, Wilkerson, Apthorp, Snow & Martin-Glen, 2006; Schacter, 2003).

Factors Impacting Literacy

Additional research studies have studied the influence of other factors affecting literacy rates. Examples of these factors may include race, socio-economic background, proficiency, learning challenges (disabilities), access to books, family literacy, family involvement and an environment conducive to reading (Carbone, 2010; Cooper et al., 1996; Graham, et al., 2011; Kim, 2006; Lauer et al., 2006; Mraz and Rasinski, 2007; Orłowski & Cottrell, 2013; Schacter, 2003). It is important to note that the above factors are not mutually exclusive. For example, access to books may be a function of the socio-economic background, family literacy and proficiency (or a general interest in reading). Furthermore, geographic location (rural versus urban) also contributes to access.

In the last decade, encouragement of literacy, access to literacy-related materials, and the time to engage in literacy-related activities have been singled out as the top three agents of literacy growth in developing readers (de Groot & Branch, 2009). Reading is the single most important factor in summer learning, and cultural literacy makes for “well-rounded citizens” (Fiore, 2007).

Oral literacy is also an important aspect of literacy building. Literacy-focused programming has been shown to increase oral literacy as demonstrated in Morrow’s (1992) study which tested children on their ability to orally

produce a story. The children who were exposed to the literacy training outperformed those who did not on all categories in the study which included setting, theme, plot episodes, resolution, and sequence (Morrow, 1992). Summer reading programs are designed to encourage and enable children to read by offering a variety of mechanisms (or techniques) to read.

Voluntary Reading

Voluntary reading, where children make the choice to read when they are given free time, choose their own books, read silently, and receive no feedback on their choices, is arguably the most important form of reading anyone can engage in due to its aspects of self-improvement and enlightenment (Kim, 2006). According to Morrow and Weinstein (1986), both the kinds of activity and the location influence student choices:

The implementation of regularly scheduled literature activities and the creation of appealing, carefully designed library centers led to a substantial increase in children's selection of literature during free-choice time, an increase that was maintained even when the program part of the intervention was ended. (p. 342)

This increase shows the importance of continued available programming for children who are learning to read over the summer in creating voluntary readers who will continue to love reading as they grow older.

Structured Reading

Structured reading occurs during programs structured into sessions focusing on building skills in reading through different means of exposures to literacy such as group reading and individual literacy exercises. This allows for a more reactive education experience which, as noted by Kim (2006), also shows improvement among lower performing students across six areas:

1. Students improved in word identification abilities.
2. Students became more fluent in oral reading and writing.
3. Students became more strategic in reading comprehension.
4. Students developed more positive perceptions of themselves as readers.
5. Students developed more positive attitudes toward reading.
6. Students increased their instructional reading levels.

These improvements are an indicator of the different aspects of reading that can be improved via structured reading and proper guidance. Without structured mechanisms it is found that voluntary reading is less likely to occur in those at risk of literacy loss due to parents not properly facilitating home-run programs (Morrow & Weinstein, 1986).

Effective Programs and Participation

The above set of literature documents the importance of factors affecting literacy, with reading being the single most important factor. Summer reading programs are designed to facilitate reading. However, these programs must be structured to effectively enable reading behaviours among children. There are three basic components of a summer reading program: (1) promotion, (2) delivery and (3) evaluation/measurement.

Promotion includes all the different ways in which the availability and details of the program are communicated to attract participants to register in the program. Promotion may be achieved through mechanisms such as school visits, flyers/posters in common public places, word of mouth, and direct communication to parents/caregivers/teachers. Delivery includes all the resources available and activities/mechanisms put in place to keep the participants engaged in the program. These may include books and other reading materials of various types, story-telling sessions by various community members (e.g., elders) and performers. It may also include competitions and other incentive mechanisms. Finally, evaluation consists of tracking critical data pertaining to the participants, the level of their engagement and other relevant information.

Scholars, based on experience and research, have suggested best practice guidelines for summer programs. For example, Bell & Carrillo (2007, pp. 45-46) identify nine characteristics of effective programs. Three characteristics are related to adopting a holistic approach (intentional focus on accelerating learning, commitment to youth development, and proactive approach to summer learning), whereas the remaining six pertain to organizational infrastructure (strong leadership, collaborative planning, extensive staff development, strategic partnerships, rigorous evaluation for program improvement, and a focus on sustainability and cost-effectiveness). Appendix A contains three sets of best practice guidelines including the one mentioned above. It is important to note that best practice guidelines are often stated in general terms; each program coordinator must translate these guidelines into operational terms that best align with the individual library in terms of its size, resource availability, and other relevant factors.

Just having the available resources is not enough to encourage youth to use literary materials. Morrow's (1982) study of voluntary participation in literacy activities in school-aged children notes that voluntary use of literature materials in developing children increased when class programming and reading corners were set up in such a way that was attractive and entertaining for the children. According to Fiore (2007), library programs do so much more than their name suggests; she states as follows (pp. 89-90):

Library programs are more diverse in nature than reading instruction or skills programs. They may feature new and developing technologies that libraries are adopting and the youth of our country are embracing, including computers, portable music players, gaming consoles, and the Internet. They are not as book centered as a reading program; summer library programs are able to help participants develop their visual literacy and language skills as well as give them practice in reading. Library programs tend to use the innate curiosity and information-seeking behaviors of the participants rather than just prescribing a list of books from which to choose to read.

Research shows that literacy levels are higher when there is exposure to literacy. Oral and written exposure are both valuable to the development of literacy ability. Within oral and written literacy, structured and voluntary methods exist. Each method offers its own benefits impacting literacy in its own way. Research examining the impact of summer reading programs has shown that these programs can have a positive impact on reading performance and the amount of reading, increase reading enthusiasm among children, and also increase their confidence levels (Gross Gilroy, 2006). Thus it is safe to conclude that summer reading programs can positively influence literacy among children.

