Elizabeth D. Gorman. Purposes Behind Summer Reading Assignments. A Master's Paper for the M.S. in L.S degree. March, 2008. 57 pages. Advisor: Sandra Hughes-Hassell.

This study attempted to better understand the purposes behind assigning summer reading lists to students. It addressed four research questions, considering the reasons behind summer reading lists, who helps create the lists, how the criteria for book selection and additional assignments support the purposes, and how the lists and purposes are communicated to students and parents. The researcher interviewed a sample of educators in North Carolina who help create the summer reading lists at their schools, then created transcripts of the interview recordings and analyzed the transcripts qualitatively. The results showed that, contrary to the literature, educators use many different purposes in concert when they assign summer reading. The primary purpose appeared to be encouraging leisure reading. A variety of school community members contribute to the list creation, and a great deal of thought, shown by the large number of criteria, goes into the book selection. The interviews revealed that two possible areas for improvement of the use of summer reading lists are the formulation of goals before creating the lists and increased collaboration within the school community and with the public library.

Headings:

Reading—Aims and objectives

Reading—Educational aspects

Reading incentive programs--Evaluation

School libraries—Book lists

School libraries—Reader guidance

PURPOSES BEHIND SUMMER READING ASSIGNMENTS

by
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Introduction

"The more you read, the more you know, the more you know, the smarter you grow…" So begins the poem often posted in libraries touting the value of reading, especially to children and adolescent readers. Despite many professional disagreements, one point upon which almost all librarians can agree is that reading helps intellectual development.

Countless studies have been conducted on the subject of reading: what goes into the reading process, how best to teach reading, and how reading affects achievement in other areas. In the last century, the notion of "individualized reading" (Aronow, 1961) or "free voluntary reading" (Krashen, 2004) has gained prominence in both the education and library worlds. Advocates of this kind of reading believe that children should get to spend a percentage of reading instruction time reading materials of their own choosing, and that educators should encourage children to read during their own leisure time as well. This is a kind of reading instruction in which librarians and educators can collaborate especially well, since the idea of students choosing their own reading selections fits well with the American Library Association's Freedom to Read Statement (2004): "There is no place in our society for efforts to coerce the taste of others…"

In addition to allowing students to make their own reading choices, there have been a number of efforts to encourage students to read more. Many K-12 schools currently use the Accelerated Reader program, which introduces extrinsic rewards for reading. Students who participate in this program read books that have been approved as

being at their reading level, then take a short, computerized quiz for each book. Performing well on these quizzes earns points, which are then traded in for a prize or reward. The state of North Carolina encourages middle school students to read by introducing a competition, the “Battle of the Books.” In this program, students form teams and read books on the Battle of the Books list. They then engage in competition with other schools to see who can answer the most questions about the books (NCSLMA, 2007). Many different reading encouragement schemes have been tried over the years, from national level programs such as BookIT!, sponsored by Pizza Hut, and Reading is Fundamental to efforts that originate in a single school or library. All of these programs share the goal of convincing kids to read more than is necessary simply to pass their school classes.

Problem

Summer is a time when reading seems particularly important. Because schools traditionally take a long break during the summer, it is possible for students to lose some of the reading fluency and understanding that they gained during the school year. Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay, and Greathouse (1996) conducted a review and meta-analysis of summer loss studies ranging from the 1900s through the 1990s, finding that, while summer loss is greater in mathematics, it does exist in reading skills, and affects students of lower socioeconomic status to a greater degree. Convincing students to read during the summer is one way of counteracting that loss.

Both school and public libraries have taken it upon themselves to encourage students to read during the summer. Public libraries offer summer reading programs,

which both reward kids for reading and provide fun programming loosely tied to reading, bringing more children to the libraries. Another way to encourage students to read over the summer is by assigning summer reading.

Summer reading lists go back at least as far as 1901, and actually seem to have originated in the public library sphere (Bertin, 2004). Freeman (1901) tells about a public library summer reading program that makes use of a summer reading list. The Michigan City, Indiana, Public Library provided students with a pamphlet of "old Stories about / These Men and Things" (p. 57), which it was intimated would be useful for students to learn. Topics included historical figures such as Alexander the Great, Greek myths, and famous folk stories. The library then kept a list of all the juvenile books in their collection that dealt with the topics described in the pamphlet so that children could find books on topics of their choosing. Since those early lists, summer reading lists have been provided by both schools and public libraries, and have ranged from a list of required reading with accompanying assignments to a list of suggested books from which students can pick and choose, and in some cases refrain from using at all.

