
The Idaho Commission for Libraries assists libraries to build the capacity to better serve their clientele.

NEWS RELEASE

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Idaho Commission for Libraries implements a pilot project to evaluate whether opening school libraries over the summer and providing free books toward the end of the school year maintains or increases children's literacy skills over the summer months.

Six Idaho school libraries will test program to "Stop the Summer Slide"

BOISE, ID –The Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICfL) is working with Boise State University Literacy Professor Dr. Roger Stewart to research whether opening school libraries over the summer, along with using a "Book Fair" model of providing free books toward the end of the school year, can maintain or increase children's literacy skills over the summer months.

The Commission will work with three schools and their public library partners on a "full-court press" approach, providing \$1500 in funds for personnel to keep school libraries open as well as up to \$9000 in paperback books for all K-2 grade students. Three additional schools will try a "zone" approach, with the Commission providing \$1500 for personnel to keep those school libraries open during the summer, but without the additional books. All six schools serve populations where at least 60% of students come from low-income homes.

This pilot program has three primary goals:

- 1) Increase the amount of reading done over the summer.
- 2) Increase the number of children reading on grade level, particularly in K – 2nd grades.
- 3) Build the capacity of school and public libraries to better serve children and families in their service area.

The three schools using both the open school library and the "Book Fair" model are:

- Coeur d'Alene School District #271: Fernan Elementary, Coeur d'Alene
- Jerome Joint School District #261: Horizon Elementary, Jerome
- Meridian Joint School District #2: Desert Sage Elementary, Meridian

At these three sites, ICfL Read to Me staff will work with a local team to develop and implement a spring "Book Fair," modeled after that outlined in *Summer Reading: Closing the Rich/Poor Reading Achievement Gap*, edited by Richard L. Allington and Anne McGill-Franzen. The Commission will provide enough books that each kindergarten, first, and second grade student will be able to select at least six books to take home during the last month of school. Students and their family members will be encouraged to read and return the books, and students in the program will be able to keep at least two books. All remaining books will become the property of the participating school to use to support the program.

The three schools using only the open school library approach are:

- Caldwell School District #132: Wilson Elementary, Caldwell
- Cassia School District #151: Mountain View Elementary, Burley
- Plummer-Worley School District #44: Lakeside Elementary, Plummer

The program requires that the school library be open at least two days per week (a minimum of four hours per day) for a minimum of nine weeks during the summer months to allow students to exchange or check out books.

“We are excited to try the ‘full-court press’ and ‘zone’ approaches with these schools and gather some solid data we can use to demonstrate the need in Idaho,” said ICfL reading programs coordinator Stephanie Bailey-White. “Ensuring that books are available to all students throughout the year has been proven to enhance the reading achievement of low-income students,” said State Librarian Ann Joslin. “Since 2005, in our summer literacy initiatives we have focused most of our efforts on public libraries and watched numbers increase. However, in schools with large numbers of low-income students, we saw only 10–20 percent participation, and we know that’s not enough to combat summer slide. We are working hard to help close the reading achievement gap in Idaho and this ‘Stop the Summer Slide’ program is an important step.”

This project is made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

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The Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICfL) assists libraries to build the capacity to better serve their clientele through support of statewide databases and online resources, continuing education, consulting, programming, early literacy skills, and building library community. To learn more about ICfL, visit <http://libraries.idaho.gov/>.

“The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation’s 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. Our mission is to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. Our grant making, policy development, and research help libraries and museums deliver valuable services that make it possible for communities and individuals to thrive. To learn more, visit <http://www.imls.gov> and follow IMLS on Facebook and Twitter.”