Shifting the Sands of Summer Reading: Promoting Reading and Literacy with Effective Summer Reading Programs

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This study investigated ways in which summer reading programs (SRPs) support children's recreational reading interests and habits and help to promote reading and literacy throughout the summer months. The primary research question was: How do children, parents, and library staff experience their public library summer reading program? This paper will present selected findings from the study related to children's reading experiences in school and during the summer, reading games and incentives, and designing summer reading programs that emphasize the social aspects of reading. Findings from this study suggest that school and public libraries should consider moving away from traditional summer reading programs that include reading games and rewards and focus instead on providing children, their parents, and library staff members with greater opportunities to interact with books and reading, and one another, throughout the summer.

Introduction

Summer reading programs are staples of public and school libraries across North America and are offered in an attempt to encourage children to read throughout the summer months. The overall goal of a summer reading program (SRP) is to promote reading and literacy and encourage children to read for pleasure using a variety of activities, programs, and reading games. Ideally, these programs provide children with the opportunity to talk about books and reading with their peers and with interested adults who are not their parents or teachers. The social context of reading, as described by Chambers (1991) and supported by the theories of Vygotsky (1978; 1986) and Rosenblatt (1938/1995; 2005), can be a valuable function of SRPs. As well, children need time and space to explore texts in a variety of forms and genres in order to develop their literacy skills. Adults, especially parents, teachers, and librarians, generally agree that summer reading programs are beneficial to children (see, for example, Carter, 1988; Celano & Neuman, 2001; Fiore, 2005; Heyns, 1978; Howes, 1986; Locke, 1988; Thompson, 1991).

Without school-related deadlines and pressures, summer reading programs encourage children to read widely and choose materials that are relevant and interesting to them.

This paper will present selected findings from the study related to children's reading experiences in school and during the summer, reading games and incentives, and designing summer reading programs that emphasize the social aspects of reading. These findings were part of a larger study about children's experiences with summer reading programs in one province in Canada. The purpose of broad study was to explore how a small group of children, their parents, and library staff experience public library summer reading programs (SRPs). The study investigated ways in which SRPs support children's recreational reading interests and habits and help to build "a nation of readers" (Fiore, 2005, p. 11). The primary research question guiding the study was: How do children, parents, and library staff experience their public library summer reading program?

Theoretical Framework

The works of Vygotsky (1978; 1986) and Rosenblatt (1938/1995; 2005) provide the theoretical framework for this study. Vygotsky emphasizes that knowledge and meaning are socially constructed. In a social constructivist environment, learning activities tend to focus on active engagement and collaboration with others (Abdal-Haqq, 1998). Rosenblatt suggests that a reader brings his/her own attitudes and ideas to any text, which impacts the reader's interpretation of that text. The dynamic transaction between reader and text is necessary for children's literacy skills to develop. Classroom teachers often have insufficient time to devote to the social nature of reading, which Rosenblatt sees as essential for the development of literacy. The less formally structured summer reading programs can provide time and space for recreational reading, for relaxed social interaction related to books, and the opportunity to engage in literacy-related activities. This research draws on both Vygotsky's social constructivist theory and Rosenblatt's reader response theory to investigate the role of summer reading programs in children's reading experiences.

Review of the Literature

Children's services in public libraries have not been widely researched (McKechnie, 2006; Walter, 2003) and few studies have specifically investigated summer reading programs in school or public libraries, particularly in Canada. The existing literature suggests that adults generally agree that public library summer reading programs SRPs are beneficial because children who read for pleasure during the summer tend to retain or improve their reading abilities (Carter, 1988; Heyns, 1978; Howes, 1986; Los Angeles County Public Library Foundation, 2001). But, what are the main goals of a public library summer reading program? According to Fiore (2005), when today's children enter the workforce, they will need reading and literacy skills that exceed the

skills of current students and workers. While schools focus on providing children with reading and literacy instruction that develops skills, there is little time to emphasize the social nature of reading, which is critical for developing a lifelong love of reading. Therefore, the main goal of a public library summer reading program is critical. These programs provide

> experiences through which children, their parents, teachers, and caregivers can delight in sharing perceptions gained from literature. Group activities that are today an integral part of most summer library reading programs help dispel the myth that reading is a lonely pursuit. Activities that promote cooperation rather than competition help establish reading and literacy activities as ones in which everyone who participates becomes a winner. (Fiore, 2005, p. 6)

Chambers (1991), echoing Rosenblatt (1938/1995; 2005), emphasizes the importance of the social context of reading: "[E]very reader knows that where we read affects how we read: with what pleasure and willingness and concentration" (p. 7). He adds that "it is also a matter of having the books we want, and what mood we're in, and what time we've got, and whether we're interrupted... They make up the social context of reading… the reading environment" (p. 7). Through their summer reading programs, public and school libraries should be trying to create an exciting, fun reading environment for children of all ages where they can participate in literature-related activities with their peers.