Although a strong tradition of summer reading lists exists, the exact purposes behind these lists are often not clearly stated. Just as disagreement exists about the best way to teach reading, disagreements about the purposes behind summer reading exist. Krashen (2004) describes successful summer reading programs that essentially provide a structured chance for students to read more and gain fluency. Geier (2005), Von Drasek (2005), and Williams (2003) see summer reading as a chance for students to learn to read for pleasure. Purposes seem to vary from school to school, as greatly as the lists themselves vary.

Research Questions

This study proposes to more fully investigate the phenomena of assigned book lists for summer reading. To that end, four research questions will be investigated:

1. What are the purposes that lead principals, teachers, and school media specialists to create assigned reading lists for the summer?

2. Who in the school community helps to create these lists and what role does each contributor play?

3. How do the books chosen for these assigned lists, the structures of the lists, and the associated assigned activities support these purposes?

4. How are these lists and purposes communicated to students and parents?

Purpose of Study

The goal of this study is to investigate the purposes behind summer reading list assignments and the processes that go into forming these lists in order to come to a better understanding of how summer reading lists contribute to student reading development.

Literature Review

In order to prepare for the study, three main areas of literature were investigated: literature about leisure reading, literature investigating summer reading loss, and literature describing specific methods of encouraging or requiring reading over the summer, including summer reading lists. The latter area of literature is relatively small and consists largely of action research and other information shared in professional journals or magazines. The former two areas, however, have been studied in greater depth, both in the professional literature and in the academic sphere, and both help to inform the many reasons why summer reading lists might be assigned.

Leisure Reading

Leisure reading, known also under many other names, including “individualized reading” (Aronow, 1961) and “free voluntary reading” (Krashen, 2004), is the reading that students undertake to fulfill their own interests and/or on their own time. Literature in this area discusses the use of leisure reading both in the course of formal reading instruction and as a supplemental activity to be experienced outside of school. Since reading assigned during the summer may be considered leisure reading, depending on the purpose of the assignment, the structure of the list, the accountability to which students are held, and the students’ own motivation in completing the reading, this area of research can be quite illuminating.

One of the most vocal proponents of leisure reading is Stephen Krashen, whose book, *The Power of Reading* (2004), presented an argument for using free voluntary reading (Krashen's term) as an alternative means of reading instruction. Krashen introduced his argument by explaining that, although most people in the United States can read and write at a basic level, significantly fewer have developed a high level of literacy. He then argued that free voluntary reading, as opposed to such traditional reading instruction methods as the heavy use of phonics, is the solution to this literacy problem.

Krashen stated in his definition of free voluntary reading quite explicitly:

> FVR [free voluntary reading] means reading because you want to. For school-age children, FVR means no book report, no questions at the end of the chapter, and no looking up every vocabulary word. FVR means putting down a book you don't like and choosing another one instead. It is the kind of reading highly literate people do all the time. (p. x)

Krashen was adamant about encouraging this kind of reading, and presented a great number of research studies supporting this type of instruction. Although Krashen definitely presented a biased view, he was straightforward about his bias, and also admitted that there are certain areas in which free voluntary reading is not the best solution, particularly acquiring the conventions of spelling and grammar. It is important to note that Krashen believes free voluntary reading is effective both in helping students achieve greater skill in reading, and in motivating them to read more often. Both of these are cited as purposes behind summer reading lists.

One of the studies Krashen used to support his point is a study conducted by Miriam S. Aronow (1961). Aronow studied how individualized reading, which, unlike Krashen, she did not clearly define, affected the reading test scores of third through sixth graders in New York City. She examined students who were at the time of the study in sixth grade, comparing those who had received "individualized reading instruction" in fourth and fifth grades with the student body as a whole. Because she received her lists of individualized reading students from reading consultants throughout the city, she allowed each of her contacts to define this type of instruction as they saw fit. From the candidate lists, Aronow drew a sample that was intended to be representative of the entire third grade of the city, based on test scores. She then compared the average of sixth grade reading test scores from her sample of individualized reading students with the average score of sixth graders as a whole. Her hypothesis was that she would find no significant difference between the groups, but instead she found that the individualized reading group achieved significantly higher reading scores. Although Aronow firmly stated that she could not determine causation, it is important to note that, in this study, individualized reading appears to positively impact reading test scores, which may lend weight to incorporating this type of instruction in schools and encouraging students to read during free time.

Fay Shin (2001) conducted a study that also showed how individualized reading instruction can be effective in the classroom. Shin's study is particularly relevant to the present study because it deals with middle school students in a six-week summer school reading program, students who had been identified as needing extra help with reading and continued instruction over the summer. Shin led a pilot program for 200 summer school

students, each day of which teachers took their classes to the library for 25 minutes, provided time for SSR (sustained silent reading, yet another term for leisure reading), and held short conferences with each student to provide some individual instruction and discuss the books. Before the beginning of the program, the school district stocked the library with popular books, notably from R. L. Stine's *Goosebumps* series, and current magazines. In addition to the individual reading time, students did read some novels as a class, to allow for class discussion of a common book. For comparison, Shin used a control group of 160 students who received traditional summer school instruction.

