

**Impact of early literacy experiences and summer learning  
loss on reading achievement scores  
February 2015**

Thank you, Ann. Chairman Mortimer, Members of the Committee, thank you for your time today.

I'm Staci Shaw and I am a project coordinator for the ICfL's Read to Me program. I also help coordinate summer reading programs. We're going to be taking a few steps to illustrate the impact of early literacy experiences and the "summer slide" on the growth and the achievement gap for kids during their elementary school years. We are going to be focusing today on reading achievement.

**Slide #1: Summer Reading Loss**

Up until around third grade children are learning to read. After that children "read to learn," in all content areas. This is why becoming a proficient reader by the end of third grade is so important, as we heard the Governor mention in his State of the State Address. Traditionally we've assumed that the amount of time spent in school is sufficient for children to learn to read.

**Slide #2: Time spent in and out of school**

There are 87,600 hours in a ten-year-old child's life. If we calculate the number of hours spent in school, based on Idaho's average school day, it totals a little over 4000 hours. This is a very small portion of that child's life. We know that in order to become really good at a sport or to become really good playing a musical instrument, one must use the instruction learned during formal lessons and practice practice practice at home. One must also have access to the sports equipment or the instrument in order to practice. We can see by this chart that though there may be enough time for children to learn to read in school, becoming a good reader will take practice outside of school.

Children who don't have access to books or print materials outside of school time will rarely become good readers, especially lower-income children.

I'd like to demonstrate this for you. I have two volunteers: Stephanie Bailey-White and Julie Armstrong, both project coordinators for Read to Me. I'm going to ask Julie and Stephanie to stand side by side. Julie is going to be our typical middle income child. Stephanie is going to be our typical lower income child. Again we are talking about generalizations and again typical children.

Today is the first day of kindergarten. Stephanie and Julie are joining the Stephaniee class. However, in this case we are going to start with asking Julie to take 4 heel-to-toe steps forward.

This is where Julie and Stephanie would most likely be when they start kindergarten. This is the gap at the starting gate. We know that young people, based on income, based on socio-economic status enter school at very different levels.

A lot to do with access to books, with reading material in the home, the amount of time spent with language development activities. One of the big reasons we have an achievement gap is disparities in access to preschool learning opportunities. So this is the beginning of the gap and it's huge. Most children who start school behind tend to stay behind.

So now I'm going to ask Stephanie and Julie to each take 4 heel-to-toe steps forward to illustrate what happens to reading achievement during the kindergarten year.

So this is what happened during the kindergarten year. Stephanie & Julie basically achieved about the same amount in reading – the gap is still there, but they achieved roughly the same amount during the kindergarten school year.

Chronic Absenteeism: Children in low-income families tend to miss a lot of school. This is not usually a choice by the child, but inability on the parent/caregiver's part to get them to school. Children in low-income families also have less access to health care, so they are frequently absent due to sickness or dental health issues.

Children who miss even a couple of days of school every month lose an average of 20 days each year, valuable learning time. Over the course of Kindergarten through third grade, an average of 20 fewer school days each year can add up to almost half a grade level!

Stephanie missed 2-3 days of school each month during kindergarten. Stephanie will actually need to take a full step back.

Now let's look at what happens during the summer. Julie -- our typical middle income student -- please take a half step forward. Stephanie, please take a full step back.

So this is what happens the summer of the kindergarten year, the summer between kindergarten and first grade. Middle income children tend to have access to books, and they continue to read. They also tend to participate in summer camps, visit zoos and museums, take family vacations—in other words, their “learning faucet” remains open. Research shows us that lower-income children do not tend to have many books in the home or transportation to access free books at the library, and therefore they do not tend to read much over the summer. Many lower-income children also spend a lot of summer hours at home alone or in daycare environments. In many instances, the “learning faucet” has been turned off. Three months with the faucet turned off is equivalent to a third of a school year.

So now let's illustrate what happens during the first grade year. Stephanie & Julie to take 4 heel-to-toe steps forward. Stephanie, take one step backward for all the time you were absent. And again – let's look at the summer between first and second grade. Julie take a half step forward. Stephanie, please take a full step back.

Let's look at the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade year again in reading achievement. Stephanie & Julie please take 4 steps forward. Stephanie, take one step backward. Again Julie take a half step forward for the summer and Stephanie take a full step back.

Here we are in third grade, what we know is a critical year. Why? Up until the end of third grade children are learning to read. After that they are mostly reading to learn. Stephanie and Julie, take 4 steps forward. Stephanie take one step back. And during the summer, Julie take half a step forward, and Stephanie take a full step back.

Now let's look at what happened to this achievement gap. The gap grows dramatically not because of what happens primarily during the school year, but what happens during the summer. If we continued this demonstration, Stephanie could be as many as three grades behind Julie by the end of sixth grade.

The impact of differences with summer learning opportunities for Julie & Stephanie, representing our typical middle income kids and typical lower income kids, is very hard to overcome without costly and direct intervention. Their experiences before they get to school and during the summer months are vastly different and have a huge impact on the achievement gap.

Let's take a quick look at what is happening with Idaho children.

Slide #3 – end

Children are making gains during the school year, but losing much of those gains during the summer. Until we address what is happening (or not happening) over the summer months, we are simply not going to be able to move the needle far enough toward reading proficiency, especially with our lower-income children.

Last slide: Here are some resources to learn more information about the Campaign for Grade Level Reading, summer learning loss, or Idaho's children.

Chairman Mortimer, Committee Members, thank you for being advocates for Idaho's young readers. Are there any questions?