Many studies about summer reading have focused on the so-called summer reading gap and programs meant to combat reading achievement loss during the summer, especially among low socio-economic status children. The discussion in such articles highlights that some children appear to lose ground in their reading over the summer months (see, for example, Cooper et al., 1996; Kim, 2004; Krashen & Shin, 2004; Shin & Krashen, 2007). There has been less attention paid to public library-sponsored summer reading programs that promote reading and literacy activities to all children throughout the summer. What research does exist points to the success of these kinds of programs in connecting with children and their parents or caregivers and encouraging recreational reading as a worthwhile activity.

Three recent studies, (Dominican University, 2010; Gordon & Lu, 2008; Lu & Gordon, 2007), focus on the impact of school-based and public library summer reading programs (SRPs) on students' reading achievement. The Dominican University study found that students who participated in public library summer reading programs showed higher levels of reading achievement at the beginning of the school year than students who had not participated in SRPs. While students who did not participate in SRPs did show improvements, they did not reach the same level of achievement as their peers who participated in a public library program. As well, teachers and school library staff reported that students who had participated in public library SRPs returned to school better prepared to read and seemed to enjoy reading for pleasure more than their peers who had not participated in a summer reading program. Lu and Gordon (2007) focus on school-mandated summer reading and the effects of free choice on student learning. The researchers found the purpose of this school-based reading program was unclear to both the teachers and the students. This resulted in different views about what students were reading and why, and whether the purpose of the program was to promote academic or

recreational reading. This lack of specific purpose caused concern "about the quality of books read and the importance of grading and accountability" (para. 37). The researchers also concluded that "free choice enriches summer reading" (para. 38), which should be an important function of school library programs. A follow up study, conducted at the same school, found that low-achieving students prefer to read alternative forms of media over books and that low-achieving readers choose to read realistic stories that "seem to function as a tool for developing, or even molding, individual behavior and personality" (Gordon & Lu, 2008, para. 30). The researchers concluded that libraries should be mindful of how they design reading programs, such as summer reading programs, and include alternative media in their descriptions of reading and texts.

Other research indicates that summer reading programs are an essential community service that support children and their families from all income levels and ethnic groups in their reading (see, for example, Celano & Neuman, 2001; Fiore, 2005; Kim, 2004; Locke, 1988; Thompson, 1991). One often-cited study conducted in Atlanta, Georgia in the 1970s studied a group of sixth and seventh graders through two academic years and the summer in between. Heyns (1978) concluded that the one activity that directly impacted these students' summer learning was reading. This finding was largely irrespective of family background, socio-economic status, and ethnicity. A number of researchers argue that public library summer reading programs positively impact children's reading skills and ability (see, for example, Carter, 1988; Howes, 1986; Los Angeles County Public Library Foundation, 2001).

Research indicates that summer reading programs can have a positive effect on children's reading ability and interest. Some of the success of these programs may be related to the use of small prizes or rewards as incentives to encourage and motivate children to read each week during the summer. The use of incentives to promote and reward reading is common, but it can also be problematic as the issue of offering incentives for reading has both adamant supporters and critics. Those in favour of the practice argue that children, especially reluctant readers, will read when they receive a prize or reward for doing so (Norton, 1992). In fact, "many teachers and professionals [including librarians] believe that rewards and incentives ignite students' motivation to read. This is evidenced by the widespread adoption of sponsored reading incentive programs throughout North America" (Cameron, Gear, & Wizniak, 2004, para. 1). Critics of offering incentives for children's reading provide equally strong arguments against the practice. Alfie Kohn, a widely read critic of rewards and incentives, shares a story about a reluctant reader who participated in his local public library summer reading program in order to earn packs of baseball cards and other prizes by reading books. Kohn (1993) suggests that an incentives-based summer reading program, like the one that awards packages of baseball cards in return for books read,