Shin administered two reading tests at the beginning and end of the six weeks, and the scores showed that the experimental group made equal or greater gains in reading compared to the control group. Additionally, student interviews showed that those in the experimental group grew to enjoy reading more as a result of the program, and that they planned to read more outside of school once the program ended. Some cautions should be kept in mind about this study: Shin did not discuss how students were assigned to the experimental or control groups, and there is a noticeable drop in participants from both groups by the end of the study. Still, the results seem to show that individualized reading instruction is a viable instructional method, with the additional benefit of carrying greater intrinsic motivation.

Another study that Krashen relied on to support free voluntary reading explored how much time children spent reading outside of the school day. Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding (1988) conducted an extended survey of fifth-grade children at 3 schools in east central Illinois. The researchers had students fill out daily worksheets over a period of either 8 weeks or 26 weeks, recording the number of minutes they spent in various leisure

time activities. Some of the activities included “doing chores,” “doing homework,” “listening to music,” “playing games,” and “watching television.” The researchers had children report on several different types of reading: “reading books,” “reading comics,” “reading mail,” and “reading newspapers and magazines.” To help ensure accuracy in the actual time spent reading, book-reading time was only counted if the students could recall the title or author of the book, while newspaper- and magazine-reading time was counted only if the students could recall the topic.

Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding encountered several difficulties in their study, the most notable being that they had originally intended to compare pre- and post-test reading scores in relation to the amount of time spent reading and engaging in other leisure activities, but had to abandon this plan due to obvious fatigue and disinterest on the part of the participating students at the end of the study’s timeframe. The researchers instead compared the pre-test scores and previously obtained second grade reading scores, on the assumption that the students’ use of their leisure time was already in established patterns by the time recording began. Although the study contains this and other admissions of possible error, the correlation between time reading and reading achievement was great enough that the researchers felt it was an accurate finding. This study is important both because it confirms that time spent reading truly does correlate with improved reading ability, and because it signals that children do not spend very much of their free time reading. Both of these results might possibly be used as reasons for assigning summer reading lists.

Many researchers have studied how to motivate students to spend more of their leisure time reading. A very recent study, conducted by Hughes-Hassell & Rodge (2007)

took place in an urban middle school in the Northeastern United States, with a large minority student population and a healthy school library media program. The researchers gave students a questionnaire about their reading habits, and 72% indicated that they do at least some leisure reading, while 22% reported that they only read for school, and 6% that they do not read at all. Additional questions asked why students did or did not choose to read, what topics they enjoyed reading about, and what type of materials they enjoyed reading, the last two questions being asked only of self-reported leisure readers. The responses led the researchers to make suggestions about increasing leisure reading among these students. One of the suggested responses was to encourage reading over the summer, both by increasing access to books, and providing students with opportunities to connect with others and discuss their reading.

Overall, leisure reading appears to be a valuable activity that can significantly improve reading ability. Allowing free reading during the school day and convincing students to engage in reading during their free time appears to improve student reading ability and equip students to continue to grow as readers. During the summer, leisure reading may be even more crucial, as will be discussed in the next section.

Summer Reading Loss

Summer reading may be seen as an especially important instance of leisure reading because students tend to experience a decrease in knowledge and skills during the summer months. This phenomenon, known as summer loss or, in the case of reading skills, summer reading loss, has been studied fairly extensively and is a recognized difficulty in education.

Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay, & Greathouse (1996) completed a particularly comprehensive study on summer loss, including a loss in a variety of school subjects. Although they did not gather their own data, Cooper et al. reviewed all the studies they could find from the 1900s to the 1990s that examined summer loss, and completed a meta-analysis on the studies from 1975 on, which effectively consolidated and summarized the findings of these studies. Their results indicated that summer loss did indeed occur in the overall picture, with greater loss occurring in mathematics. An important finding relevant to the present study is that while reading achievement suffered from less summer loss compared to mathematics, there was a great discrepancy between low-income and middle-income students, with the former group losing reading ability over the summer and the latter group either remaining the same or gaining reading ability. Additionally, they found that as grade level increased, summer loss tended to increase as well.

