

What Works Clearinghouse

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WWC Quick Review of the Report “Addressing Summer Reading Setback Among Economically Disadvantaged Elementary Students”¹

What is this study about?

The study examined whether providing summer reading books to economically disadvantaged first- and second-grade students for three consecutive summers improved reading achievement.

The study analyzed data on about 1,300 students from 17 high-poverty elementary schools in two large districts in Florida.

Student-level reading achievement was measured by the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test, the state-mandated reading assessment.

The study compared reading scores of students randomly assigned to receive summer reading books with those of students who did not receive them. Scores were compared at the end of the third summer, at which time most students were in 4th or 5th grade.

The authors examined effects for students overall as well as for the subgroup consisting of the most economically disadvantaged students—those who were eligible to receive free lunch.

WWC Rating

The research described in this report meets WWC evidence standards²

Strengths: The study was a well-implemented randomized controlled trial.

Features of the Summer Reading Book Distribution

In the spring of the first year, 1st- and 2nd-graders in each school were randomly assigned to receive 12 self-selected summer reading books every year for three consecutive summers.

Each spring, students in the summer reading group attended a book fair and were asked to select 15 books from the 400 to 600 offered.

From these 15 books, 12 were distributed to students in the summer reading group for free on the final day of school.

What did the study find?

The study found that students who received three consecutive years of free, self-selected summer reading books had statistically significantly higher reading test scores than students who did not receive summer reading books. The reported effect size of 0.14 is interpreted by the WWC as roughly equivalent to moving a student from the 50th percentile to the 56th percentile of reading achievement.

In addition, the study found a statistically significant effect of summer reading among students who were the most economically disadvantaged, with an effect size of 0.21.

¹ Allington, R. L., McGill-Franzen, A., Camilli, G., Williams, L., Graff, J., Zeig, J., et al. (2010). *Addressing summer reading setback among economically disadvantaged elementary students*. Washington, DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, Grant # R305T010692-02.

² Although the version of the report reviewed by the WWC did not contain baseline sample sizes, the study authors subsequently provided these to the review team.

Quick reviews examine evidence published in a study (supplemented, if necessary, by information from author queries) to assess whether that study's design meets WWC evidence standards. Quick reviews rely on the effect sizes and significance levels reported by study authors.

The WWC rating applies only to the summarized results, and not necessarily to all results presented in the study.