> turns vacation reading into something one has to do to obtain a reward [which] is hardly likely to produce children who have 'learned to love books'. Quite the contrary….Once the library runs out of baseball cards, children are not only unlikely to continue reading; they are less likely to read than they were before the program began. Think about it: reading has been presented not as a pleasurable experience but as a means for obtaining a goody. (p. 73-74)

According to Kohn, and others, the experience of reading should be its own reward, and children should not be offered rewards that take away from the intrinsic pleasure that can come from reading a good book. Kohn's premise is supported by Ramos and Krashen (1998), who found that increased access to books through regular visits to the public library resulted in an increase in the number of books read by a group of inner city school children in Los Angeles. The implication is that "simply providing interesting books for children is a powerful incentive for reading, perhaps the most powerful incentive possible" (p. 614).

Incentive-based summer reading programs are not inherently wrong or bad; however, there are questions about the effectiveness of this approach to motivating children to read. The research seems to indicate that libraries should consider the structure of their programs and think about the messages they are sending to children and their parents about reading for pleasure. Competitions that reward only those children who read many books over the summer, for example, leave out those children for whom reading might be a struggle.

Summer reading programs in school and public libraries are common across North America and have been shown to improve children's reading ability, and in some cases, their interest in recreational reading during the summer months. However, there has been little research done that investigates children's experiences of and opinions about summer reading programs. Issues related to the use of rewards and incentives, as well as the the effect on children's interest in reading need to be further explored in order to develop summer reading programs that truly support and promote children's reading and help turn children into lifelong readers.

Methodology

The large study that this paper is based on investigated the experiences of a small group of children, parents, and library staff in three public library summer reading programs in Alberta, Canada. In the original study, a purposive sample of libraries was selected to emphasize diversity in population and type of program. To investigate a small number of SRPs in depth, case study was an appropriate methodology (Creswell, 2005; Stake, 1998). Data collection included artifacts created by the children (such as reading journals and artwork); direct observation of children engaging in program activities; and interviews with eight participating children from ages 6 to 13 and the library staff at each library. All of these data were then analyzed to identify themes and patterns within and across the cases using a qualitative data analysis method described by Miles and Huberman (1998).

This paper presents a subset of the findings from the larger study and draws on representative quotes and examples from the case studies to present findings on three central themes: children's reading experiences; reading games and incentives; and the social aspect of summer reading programs.

Findings

Children's reading experiences

In interviews conducted with children in this study, they were asked to talk about themselves as readers. Seven of the eight children interviewed described themselves as readers and admitted to enjoying reading for pleasure. They indicated that they derived personal pleasure from their reading experiences and described reading as important because it was entertaining or fun or something to do when they were bored. However, these same avid readers also saw reading as having a much more educational purpose. They described reading as being important because it is "good for your brain" and "it makes you smarter and it helps you get better at reading and sometimes at talking" and "you can't exactly get jobs if you can't read." For these readers, reading was a pleasurable, fun experience, but it also served an educational, utilitarian purpose. Similarly, the children in this study made a clear distinction between school reading and summer reading. All of the children who participated in this study preferred summer reading over school reading, particularly because of the choice that was afforded to them in the summer. The ability to choose anything they were interested in for the summer was a highlight of their summer reading experiences. The restrictions they mentioned included Accelerated Reader (AR), which is a reading program used by some schools in which children read books at their reading level and complete multiple choice style tests for each book, borrowing a limited number of certain types of books from the library, and a limited selection of books to choose from in their school libraries. Many of the children also indicated that reading choice was restricted in their school reading. In other words, they were forced to read books they would not have chosen themselves. For example Pélé, a self-described non-reader, admitted that school reading is challenging because of the lack of choice and his belief that many of the books in his school library, especially those for Accelerated Reader, are boring. He believed that his school library did not have any of the kinds of books he was interested in, such as adventure books, and if they were there, he did not know how to find them. On the other hand, the children in this study perceived summer reading to be freer, with fewer restrictions, and with a greater supply of interesting books in the public library. Without the limitations imposed on their reading by teachers and school librarians, the children in this study were glad to be able to read whatever they were interested in during the summer.

Choosing books was an important part of the reading experiences of the children in this study. Participants from one library used clues on the books themselves to help determine if book was going to be interesting to them. For example, Martha used symbols on the covers of books to help her identify books and series that she might like to read. Her choices were also often dictated by the thickness of the book and the cover art. Similarly, Coleton read the blurbs on the back of the book and sought out books in series that he had previously enjoyed to help him choose new books to read for pleasure.