Allington & McGill-Franzen completed another literature review on this topic in 2003, though without the accompanying meta-analysis. These researchers spoke specifically about summer loss (or "summer setback," as they called it) as it contributes to a gap in reading achievement between rich and poor students. They presented evidence that, because low-income and high-income students gain about the same amount of learning during the school year, it is the loss of skills over the summer that accounts for most of the achievement gap. Additionally, they explain the theory of "self-teaching" that describes why more time spent reading leads to greater reading ability: a great deal of reading improvement comes simply from the practice that takes place as students read independently and successfully. If this theory is valid, then the importance of reading

over the summer is self-evident; students who read over the summer will teach themselves to be better readers while those who abstain from reading will not. Allington & McGill-Franzen then cite, as possible reasons for the difference in reading over the summer, a difference in access to interesting books, and a difference in beliefs about personal reading ability. Students with greater access and greater confidence will be more likely to read. They conclude by emphasizing the important influence of the "volume of reading" (p. 74) on reading growth and that "children must have easy—literally fingertip—access to books that provide engaging, successful reading experiences throughout the calendar year" (p. 74). In addition to neatly summarizing the evidence about summer loss as it specifically pertains to reading, this study is important because it is widely cited both by researchers and practitioners.

Mraz & Rasinski completed a third review of the literature on summer reading loss in 2007. Their report serves largely to brief teachers of reading on the issue, and they refer both to Cooper et al. (1996) and Allington & McGill-Franzen (2003). As do Allington & McGill-Franzen, Mraz & Rasinski present the evidence for the seriousness of summer loss and explore possible reasons for the loss. They then further provide suggestions on preventing summer loss, again supported by research. Suggestions include providing workshops for parents, coordinating with the public library summer programs, requiring summer reading lists, initiating summer reading incentive programs, and distributing books. They also offer suggestions for encouraging greater family involvement in literacy, such as teachers building relationships with families, and providing information and materials to help parents support their children's reading achievement.

In 2004, Jimmy Kim undertook the task of empirically studying the phenomena of summer reading and summer reading loss as they relate to both ethnic and socioeconomic achievement differences. He conducted a survey of summer reading habits at 18 elementary schools in the Lake County Public Schools district, located in the Mid-Atlantic region. He chose to use this suburban district because it had a current requirement that students read at least one book over the summer, with the additional requirement of producing a story or report about the book read, and, in some cases, having a parent sign off on the completion of the book. Kim studied rising sixth grade students, obtaining data on their reading and writing scores from May of fifth grade and September of sixth grade, and their gender, English proficiency, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, as well as the students' survey responses about their reading over the summer. He conducted several analyses, reaching the following conclusions: reading over the summer does positively correlate with fall reading scores, this correlation is consistent across ethnic groups, greater access to books correlates with higher fall reading scores, and accountability (measured by the number of students who reported completing the additional assignments and/or obtaining a parental signature) appears to positively correlate with amount of reading. Kim also noted that students who read more books tended to have higher fall reading scores. He is very clear that his study only shows correlation rather than causation, but it certainly builds the body of evidence suggesting summer reading as a helpful antidote to summer reading loss.

It is clear that summer loss is a serious educational concern and that educators, librarians, and parents are all groups that try to prevent summer loss. The next section

will discuss some of the approaches to maintaining and increasing reading skills over the summer.

Summer Reading Solutions

Although this present study is primarily interested in summer reading lists, another of the most well known summer reading solutions is the public library summer reading program. Several of the studies presented below consider this particular reading encouragement method, sometimes critiquing it or suggesting modifications. Additionally, many of the reports in this section are aimed at the professional librarian and educator community, with opinions on and suggestions for practice taking the center role.

In 2004, Stephanie Bertin provided a history of the public library summer reading programs for her master's paper. She analyzed articles from the journals *Library Journal*, *Junior Libraries,* and *School Library Journal* to provide a picture of the state of summer reading programs from the 1890s to the year 2004. Early public library summer programs actually focused on required or recommended reading lists, which now seem to have been transferred to the schools' responsibility. The extremely early programs were initiated largely to increase circulation and teach children how to take care of books, but it did not take long to focus on reading guidance, reading encouragement, and teaching children to become long-term users of the public library. The programs originally targeted children who were already independent readers, and often involved some sort of competition. Over time, the lower age limit dropped and the value of competition began to be debated. Additionally, libraries began to offer additional activities that supplemented, and

sometimes competed with, the reading aspect of the programs. Today's programs involve more use of computers and the Internet, but the basic format has not changed a great deal since the early 20th century. It is interesting to note that summer reading lists appear to have started as the domain of the public library, and so it will be useful to learn if schools still rely on the public library to inform their creation of reading lists.

Krashen & Shin (2004) produced another book review on summer loss, but addressed this information to public librarians rather than to educators and focused their report on a possible solution. As in the reviews in the previous section, they presented evidence that children lose reading ability over the summer and that access to books is one possible factor in this problem. They used this information to form the conclusion that public libraries should focus less on "summer reading clubs" (p. 105), as the researchers refer to the programs, and more on providing a "book flood" (p. 105) during the summer for students who have little access to books outside of the library. This fits in with both authors' opinions that children need to choose their own books and that, given access to interesting books and time to read, children will be motivated to read and therefore become better readers. This solution may fit in well with the purposes of schools who assign lists that they hope will motivate students to read for fun, but may be at odds with list assignments that require students to read the books listed.