MANAGEMENT CONTROL SYSTEMS

Although the summer reading program has been offered since 1977, the focus on evaluation of the program and its outputs/outcomes is recent. Part of the coordinated provincial strategy and evaluation around the activities and outcomes of the Summer Reading program is the joint development of an evaluation culture and a method for implementing evaluation across an organization of autonomous public libraries supported by a system of headquarters and the Provincial Library and Literacy Office. An initial step is to consider strategies and structures in place at each level of the Saskatchewan provincial public library system which will impact implementation of a provincial-level strategy and evaluation. One such structure may be referred to as the management control system existing within the organization.

According to Hawkins (2005) an organization's management control system (MCS) is designed to do the following:

1. Provide direction to the organization's employees to achieve its objectives (this includes establishing the vision, mission, objectives and strategy, as well as the values and beliefs)
2. Assist/Motivate employees in achieving the organization's objectives (this includes the traditional functions of planning and providing decision making tools, providing direction, organisation structure, incentives/rewards, and other forms of motivation)
3. Motivate employees to take the right actions (policies and procedures, and codes of conduct)
4. Provide information to monitor progress towards achieving the organization's objectives (information and performance measurement systems).

Merchant and Van der Stede (2012) classify management control into four types: (1) Results Control, (2) Action Controls, (3) Personnel Controls and (4) Cultural Controls.

Results Control involves ensuring that employees perform actions known to be beneficial to the organization and includes (1) structuring the organization to establish clear lines of authority, responsibility, and commu-

nication; (2) planning and budgeting systems; (3) identifying and developing desired short- and long-term outputs and outcomes; (4) developing appropriate metrics and establish targets; and (5) developing appropriate incentive systems. It is important to note that certain types of organizations (e.g., not-for-profit) may not use some mechanisms of results control. A results control system is effective only when the organization is knowledgeable of the desired results, key individuals have the ability to influence the desired results, and the organization has the ability to effectively measure the results in a timely manner.

Action Control includes (1) identifying and defining the desired actions and/or tasks and (2) establishing mechanisms to observe/monitor the actions in order to ensure that employees perform actions known to be beneficial to the organization. This type of control is effective when the organization has knowledge of the desired actions and has the ability to ensure that the desired actions are taken.

Personnel Controls are designed to enable employees to perform the desired tasks satisfactorily on their own because the employees are experienced, honest and hard-working, and derive a sense of self-realization and satisfaction from performing the tasks well. Elements of personnel controls include defining the job(s), hiring the right people, clarifying expectations, and implementing mechanisms to provide the required knowledge, skills and resources; these contribute to increasing the employee's ability to perform well and increase the likelihood that the employee will engage in self-monitoring.

Cultural Controls exist to identify a common vision/purpose and to shape the organization's behavioural norms towards achieving this common vision. For example, an evaluation culture will have to be created and nurtured to ensure that individuals within the PLLO and the individual libraries internalize it, buy into the idea of evaluation, and carry it out enthusiastically. Cultural controls are by far are the most important form of control to initiate a new activity such as evaluation. Appendix B illustrates the interaction among the four types of control.

METHODOLOGY TO EVALUATE THE PROGRAM

This section explains the basis of the methodology to evaluate the outcomes of the Summer Reading programs. However, it would be useful first to establish an understanding of baseline program data. The baseline program data interview questionnaire/tool was developed as a formalized/agreed upon set of inputs through working discussions with CUISR, PLLO, and public library program coordinators.

Baseline Program Data

The baseline program data consists of a summary of the key variables of the program infrastructure including resources and activities, as well as challenges. This data was collected through the use of interview ques-

tions that were developed in consultation with the Summer Reading Evaluation Committee.

To facilitate this data collection, a research assistant at CUISR interviewed twelve coordinators of the Summer Reading Programming/TD Summer Reading Club from regional systems in the Saskatchewan Public Library System, using a standard interview structure (Ethical Disclosure and Interview Questionnaire may be found in Appendices C and D respectively). The study was approved by the University of Saskatchewan's Research Ethics Board and consent was obtained from each participant before any interviews were conducted.

The researchers then administered the interviews over the course of one month via pre-arranged phone call interviews, recording each interview on hand-held recorders. Each interview took around thirty minutes to an hour. After the interviews were completed they were transcribed and the transcribed data were analyzed to identify trends of success and/or challenges pertaining to the summer reading programming offered by Saskatchewan Public Libraries. Transcripts and copies of the data are securely stored in the CUISR archives; consolidated data is also held by PLLO.

The research is limited to the perspectives of the twelve summer reading coordinators, which means that the results may not provide a complete representation of summer reading programs. This study does not contain data from participants or external supporters of the TD/LAC Summer Reading Club.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings from the interviews are summarized below by topic: Funding and Expenditures, Incentives (Prizes and Performers), Other Community Programming and Shared Programming, School Involvement, Hiring, Programmer Time, and Reflections.

Funding and Expenditures

Data show that due to funding model differences between municipal and regional library systems the smaller communities rely more on government funding, sponsorships, and grants for programming. Funding ranges across libraries depending upon the active or passive nature of the program, site size, and regional differences. Summer programming is the jurisdiction of the branch libraries supported by the system headquarters and it was noted that accounting may be spread across multiple reports, and documented over multiple years. This makes tracking specifics of this input challenging.

Often summer reading programming is one of the major programming expenses for a public library. Supplemental summer reading grant monies for 2013 were used for a variety of resource and program development uses. All twelve coordinators noted that planning for summer reading programming was completed early in the year, so

the grant could often not be used to its maximum potential. This suggests that the regional libraries planned based on an estimated amount of resources that they were likely to receive, and did not have a built-in flexibility to make last-minute alterations to their plans. Extended sponsorships from local businesses are an opportunity that could be more fully explored, as well as a more unified external grant development process.