Martha and Coleton did not generally ask for recommendations from adults and they both indicated that they enjoyed the solitary aspects of reading and relied most often on their own experiences as readers to help them choose books they would enjoy.

Talking about books with trusted adults, such as a librarian or their parents, was another major way for these children to get recommendations for future reading. In one library, Susan, the public librarian, used informal interactions and discussions with the children in the library as an opportunity to connect those readers with books she thought they would enjoy. In response, the children I spoke to from that library agreed that Susan was a good source of book information "cause she's read most of them and she knows us and knows what we like." For the young participants in this study, it was critical that if they asked an adult for a book recommendation, that person had to have read the books and be perceived as a reader. Similarly, if they had received a good recommendation in the past from an adult, that person was generally trusted to give further good book recommendations.

This kind of connection with readers was important to Susan who often referred to the idea of building a community of readers through the public library. This was one of her major goals for the library in general and the summer reading program specifically. She worked hard to develop relationships with library patrons that would allow her to talk to them about their reading choices. Her informal approach to talking about books seemed to be working:

> they hear us talking about books, it doesn't matter whether it's kids or adults. I tell people about the new books at the back wall and some people don't know about it and they hear me say that and they want to go check it out. And now that we have more than one person in the library at a time it doesn't feel isolated. You don't feel like the only person who reads.

As a reader herself, Susan was able to make recommendations to library patrons and used these opportunities to connect with adults and young people in the community. Through these interactions, she engaged them in talk about books and reading, but also promoted library services and programs and developed relationships with the people who visited the library.

Reading games and incentives

Summer reading programs traditionally design reading games and/or logs to keep track of children's reading and to motivate them to read during the summer months. The library programs that were investigated as part of this study also used various incentives to reward children for their reading and continue to motivate them throughout the summer. Based on findings from this study, the role of these types of games, and the rewards that go along with them, was not clear cut. Of the children who participated in the study, the avid readers who were also good readers enjoyed receiving prizes as part of their summer reading program experiences, but noted that they would have read throughout the summer regardless of whether or not they were rewarded. For example, Coleton played the reading game each week and recorded the amount of time he spent reading everyday, but was not particularly interested in receiving prizes. He did not win

any of the big weekly prize draws and said that it was "not really" important to him that he might (or might not) win a prize at some point during the summer. In fact, Coleton did not even know what prizes were available to be won. Similarly, Bongos Opposite, a participant at another library indicated that she would be reading during the summer, even without the library's summer reading game and the prizes; however, she also suggested she would probably read less than she did if she was not playing the game. She also said that getting small prizes, like stickers, was nice, but "not too important…[because] I just like the book [prize] at the end" of the game. For Bongos Opposite, one big prize, a book to take home and keep at the end of the summer, was a bonus for participating in the program.

On the other hand, Martha, who described herself as an avid reader, but who struggled with reading, did not participate in the reading game at all. She suggested that it was too much work to keep track of her reading minutes and would prefer to simply to talk to someone at the library about the books she had read. Martha found the system of recording her minutes too complicated and she told me that the reading game was not of interest to her: "I don't like the game that much…I just don't like keeping track of my minutes…I like the [weekly] programs, but I don't like the game." Martha's father concurred, stating that "the reading game hasn't been a big hit. She hasn't participated in it for the last several years. She has a habit of skipping from book to book without finishing any one, so a game based on books read through is more frustrating than inspiring for her." Although the reading game tracked minutes read, not books completed, the game and the prizes associated with the game were not motivational for Martha and were not a significant part of her decision to participate in the SRP or read during the summer.

Finally, Pélé had a different view of incentives and the reading game. Pélé was a struggling reader who indicated that he did not like to read. He described himself as a non-reader and suggested that he only participated in the reading game at his library because of the prizes. When asked what he enjoyed about the program, he replied that the prizes were the best part. He also admitted that without the prizes, he would maybe read "a little bit, but not as much" as he was reading that summer. The best part of getting prizes for Pélé was that "sometimes you get to wear them [like the shoelaces he received one week] or you get a nice book." Pélé also admitted that "the prizes boost my confidence. If there wasn't any prizes, I probably would read only like, one book maybe every two months or two weeks. The prizes boost my confidence by making me read more." Although he had not yet completed the board game and received the book to take home, the promise of a grand prize at the end was an important motivation for him to continue playing the game. For him, it was worth struggling to read a book and keep track of his reading because he wanted to win more prizes, particularly the t-shirt and new book at the end of the game.