Another solution to summer loss was presented in a brief report by Borduin & Cooper (1997). Following the idea of increasing access to books, teachers at the U.S. Grant Elementary School in Columbia, Missouri, identified Title I students who they felt would have difficulty accessing books over the summer. They then used Title I money to buy books that matched the students' interests and mail them to the students, along with

personalized letters, over the summer. The participating students were requested to read the books and then write back to their teachers with their opinions on the books. When the school year began, students were tested in reading and their scores showed that they had “either maintained or gained reading levels.” This small but successful program illustrates one creative response to the challenge of summer loss.

The present study most specifically involves the solution of assigning students a list of books to read over the summer. Sometimes the lists are suggested reading lists, sometimes they are required, and sometimes they have accompanying written work to complete over the summer. Most of the literature about these lists is generated by professional educators or librarians, who work directly with students and are often responsible for creating the lists themselves.

Linda Williams, a children’s services librarian in Connecticut, has written several articles about summer reading for VOYA (Voice of Youth Advocates) magazine. For a 2002 article, she analyzed the summer reading lists assigned by 57 Connecticut high schools to determine how multicultural, current, and teen-friendly the book selections were. She determined that there were very few multicultural books (150 Asian, Native American, Hispanic, and African American authors put together, out of a total 983 authors), and that indeed most of the selections were written by “dead white male authors.” (p. 416) Just over a third of the books were published between 1990 and 2000, and young adult books made up only 18% of the total. Williams argues that it would be difficult for students to find a book that truly interests them, particularly if they were of an ethnic background other than white. Additional problems she discovers with the lists

are that they contain few annotations describing the books, have many misprints of titles and authors' names, and use poor visual design.

A 2003 article by Williams discusses and refutes the argument, put forth by journalists Chris Sinacola, Jane Margolies, and Christine Samuels, that only classics should be assigned for summer reading, an argument that follows the early public library list notion that children should only be given "good" books to read. Williams' thesis is that, contrary to "dumbing down" the curriculum, providing a variety of summer reading books from which to choose motivates students to read for the sake of reading and to grow to become self-sustaining readers.

The other professional literature on summer reading tends toward teacher instruction. Geier (2005) provides a step-by-step process for creating a summer reading list, working from the assumption that motivating leisure reading is the purpose of the list. Von Drasek (2005) and Livingston & Kurkjian (2006) provide suggestions for titles to include on the summer reading lists, a formula that is repeated in many professional journal articles dealing with summer reading lists and that provides a service to time-crunched professionals trying to quickly assemble their own lists.

There are many different options for encouraging students to read over the summer, and many different approaches to the option of creating a reading list. Because there does not seem to be a unified vision of why summer reading lists exist, an in-depth study of how some educators approach this task will add to the understanding of this tool.

Summary of Literature

There is strong evidence that leisure reading is an enjoyable and effective tool for increasing reading skills and encouraging life-long reading. There is additional evidence that students who are at-risk in reading skills lose much of their ground during the summer, when formal reading instruction is not occurring and their access to reading material is limited. Although there are many ways to help bridge the gap over the summer, one that is particularly widely used, summer reading lists, is not as well understood as it might be. The research suggests that purposes behind summer reading lists might include motivating students to read more as a leisure activity, providing practice reading time to improve their reading skills, providing a greater number of successful reading experiences, preventing a loss of reading skills over the summer, equalizing reading ability between disparate ethnic and socioeconomic groups, and enforcing student access to some reading material. However, an empirical study of actual purposes given for a sample of school summer reading lists may better explain which of these reasons actually do apply, and if there are others not presented in the research.

Methods

This study used interviews to gain insight about the creation of summer reading lists from involved parties in the school community. Interviews are an extremely familiar form of research, given that they are used in journalistic and business settings as well as in academic research. In social science research, there is frequently a distinction drawn between structured and unstructured interviews. Babbie (2004) goes so far as to classify the most structured interviews as a type of survey research and discusses what he calls "qualitative interviewing" along with such types of field research as participant-observer research. In addition to the differences between structured and unstructured interviews, researchers also consider differences between individual and group interviews—routinely, and, according to Fontana & Frey (2000), almost entirely known as focus groups.