Incentives (Prizes and Performers)

The coordinator interviews indicate that in some Saskatchewan libraries prizes and entertainment consume a high proportion of the amount budgeted for summer reading programming. The respondents are in agreement that in locations where the prizes are effective in increasing participation, removing them would be detrimental to the program. Prizes provide incentives to read and, in some cases, promote literacy.

According to our findings, the performers often strengthen community bonds. This could be because the performers are from the local area or because there are very few performers that come through the area. Either way, the performers bring people together under the banner of literacy with public library branding. Gathering in this positive way builds a trusting and engaged community. Called the “public good” of social capital, children benefit from this type of environment due to an increase in available resources and a decrease in crime (Stone, 2003).

Performers provide exposure to new genres, and oral literacy, and bring people into the library. Analysis of data associated with prizes and performers could be used to track community engagement with the library as an outcome.

Other Community Programming and Shared Programming

Summer camps and day programs were noted as potential partners. Partnerships for shared programs have high potential for impact; with the proviso that many potential partners are dependent upon using the library’s services and resources as a free service and may not be in the position of reciprocity. Nonetheless, there is scope to expand this, particularly to encourage staff of partner to get actively involved with running programs with public library staff.

School Involvement

Currently most locations communicate with schools regarding summer programming. In some systems, programming coordinators engage further with classroom teachers by running joint programming, or facilitating library visits in advance of summer reading. This partnership could be further developed to conduct pre- and post- summer reading program evaluation studies, for the communication of library programs and as pilot locations for potential literacy camps.

Hiring

Student hiring is a popular option. The summer job gives high school and university students work experience and keeps them busy during the summer months. Summer student hiring could be expanded as the data shows an increase in program engagement when the children are instructed by teenagers and young adults.

Programmer Time

Currently information on how much programmer time is related to developing and coordinating summer reading programming is not consistently tracked; there is opportunity for data collection and improved communication.

Reflections

The challenges pertaining to developing library programs (especially digital activities) revolve around space, funding, staff and student/intern training, quality programming, and technology. Participation challenges include lack of children due to enrollment in other programs, distances between children's homes and the libraries in rural centres, and community engagement. Some of these challenges may be mitigated by the development of shared programming tools and practices.

Many of the coordinators expressed positive opinions about the program. Sharing success stories and other feedback from across the province would be useful for the further development of the program as a province-wide strategy.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The basic question pertaining to evaluation is whether the Saskatchewan summer reading programs result in desired outcomes; this question is illustrated in Appendix E. A desired outcome is that the summer reading program leads to a long-term increase in literacy levels, but particularly if it results in the retention of literacy levels over summer months. There may be other outcomes as well; for example, Fiore (2007) documents the work of other researchers who suggest that reading programs can create a life-long love for reading, can develop the children's thinking, and may also result in behavioural changes especially through reading stories that reflect moral values. These latter outcomes are more longer term and qualitative in nature; the more immediate and measurable outcome is the effect on literacy levels.

Evaluation Option 1

A simple evaluation option is to measure children's literacy levels prior to them registering in the summer reading program and upon completion of the same. Any differences may be attributable to the summer reading program. Although this is an easy option, the key question is whether a difference in literacy levels prior to and upon completion of the summer reading program can be fully attributed to the program.

Prior research suggests that there may be other factors affecting this relationship; examples of these factors may include race, socio-economic background, proficiency, learning challenges (disabilities), access to books, family literacy, family involvement, and an environment conducive to reading (Carbone, 2010; Cooper et al., 1996; Graham, et al., 2011; Kim, 2006; Lauer et al., 2006; Mraz and Rasinski, 2007; Orlowski & Cottrell, 2013; Schacter, 2003). In addition, the attractiveness of the reading program in terms of its offerings and the extent to which staff are involved and encourage children also influence how many students continue in the program, participate in all activities and read books. This expanded set of factors is captured in Appendix F.

Evaluation Option 2

The second evaluation option is to collect an expanded set of data including the pre- and post-summer reading program literacy levels. This expanded set of data would include demographic factors as well as data pertaining to the participation/engagement of children while they are attending the reading program. Collecting data pertaining to the expanded set of variables would require the involvement of library staff (to capture program-related data and participant engagement data), school teachers/school system (to capture literacy level data). Other data such as participant demographic data may already be available through the school or some other community/population database.

The critical element in data collection is to identify the relevant variables for which data is required, determine the nature of the data to be collected (e.g., quantitative or qualitative), explore whether such data may be already available through a different source, determine when, where, how, and by whom such data may be collected. A potential source of data is the summer reading program evaluation data collected by the marketing firm; data pertaining to basic demographics and program activity engagement levels may be relevant. Appendix G illustrates evaluation options 1 and 2.

The next two options present an experimental methodology which involves identifying two groups similar in all respects except their involvement in a reading program.

Evaluation Option 3

This option involves assigning two sets of experimental tasks, one task to one group and the other to the second group. Both would be placed in a similar simulated experimental setting (e.g., a classroom or a library

or some other non-threatening location). One experimental task will involve reading and reading-related activities, whereas the other will involve non-reading related tasks. Literacy levels prior to and subsequent to the program may be measured to compute differences. Assuming that the two groups are similar in all respects, any differences in literacy levels between the groups can be reasonably attributed to the experimental task. The two critical elements in conducting such an experiment are as follows: (1) the extent to which the two groups are similar and (2) the choice of the experimental tasks for the two groups (it is especially important to ensure that the non-reading task assigned to the comparison group will have no indirect effect on literacy levels).

Evaluation Option 4

This option is similar to the previous one in that this is also an experiment, but it is a real experiment. One group in this option will consist of children who participate and go through a summer reading program offered by the local library. The second group will consist of children, similar in all respects except for the fact that they do not participate in a summer reading program. Literacy levels prior to and subsequent to the program may be measured to compute differences. Assuming that the two groups are similar in all respects, any differences in literacy levels between the groups can be reasonably attributed to the summer reading program. The two critical elements in conducting such an experiment are as follows: (1) the extent to which the two groups are similar and (2) ensuring that children in the comparison group do not engage in any reading or reading-related activity for the duration of the summer reading program. Appendix H illustrates these two options.