Together these findings suggest that when planning reading programs, library staff members should recognize that not every child wants, or needs, extrinsic motivations to participate in the reading game. Designing a program that is not only about recording minutes and rewarding reading time, but focuses on providing opportunities for children and adults to interact, read together, and discuss their reading activities, might encourage more children to participate in the program and the game, and therefore encourage more children to read throughout the summer.

Social aspects of summer reading

Finally, data from this study indicated that traditional summer reading programs (SRPs) are no longer as effective as perhaps they once were, in part because they typically promote reading as a lonely and individual pursuit. When asked to describe reading, the children in this study all referred to reading as a solitary act, something that occurs in isolation, often alone in a bedroom. For most of the participants, reading was enjoyable, and often seen as necessary in order to get a job or improve themselves, but it was also an individual activity that took place away from others. In contrast, the children all enjoyed the social aspects of participating in the summer reading program and seemed to enjoy having opportunities to talk about books and reading with others, particularly with adults. Martha, in particular, enjoyed the weekly interviews that were part of the research study because they gave her an opportunity to talk about her reading with another reader. Similarly, Sam and Cameron suggested that they enjoyed talking to Susan, the librarian, but did not have opportunities to talk to other adults or their peers about reading and books on a regular basis.

Further discussion with all of the children in this study suggested that these children seemed to place little value on this kind of book talk with their friends and peers. Even their interactions with adults in their schools or libraries seemed to be limited to getting book recommendations or assistance in locating books on the shelves. For the children in this study, reading was a solitary activity that did not seem to require a lot of discussion or talk with others, either adults or peers. Throughout our interviews, however, it became clear that all the children in this study, even Pélé the self-described non-reader, wanted to talk about the books they were reading and were happy to have an audience for their book talk. Each of them talked about the books they were reading and were able to clearly articulate what they liked, or disliked, about those books. Many of these discussions went beyond plot summaries and turned into complex personal reactions to their reading. The contradiction between the children downplaying the importance of talking about books with adults or their peers and their obvious enjoyment of having an interested adult to talk to about their reading was an important finding in this study. These findings emphasize that social interaction with other children and adults, as well as developing culturally rich environments in which to learn and explore, should be an essential part of a library reading program.

Implications and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate multiple experiences with summer reading programs (SRP) in three public libraries in Alberta, Canada. Findings from this study suggest that school and public libraries should consider moving away from traditional summer reading programs that include reading games and rewards and focus instead on providing children, their parents, and library staff members with greater opportunities to interact with books and reading, and one another, throughout the summer.

The goal of a public library summer reading program is often to help turn children into readers. The rhetoric of turning children into readers is found throughout the literature related to summer reading programs and is interesting to consider in light of the findings of this study. Many of the children who participated in this study were already readers. Cameron, Sam, Bongos Opposite, Coleton, and Martha described themselves as readers and enjoyed reading for pleasure. They all participated in the SRP for a variety of reasons, but all admitted that they would have read during the summer even if they were not playing the reading game or attending programs at their local libraries. These readers often described reading as important because it was good for building vocabulary or getting jobs as adults, perhaps echoing the language of reading that they heard from their parents or teachers. Similarly, many of these readers did not view reading as a social activity, but rather indicated that their reading experiences were solitary and individual. It appeared that many of these children had not had opportunities at home, in school, or at the library to engage in programs that made reading a social activity. Unfortunately, their public library SRPs did little to change their attitudes about reading or books. These children were already readers, the programs did not turn them into readers, and it appeared that none of them thought differently about reading as a result of their participating in the programs.

Pélé, on the other hand, did not think of himself as a reader. He stated that the worst part about playing the reading game during the summer was the reading and he admitted to sometimes having difficulty finding books he liked to read. However, he could also talk about books and reading like a reader might. He said that when reading, "you use your imagination and you just want to keep reading and your mom says put the book away and you say come on, just let me read more, just let me read more, I want to know what happens." It was impossible at the time of the interview to learn whether Pélé was talking about himself in this quote and he did not want to talk more about this at the time of the interview. Given what I learned about his family, it is possible that some of these comments could have been a result of hearing his older brother, who read a lot, talk about his experiences as a reader. Or, Pélé might have liked reading more than he was willing to admit to me or to any other adult. Either way, Pélé's experiences with the public library summer reading program did little to convince him that reading was fun or interesting, even though these experiences seemed to be positive. By the end of the summer he continued to tell me that he did not like reading and did not think of himself as a reader.