Interviews as a whole tend to allow for relatively high validity, as a researcher is able to gain more in-depth responses than from the type of questions that can be asked on surveys, and also because participants may provide more information when speaking versus writing. Interviews are particularly well suited to exploratory studies such as this one, because they can reveal information about the studied phenomenon that the researcher had no other way of anticipating (Babbie, 2004). I determined that it would be more useful for this study to obtain the full picture of how a small number of schools assign summer reading lists than to obtain limited information about a large number of schools. The picture provided may then provide a backdrop for continued discussion and

study on the subject. One drawback to interviews is that they tend to obtain lower reliability since the conversational nature of an interview allows for greater variability each time an interview is given. I attempted to maintain reasonable reliability by taking a more structured approach to interviewing.

In a structured interview, "the interviewer asks all respondents the same series of preestablished questions with a limited set of response categories" (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 649), whereas unstructured interviews "[are] essentially a conversation in which the interviewer establishes a general direction for the conversation and pursues specific topics raised by the respondent" (Babbie, 2004, p. 300). Although these seem to be strict categories, Fontana & Frey note that it is nearly impossible for even a structured interview to play out exactly as planned every time an interview is carried out, resulting in the lower reliability mentioned above. In this study, I created a structured interview schedule (see Appendix A, p. 47) and endeavored to conduct a structured interview. During the course of the actual interviews, I modified the schedule as needed by asking additional, clarifying questions or by choosing not to ask questions that had already been addressed. This choice allowed me to maintain a greater level of reliability without sacrificing the valid use of interviewing as a technique.

Focus group interviews add an additional dynamic to interview studies, because the interviewer must manage the interactions between respondents as well. Because this study required determining who in the school community helps to create summer reading lists before setting up the interviews, and because some schools may employ a team to write these lists, two of the completed interviews were focus group interviews, although each one involved only two participants.

When I decided to study summer reading lists, I obtained a collection of reading lists assigned over the summer of 2007 from the Borders bookstore in Chapel Hill, NC. It is from this collection of lists that the sample of schools has been chosen (see Appendix B, p. 50). Although this is a convenience sample, it includes a variety of school and list types and provides a reasonable starting place for an exploratory study such as this one. The sample includes 3 public high schools, 1 public school system that assigns summer reading as an entire system, and 5 private schools. The sample summer reading lists targeted grades ranging from kindergarten through 12th grade. They include required reading, recommended reading, and some lists that include both a requirement and recommendations for further reading once the requirement had been fulfilled. There is a mixture of lists that include written assignments and those that only assign reading. The sample almost certainly does not accurately represent all schools in the United States, but it represents enough variety in educational institutions to permit the results of this study to lead to tentative conclusions and suggestions for further study.

The unit of analysis for this study is the school, since for each school researched, the goal was to provide a picture of the school's summer reading as a whole. However, because the interviews involved responses by individual educators, the unit of observation is the individual. Observations of the lists obtained from last summer were also made, but these observations were used in preparing the interviews, from which results were drawn.

One concern during the design of this study was achieving adequate participation, but happily, at only one school was participation declined. The main ethical consideration in this study was the protection of participant privacy. To ensure confidentiality,

particularly because of the small sample size, I will not refer to the individual participants or schools by name in this report.

In order to arrange interviews, I contacted the sample schools by either telephone or e-mail to reach possible participants. For the most part, I contacted media specialists first, because I reasoned that they were likely to know who is involved in the creation of summer reading lists. In the case of one high school, I contacted the head of the English department, and in the case of one private school, I contacted the headmaster. For the most part, the initial contact people had some role to play in summer reading and consented to be interviewed themselves. One media specialist participant did not have a role in the creation of summer reading lists, only in distribution, but also agreed to be interviewed, and solicited information from teachers before the interview to share with me. Another media specialist participant also referred me to a teacher who helped create their school's lists. In two cases where several media specialists work together to create the lists, I was able to arrange for focus group interviews, although the schools at which I conducted focus group interviews were not the only schools that employed collaboration in creating lists. A total of ten interviews were conducted, between January and March, 2008.

Each interview was conducted at the school the participant works at, with the exception of one focus group, for which one participant traveled from her school to the school of the first participant. Although I allowed an hour for each interview, no interview took longer than 30 minutes to complete, and most interviews took about 15-20 minutes, following the interview schedule in Appendix A (p. 47). With the participants' permission, I recorded the interviews using a portable digital recorder, then created

transcriptions of the interviews and deleted the recordings. The transcripts served as the main artifact for analysis, with the lists obtained from Borders and additional or revised lists provided by the participants themselves serving as background information for the data provided in the transcripts.

After the interviews were completed and transcribed, qualitative data analysis was used to analyze the data gathered. I used open coding, referring to the data to discover patterns and using memoing to ensure greater reliability. Some patterns that I sought include using summer reading to convince students to read for fun, using summer reading to increase reading ability or prevent summer loss, or using summer reading to achieve a specific academic purpose. Additionally, I looked for patterns in the people who create the lists—Do they tend to be teachers? Librarians? Is a group role taken?—and in book selection methods and criteria. Finally, I looked for patterns in how the lists are communicated to students and parents.