Evaluation Option 5 (Social Impact Analysis)

Another evaluation option is to undertake a social impact analysis to measure social and other impacts of summer reading programs. Examples of such analyses include measuring social return on investment (SROI) or implementing the SIMPLE methodology, a strategic approach to social impact analysis (McLoughlin, Kaminski & Sodagar, 2009). Implementing a SROI analysis includes five stages and is guided by seven principles (see Appendix I) (SROI Network, 2012). The SROI analysis is a broader framework compared to the previous evaluation options in that it examines impacts across all stakeholders rather than just the children participating in the summer reading programs. Moreover, it identifies and tracks economic, environmental, and social outcomes.

The SIMPLE methodology consists of five stages as follows: (1) scope it, (2) map it, (3) track it, (4) tell it, and (5) embed it. According to McLoughlin et al. (2009, p. 155), the five steps help “managers to conceptualise the impact problem; identify and prioritise the impacts for measurement; develop appropriate impact measures; report impacts and ... embed the results in management decision making.” This methodology also focuses on a broader set of outcomes along four dimensions: financial, economic, social, and environmental.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Prior research suggests that summer reading programs can contribute to raising the literacy levels of children (or at least retain the literacy levels by preventing any summer loss). Saskatchewan public library systems have been offering such programs for over 35 years. The objective of this research project was to facilitate the development of an evaluation methodology of the summer reading programs across the province. Using a structured questionnaire, the research team collected baseline data on some variables pertaining to the summer reading programs from 12 program coordinators across the province.

The data suggested a few challenges including securing additional funding, lower attendance in rural areas, general communication, staffing, and availability (i.e. number of hours per week) and the disparity across the province in terms of resources and resource availability. Existing strengths lie in utilizing available resources, creative programming, and the exploration of partnerships with other community organizations.

The findings from the interview process and literature review raise many opportunities for the Provincial Public Library System to enhance and communicate the benefits of Summer Reading. Ensuring the sustainability of the Summer Reading Programs should include effective tracking of resource use. Based on the information collected, recommendations regarding reporting of the Summer Reading Programs in Saskatchewan follow. These recommendations fall into three categories: Inputs to be tracked, outcomes to be tracked, and opportunities (see Appendix J). Many of the metrics recommended for tracking are currently being compiled by the TD/LAC program for analysis by the marketing firm at a provincial level. Analysing data at a regional level will allow all stakeholders to understand variances that may exist among summer reading programs offered across the province.

Inputs to be Tracked

Inputs are the resources that are used in facilitating a program, such as staff hours, budgeted funds, or materials used. By tracking inputs for the Summer Reading, Saskatchewan public libraries in Saskatchewan will be capable of determining what resources were used over the course of the program. Additionally, comparing the change in inputs from year to year will help to understand what activities will best facilitate growth in outcomes.

Financial Inputs

Rigorous tracking of funding will be beneficial in producing more accurate productivity metrics such as number of participants per dollar spent. Financial inputs to be tracked include costs of prizes, how prizes are paid for, costs of shared programming vs unshared programming, and dollars spent by the partnered business. The types of grants, when their applications are due, and when they must be spent by should also be tracked to ensure the capital is being used efficiently and/or in a timely manner.

Staff Resources and Community Inputs

Tracking information pertaining to staff and community resources will provide metrics to gauge the capacity of the summer reading program. Staff and Community inputs to track include the number of partnerships, nature of partner programming, number of youth hires, the method of programming promotion, number of schools involved and in-school method of programming promotion, frequency of business involvement, number of businesses involved, number of performers per location, and variety of performers.

Material Inputs

Material inputs into the program should be tracked to understand the resources available to staff. Frequency of books being distributed as prizes, number of prizes related to literacy, number of prizes in total, new materials purchased each year, and new materials donated should all be tracked to create measurable metrics. Types of programming are another input.

Outputs/Outcomes to Track

Outputs include metrics such as the number of participants, attendance, the number of books read; outcomes are the results achieved through programming. Outcomes speak to the impact of the summer reading programs. Outcome metrics may include increase in literacy rates, participant engagement, increase in cultural awareness, increase in reading participation, participant enjoyment of programming, and the extent to which public library employment helps hired youth with their future careers. Tracking outcomes will allow the impact of the Summer Reading program on participants to be measured.

This report suggests four alternative evaluation methodologies to examine linkages between inputs and outputs/outcomes. The four methodologies range from a simple analysis to a more complex social impact analysis.

Opportunities for the Saskatchewan Public Library system

There are many opportunities for the Saskatchewan Public libraries to take advantage of; the three most prominent are expanding partnerships, hiring summer student, and best practice sharing.

Expanding Partnerships

Partnerships help all ventures involved secure resources and achieve strategic goals (Carsrud, Meyskens, Reynolds, Robb-Post & Stamp, 2010). With the right partnerships in place social ventures can gain volunteers and funding, as well as additional distribution outlets. Securing additional financial capital through community partnerships will allow for more attractive programming and improvement to the quality of online content. This could potentially increase the number of participants in the program.

There is opportunity to collaborate with other summer clubs or camps to help children who may be reluctant readers to relate things that they are interested in to the joy of reading. Partnership between the day camps and libraries will build a bond for the children between camp activities and literature. Mutually beneficial partnerships could be facilitated by developing programs together and sharing library space and resources. This opportunity will ensure that the library sessions relate directly back to the camp's activities, and leave the librarians open to deal with their other responsibilities.

Partnership between regions will also assist in identifying performers who are a valuable part of the Summer Reading program. Information regarding performers could be pooled as a shared resource to assist in finding quality performers.