The findings from this study indicate that there is a disconnect between the rhetoric of turning children into readers through their participation in summer reading programs and the reality of what is happening in libraries to make this happen. Adults argue that it is important for children to be read to and to be engaged in discussions with peers and with interested adults about books and reading with activities that promote a love of books and reading (Chambers, 1991; Rosenblatt, 1938/1995; Vygotsky, 1978). Many adults themselves have discovered the joys of being part of a reading community by joining book groups that meet regularly to talk about books, posting book reviews on commercial websites such as Amazon or Chapters, or connecting with other readers in online environments such as Shelfari. Some teachers and teacher-librarians have brought this kind of social context for reading into their schools by using literature circles to provide their students with opportunities to talk to their peers about books and reading.

These kinds of activities would be useful ways for public library staff members to think about their summer reading programs. In doing so, public libraries and their summer reading programs might be better able to turn the rhetoric into a reality and turn more children into lifelong readers.

One way that public and school libraries can help children enjoy reading through summer reading programs, or reading programs held during other parts of the year, is by developing relationships between staff members and children and using those relationships to engage children in discussions about their reading. Social interaction with other children and adults, as well as culturally rich environments in which to learn and explore, are essential parts of a child's development. Rosenblatt (1938/1995; 2005a; 2005b), Chambers (1991) talked about the importance of this kind of interaction, particularly as it relates to engaging children with books and reading. This kind of discussion about books can, among other things, help children "develop insights concerning transactions with text as well as metalinguistic understanding of skills and conventions in meaningful contexts" (Rosenblatt, 2005b, p. 28). Most of the children in this study mentioned that they talk about their reading with their parents and sometimes with their teachers. They rarely talked to their peers about books, although a few mentioned that they sometimes recommended favourite titles to their friends.

I was surprised at the limited nature of these discussions and how little value these children seemed to place on this kind of book talk with their friends and peers. Even their interactions with adults in their schools or libraries seemed to be limited to getting book recommendations or assistance in locating books on the shelves. For the children I talked to, reading was a solitary activity that did not seem to require a lot of discussion or talk with others, either adults or peers. One thing that became clear as the research progressed, however, is that all the children in this study, even Pélé, who described himself as a non-reader, wanted to talk about the books they were reading and were happy to have an audience for their stories. Each of them spent time throughout the summer telling me about the books they were reading and were able to clearly articulate what they liked (or disliked) about those books. Many of these discussions went beyond plot summaries and turned into complex personal reactions to their reading. The contradiction between the children downplaying the importance of talking about books with adults or their peers and their obvious enjoyment of having an interested adult to talk to about their reading was unexpected and enlightening.

Although the focus of the research is on public library summer reading program, the study also has significant implications for school libraries. School libraries and teacher-librarians are at the intersection between public libraries and the classroom. School libraries support both the academic curriculum and children's recreational reading through their collections and programs. Therefore, findings from this research will help teacher-librarians develop programs that engage children in literacy activities and design library collections that meet their students' recreational reading needs. A complex understanding of children's summer reading choices will also help teacher-librarians develop school library collections that support children's reading interests.

As a result, it is essential to consider new ways to plan and offer reading programs in school and public libraries. Designing a summer reading environment that focuses on creating a community of readers should be a major goal of any school or public library summer reading program. The children who participated in this study indicated that one

way to do this may be to integrate new technologies into existing programs, including social media and other Web 2.0 tools. Similarly, summer reading programs or any programs that promote reading in libraries, need to provide children with time for rich discussion and collaboration between peers and informal time for staff to interact with children in meaningful ways. Most of the children in this study indicated that they talk about their reading with their parents and sometimes with their teachers in school. They rarely talked to their peers about books, although a few mentioned that they sometimes recommended their favourite titles to their friends.

Summer reading programs in school or public libraries can play an important role in the reading lives of children. Fundamental changes to the structure of these programs, including how technology is integrated into them and how programs are designed to emphasize the social aspects of reading are critical for the ongoing success of these programs and for ultimately helping children and young adults become lifelong readers.

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