As mentioned above, interview studies help provide a more valid picture of social phenomena because they reveal in-depth information and provide the opportunity for participants to raise issues otherwise unanticipated by researchers. This present study endeavors to apply the advantages of interviews to the understanding of summer reading lists, giving a deeper picture of how such lists are used. Although the sample for this study is quite small, most literature specifically about summer reading tends to draw from the experience of one school or one professional. Therefore, the study will add some breadth of understanding to the picture given by previous studies.

This study also shares the disadvantages of all interview studies, most notably that reliability can suffer. It is unlikely that the study will reveal a completely reliable picture

of summer reading, both because of the interview method and because it relies on indirect observation: I was not actually present for the creation of 2008 reading lists, nor did I observe students using (or choosing not to use) the lists during their summer vacation. The study is further limited by relying only on those who create the lists, instead of interviewing students who have to complete the lists, parents who have to obtain the books, or public librarians and booksellers who have to ensure the books are available. Finally, the small sample, chosen using a non-probability method limits the ability to apply the findings of this study to the larger population of schools throughout the United States. An important additional note is that this study is strictly exploratory: although it attempts to explain “why” in terms of the purposes that educators harbor when creating summer lists, it relies almost entirely on the self-reports of those educators and can not prove cause and effect relationships.

Results and Discussion

After completing all interviews, I transcribed the interview recordings and used open coding to analyze the data, organizing my coding process around the study's four research questions. The complete record of codes can be found in Appendix C (p. 51).

Research Question #1: What are the purposes that lead principals, teachers, and school media specialists to create assigned reading lists for the summer?

The literature led me to believe that there were two main opinions on the merits of summer reading: those who believed it should purely encourage leisure reading and those who believed it should address the problem of summer reading loss. Surprisingly, summer reading loss was one of the least mentioned reasons why participants felt that summer reading is important, with only one participant mentioning it as one of the explicit reasons why her system provides summer reading lists. Another unexpected finding was that every participant described more than one purpose behind his or her school's summer reading list. This indicates that there is not a simple division of camps, and that many educators in the field believe the summer reading can address several purposes at the same time. Encouraging leisure reading was definitely an important reason given, mentioned in every single interview, but there were also many additional reasons that participants cited. These include specific academic purposes, satisfying parents' expectation or desire for a list, facilitating lifelong or independent learning, a general expectation from the school or neighboring schools, maintaining the feeling of a

school community during summer months, providing students with quality books to read, encouraging students to try a new kind of reading or take on a new challenge, and the idea of protecting the institution of reading.

Certainly, encouraging leisure reading was the single purpose most often given for creating a summer reading list. The one participant that specifically uses summer reading to combat summer loss stated that encouraging the students to read for fun, or even to listen to books read aloud, is the ideal way to combat that loss. Those participants whose lists were designed with specific academic purposes in mind still indicated that they wanted students to enjoy the books that were assigned to them, often providing a choice within the required books. While media specialist participants were more likely than classroom teacher participants to see encouraging leisure reading as the primary purpose behind summer reading, it is clear that all of the educators who participated in this study want students to enjoy reading over the summer.

Instead of summer reading loss, the purpose that most often was cited in opposition to encouraging leisure reading was a need to fulfill a specific academic goal. This purpose seems particularly important to classroom teachers who make use of summer reading lists, most particularly at the high school level. At both public high schools I visited, summer reading lists were assigned to upper level English classes as a prerequisite to participation. Although one participant stressed that students would not be excluded from upper level classes if they did not complete the summer reading assignment, she explained that it then became the first required assignment of the school year, so the summer reading *was* required for participation; students simply had the opportunity to complete it in a shorter timeframe once school started if they chose not to

complete it over the summer. The other public high school participant reported one teacher's explanation that she used the summer reading assignment to determine if students were motivated to take part in her class, and would remove them from the class if their performance on the summer reading did not show that motivation. Both of these high school participants also indicated that teachers used summer reading lists to give students exposure to certain authors (either authors that would be covered or authors that the teachers would not have time to cover) and to learn to read in a certain way: responsively, analytically, etc. Although many other schools used summer reading to prepare students for the coming year's curriculum, most of them more generally wanted to expose students to a theme or topic that would be covered in the upcoming school year.