Hiring Summer Students

Summer students improve the quality of the Summer Reading for participating children while at the same time freeing up librarian time to handle their own tasks. In addition to these benefits, hiring summer students keeps the students occupied over summer, while increasing their employability. This provides the library with the opportunity to engage youth in programming activities and also has a positive effect on the community.

Best Practice Sharing

To aid in the sustainability and growth of the Summer Reading program, the library regions could participate in collective best practice sharing. Data from the interviews showed that this is not being practiced within the library regions. Best practice sharing however is shown to have a positive impact on business functioning (Odell & Grayson, 1999). If best practice sharing is to be implemented within this library system, proper management of Summer Reading implementation practices will be essential (Goh, 2002). To track the effects of best practice sharing, the library system will need to engage in additional research to find effective metrics for tracking success.

It is important to ensure that everyone involved recognizes the benefit of the Summer Reading program and maintains a high level of morale. Establishing buy-in from all the individuals involved will increase their productivity (Thomson, de Chernatony, Arganbright & Khan, 2010). This can be established through internal marketing and developing clear mandates. Improving communication of the success of the Summer Reading program will significantly help in increasing common goals and staff commitment to the program.

In conclusion, summer reading programs are known to provide significant benefits to children and can therefore be a valuable mechanism to enhance literacy levels among them. In addition they have the potential to provide additional benefits leading up to children developing a love for reading and increasing their self-confidence—and their performance in education and in life. If there have been program challenges and particular disparities across the province, there are also key strengths in resources (material and personnel), creative initiatives, as well as partnerships and networks on which to build. Implementing an evaluation methodology will help individual libraries and

the PLLO to assess the benefits derived from the Summer Reading programs—and to be better able to communicate program value both within and beyond the library system.

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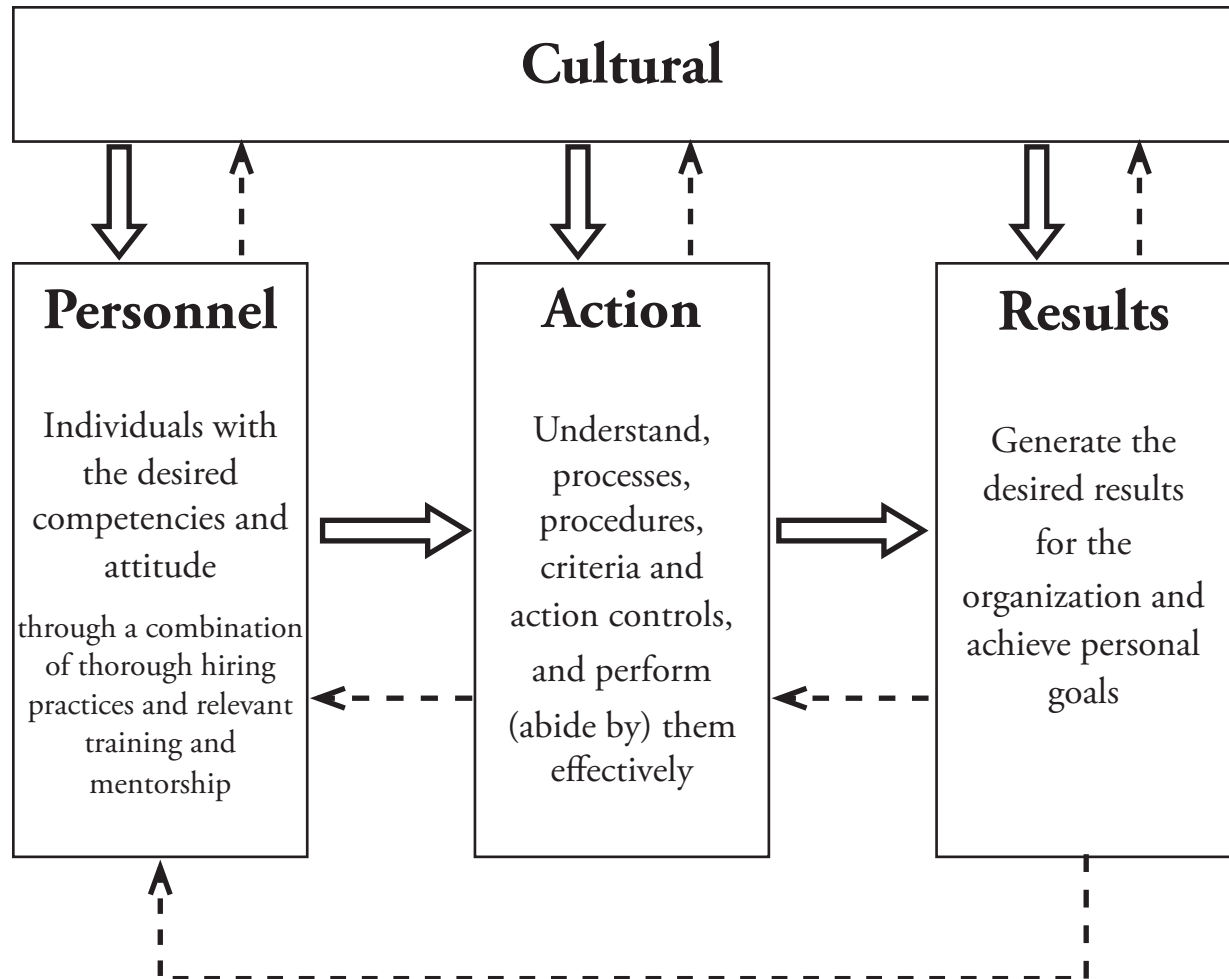
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APPENDIX A: Best Practice Guidelines

<p>Program's Approach to Learning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Intentional focus on accelerated learning 2. Firm commitment to youth development 3. Proactive approach to summer learning <p>Program Infrastructure</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong, empowering leadership 2. Advanced, collaborative learning 3. Extensive opportunities for staff development 4. Strategic partnerships 5. Rigorous approach to evaluation and commitment to program improvement 6. Clear focus on program sustainability and cost-effectiveness <p>Source: Bell, S.R., Carrillo, N. (2007). Characteristics of effective summer learning programs in practice. <i>New Directions for Youth Development</i>, 114, 45-63.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Include readers from cradle to grave 2. Include English language learners and children and teens who speak foreign languages 3. Partner with teachers and school librarians at local schools 4. Reach out to and partner with local agencies and organizations that already work with low income and disadvantaged youth 5. Promote a variety of reading and listening formats as additional ways children and teens can participate 6. Promote a variety of genres and diverse content in reading and listening materials 7. Engage readers and listeners in fun activities that provide the opportunity to discuss the books they are reading and listening to, integrate these books into real world experiences, or create projects based on these books 8. Continue story times for young children and families 9. Give away free books for children and teens to keep and/or provide free library cards to children from birth to high school graduation <p>Source: Oregon State library and Oregon Library Association (Date unknown). Components of High-Quality Summer Reading Programs: Public Library Youth Services Best Practices, retrieved from: http://orysbestpractices.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/components_final2.pdf Note: publication date 2010 or later.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Less restrictive program design; articulated goals and objectives; a marketing strategy; evaluation methods; and trained children's specialists 2. Effective partnerships with schools; emphasize the educational benefits of summer reading to parents/caregivers 3. Incentives (prizes) given to participants 4. Participants being able to choose their own books 5. Offering multiple reading activities - activities involving crafts (designing book covers; making and using the fortune teller; reading and writing poetry; author events; using computers; games; linking activities with national initiatives) 6. Knowledgeable staff, an understanding of the target audience and a suitable environment 7. Partnerships with schools and community groups; involvement of parents and volunteers <p>Source: Gross Gilroy, Inc. (2006). Literature Review on the Impact of Summer Reading Clubs, retrieved from: http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/009003/f2/009003-06-040-e.pdf Note: This report was prepared for Library and Archives Canada, Program Branch</p>
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APPENDIX B: Interactions Among Management Controls



APPENDIX C: Ethics Disclosure

Introduction

- Introduce yourself as a CUISR researcher.
- Explain the purpose of the interview – The Summer Reading Evaluation interview will focus on questions regarding staffing, resources and the nature of Summer Reading-related programming in Saskatchewan public libraries and is designed to determine the impact programming has for patrons. This interview is part of a research project undertaken by the CUISR and the Provincial Library and Literacy Office (PLLO) that will evaluate the 2013 Summer Reading programming in Saskatchewan and develop methods for an evaluation framework to be used in the future. Upon completion of the research a copy of the final research report will be made available to all Directors and participants and will be publically available on the CUISR website.
- Although this research is exempt from formal ethical procedures because it is not personal in nature, the research follows the ethical protocols of University of Saskatchewan:
 1. Confidentiality – In the final report, the data will be presented in aggregate form so that it will not be possible to identify individuals. Direct quotes, opinions or expressions may be used but will be presented without revealing names unless you agree to be acknowledged in the report. The researchers will undertake to safeguard the confidentiality of your responses to the best of our ability, however, there are limitations to this due to the small sample size of interviewees and the specific locations or experiences that may provide identification. Please keep these limitations in mind when answering any questions you feel are sensitive in nature.
Do you wish to be acknowledged for your contributions (meaning your name will appear in the publications)? _____
Do you wish to remain confidential in contributing to this research (meaning your name will not appear in the publications)? _____
 2. The interviews will be recorded for transcription purposes only. You may request that the recorder be turned off at any time. After the interview and prior to the data being included in the final report,

you will have the opportunity to review the transcript if you choose to and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcript as you see fit. Recordings will be destroyed once transcripts have been approved. **Do you wish to review the transcript before the information is included in the final report? Yes or no.**

3. Your participation is voluntary and you can answer only those questions that you feel comfortable with. You may withdraw from the research at any time; however, the data you provide may only be removed from the research prior to the analysis stage where all data collected will be combined. **Consent to participate in this study will be in the form of oral consent. Do you consent to participate in the research project? Yes or no.**

Thank you! We'll get started now. The interview should take approximately an hour. If you have any questions after the interview, please don't hesitate to contact us (contact info on the initial letter) or Catherine Howett at the PLLO.

APPENDIX D: Interview Questionnaire

Summer Reading Evaluation and Strategy –Interview Questionnaire SRC Inputs

1) Programming: Funding

What is your total budget for Summer Reading?

- a) What are the sources (and amounts of that funding)? For example, Health, Justice, Aboriginal, Immigrant, Arts, CBO, Municipal and other sources.
 - i. For grants please specify type, amount, regularity
- b) Do you have local business involvement? For example, in-kind, donations, prizes etc.
- c) How does funding for summer reading programming compare to other program funding?

2) Programming: Prizes and incentives

- a) What prizes & incentives (e.g. book giveaways) are typical in your system
- b) Do prizes or incentives differ according to branch/site size?
- c) How are prizes and incentives paid for?
- d) What role do you feel prizes and incentives serve for participants?
- e) Do you think participation would suffer if these prizes and incentives were not in place?
- f) How do you feel prizes and incentives relate to supporting Reading/Literacy outcomes?

3) Programming: Resources

- a) Do you acquire print or other resources specifically for summer reading?
- b) Do you use or market digital resources during summer reading programming (e.g. Tumblebooks, promote the TD/SRC website, run Storybird or other digital programs)

4) Programming: Tours and performers

- a) Do you have tours and performers as part of SP
- b) How much do you spend on tours and performers?
- c) How popular are tours and performers?
- d) How do you market these programs?
- e) Do you feel that this is an important part of Summer Reading programming?

f) How do they support Reading/Literacy outcomes??

5) Staff Resource Commitment: Coordination

- a) How much time does planning and coordination of the Summer Reading program take (by month)?
- b) What are the coordination mechanisms you use? (meetings, marketing, communication strategies)
- c) Who do you liaise with? Do you use other community spaces for your programs?
- d) Do you arrange school involvement pre and post summer? Could this be expanded?
- e) Is there other community resource (CBO, Health, Justice, etc.) involvement?
- f) Do you run programs with other community groups? Are there competing programs in the community during the summer?
- g) What are the factors hindering further development of summer reading? (tech, wifi, equipment desires, lack of personnel, space etc.)

6) Staff Resource Commitment: Programmer time

- a) Do you hire for summer programming? Who?
- b) As a coordinator, do you perform summer programming yourself?
- c) Does your staff perform summer programming?
- d) How many staff hours are committed to summer programming? Outreach?
- e) Do volunteers perform summer programming? What is the average time across sites?

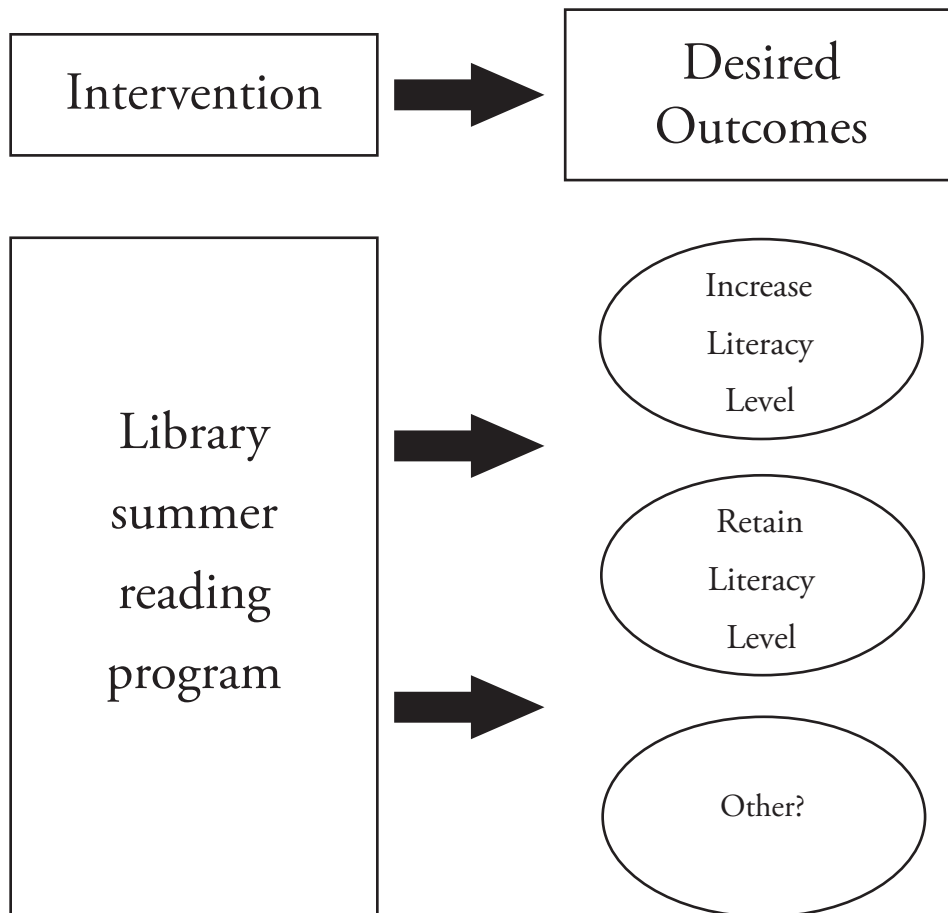
7) Does your system have a mandate/rationale for summer reading programming?

- a) In 2013, all Saskatchewan public library systems were given a \$5000 grant:
- b) What did the Summer Reading Grant enable you to do this summer?
- c) How did your summer programming change?

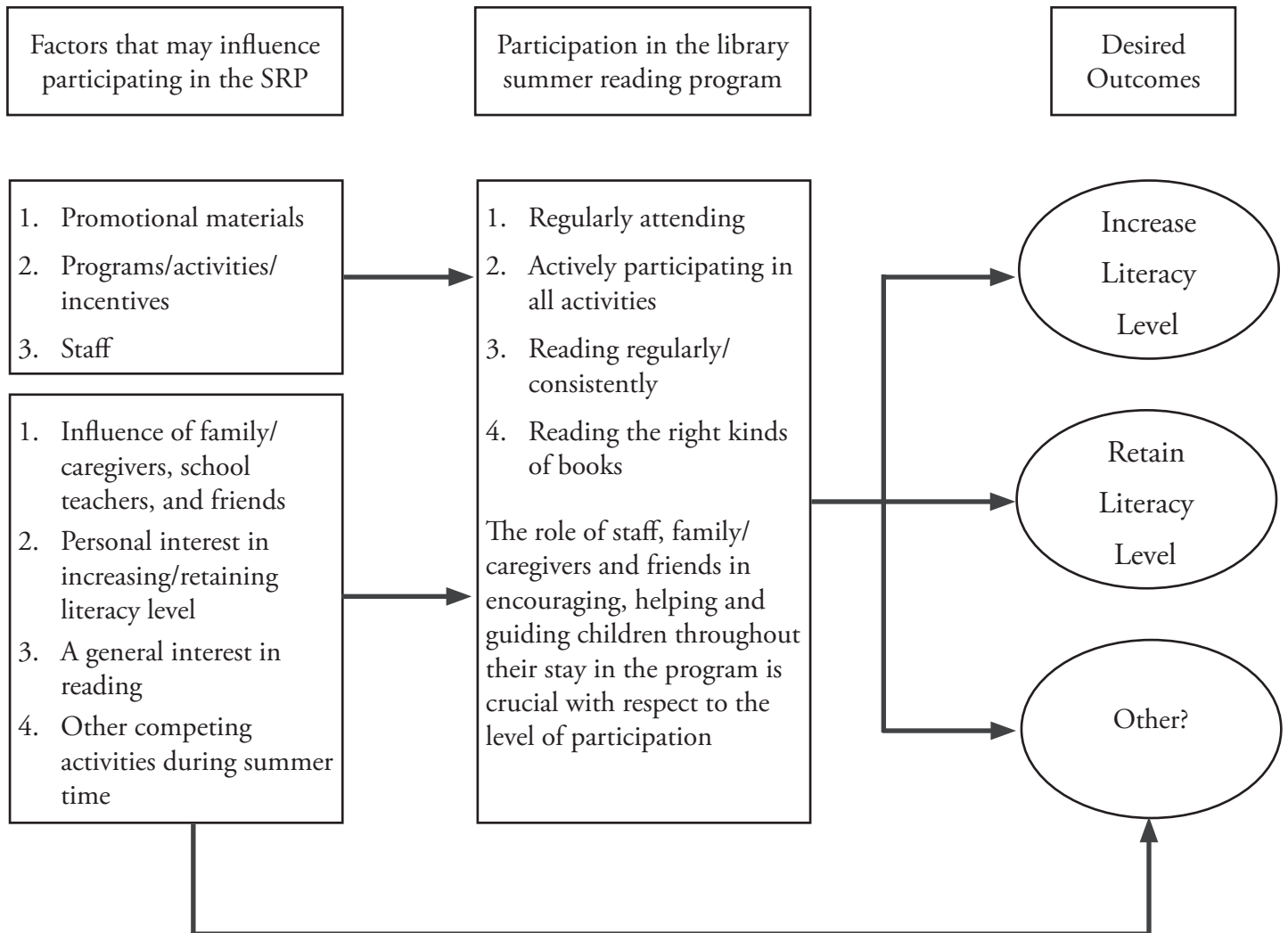
8) Reflection

- a) Is there other information you would like to add?
- b) What are your personal thoughts about summer reading programming?
- c) How do you think summer reading programming might be evaluated?
- d) What do you think are some outcomes related to summer reading programming?

APPENDIX E: Basic Intervention-Outcome Model



APPENDIX F: Possible Participation-Outcome Relationships



APPENDIX G: Evaluation Options 1 and 2

Evaluation Option 1

Simple pre and post program analysis

1. Collect data of reading scores prior to children participating in the SRP and upon completion of the SRP
2. Compute the difference in scores

- ✓ Easy, but can the results be 100% attributable to the SRP?
- ✓ Would it have happened anyway for some children? This is called dead-weight in SROI methodology.
- ✓ Could use standardized reading tests and involve school teachers in collecting data
- ✓ Could develop a different scoring system and collect data without the involvement of school teachers

Evaluation Option 2

Pre and post program analysis with additional data

Collect additional data pertaining to:

1. Background factors (e.g. general interest in reading)
2. Participation (e.g. attendance, number of books read)
3. Staff involvement

- ✓ Involves additional data collection
- ✓ Additional data may help in quantitative analysis to help in assessing attribution and dead weight
- ✓ Requires participant (and family) to provide what some might consider as personal data
- ✓ Quantification of certain variables may be difficult
- ✓ Capturing data of staff involvement may be a sensitive issue

APPENDIX H: Evaluation Options 3 and 4

Evaluation Option 3

Simulated Experiment

1. Identify two matched groups of children similar in all respects (including 'pre' literacy levels)
2. Administer a reading exercise to one group and a non-reading exercise to the other
3. Have them complete a reading assignment upon completion of the exercise
4. Measure post-literacy levels and compare the performance of the two groups

- ✓ Differences in literacy levels can be more reliably attributed to the intervention (exercise)
- ✓ Identifying matched groups is a challenging task

Evaluation Option 4

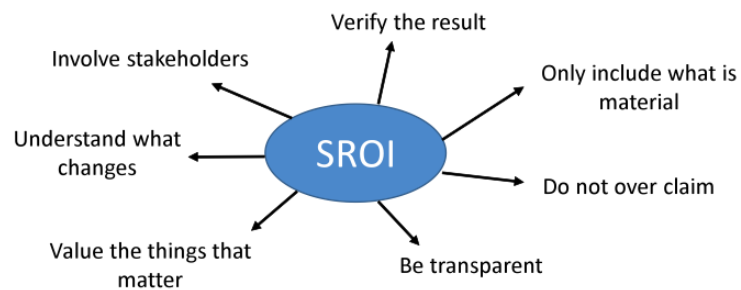
Real Experiment

1. Identify two matched groups of children similar in all respects (including 'pre' literacy levels), one is the group registered in the SRP and the other not registered
2. Collect relevant information of all summer activities for both groups
3. Track post-literacy levels for both groups and compare

- ✓ Differences in literacy levels can be more reliably attributed to the SRP
- ✓ Identifying matched groups is a challenging task

APPENDIX I: Social Return on Investment (Principles & Methodology)

Principles



Methodology

Stage 1 ➡	Stage 2 ➡	Stage 3 ➡	Stage 4 ➡	Stage 5
Identify stakeholders List intended or unintended changes	List inputs , outputs and outcomes for each stakeholder group	Describe the measurement of outcomes	List other factors (deadweight, attribution, etc.)	Calculate social return

APPENDIX J: Recommendations

Information to be Tracked		Opportunities
Inputs	Outputs/Outcomes	
Funding	Number of participants	Increased partnerships
Expenses	Attendance	Hiring summer students
Staff resources	Number of books read	Best practice sharing
Staff engagement	Participation in programs	
Volunteer resources	Participant engagement	
Volunteer engagement	Literacy levels	
Community resources	Other impacts	
Community engagement		
School resources		
School engagement		
Material resources		
Type of programming		
Background of participants		

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