Another surprisingly prominent reason behind summer reading is the opinion that parents expect and desire such lists. Six of the ten participants mentioned this reason, with several participants recalling parents who come to ask, "What can my child read over the summer?" Several participants cited this reason as one of the main purposes they see behind creating summer reading lists, and, in fact, one participant only provides lists when parents specifically request one. This factor in the creation of summer reading lists may contribute to the choice of books, and should be taken into account by those who advocate a certain philosophy behind summer reading lists, particularly if they are not currently working directly with students and parents.

Encouraging independent or lifelong reading and learning was a purpose that came to light when participants were asked how summer reading lists fit in with their schools' philosophy overall. This purpose is clearly an important overarching goal at

many different schools, one participant even noting, “I don’t know of a school in the country that doesn’t say it wants to instill a love of learning, a lifelong love of learning, in its students, and we certainly do.” Although this purpose may not be an explicit part of the summer reading list creation process, it is serves a foundational role in thinking about summer reading.

One reason that was cited, particularly at the middle and high school levels, was the feeling that summer reading was an expected part of the school’s role, either by the school community itself, by the greater educational community, or by students who were in the habit of receiving summer reading lists. The feeling of a general expectation was particularly noted by participants at independent schools, one of whom reported that it was something of a standard among independent schools, and another who explained that it was part of the school’s reputation as being academically rigorous. One participant who described summer reading as expected by the students noted that, “It appeals to a specific population of readers,” indicating that even if some students didn’t think twice about the non-required list her school system provided, it was useful for those students who like to have lists.

One participant, a middle school English teacher, mentioned the idea that summer reading helps students maintain ties to the school community over the summer. Additionally, one independent school has, as part of their summer reading list, one book, or, in the case of last summer, a musical work, that the entire school reads or listens to together. This combination of summer reading with the currently popular “one community, one book” programs that public libraries offer also conveys the desire to maintain community over the summer. Along with this, several participants indicated a

desire to facilitate more discussion among students about books they had read over the summer. A middle school media specialist saw this as one way she would like to improve her summer reading program, perhaps incorporating social networking technology to spark excitement about discussing books. It would be interesting to see if pursuing the social nature of reading over the course of summer reading becomes a greater trend in assigning summer reading.

The desire to provide students with a list of quality books was mentioned several times, although even more participants indicated a desire to simply point students to "good" books, by which they seemed to mean books the students would enjoy as much as books that were of literary merit. The concern with quality may be influenced by the purpose of providing the list for parents as well as for students. An important point to note is that the word "quality," and not the word "classic" was employed (although some participants included "classic" books as part of the make-up of their lists), so participants in this study did not share the same view as the journalists Williams argued against in her 2003 article.

A few participants explained that they saw summer as a chance for students to read a type of book they had not tried before, or to take on a longer-term challenge in their reading. This purpose seems specifically tied to the extended break summer vacation provides, and may be related to encouraging an adult form of reading—sometimes we read for pure pleasure, sometimes we want to take on a challenge.

Finally, two study participants mentioned their concern that reading, as an institution, was no longer very important in our society. This concern echoes such studies as the National Endowment for the Arts' recent *To Read or Not to Read* (2007). Although

Krashen (2007) and other reading professionals have provided evidence that reading is not an endangered activity, it is noteworthy that fear of the decline of reading is still influencing educational decisions.

Contrary to the literature, educators in the field do not seem to be creating summer reading lists with one overarching purpose in mind. Rather, they list a variety of reasons for giving students a list of summer reading books. The prevalence of encouraging leisure reading does indicate that those who argue for this purpose in the literature are being heard, but many researchers have not considered such purposes as supplementing reading done during the academic year, providing a resource for parents, and maintaining school community. Finally, while researchers tend to discuss one reason for summer reading at the expense of others, those who create the summer reading lists do not see summer reading as achieving only one purpose but integrate several educational goals into their lists.

Research Question #2: Who in the school community helps to create these lists and what role does each contributor play?

A variety of members of the school community may help to create summer reading lists, and the specific combination of contributors varies widely from school to school, sometimes even within the same school. Those mentioned include media specialists, classroom teachers, students, and administrators. They may work individually or in teams, and some schools have different lists created by different people or groups of people. Some examples of the different team combinations include media specialists working with teachers, media specialists working with each other to create a list for

several different schools, students working under the direction of a media specialist, an administrative team working with input from teachers, and classroom teachers working in their academic teams. One public high school had a list provided by the county, from which teachers drew for their own lists. A few schools solicited input from the public library, and one media specialist actually directs students to lists created by the public library rather than creating her own, unless she receives a specific request from parents or teachers.

One media specialist emphasized that her lists were intended for leisure reading by involving the students in creating the lists. She did this in two different contexts, during different school years, first by offering a short-term elective class whose purpose was to create a summer reading list and secondly by using a school-wide survey to solicit student suggestions. This seems to be a particularly effective way to use the list-creation process to support the purpose of encouraging leisure reading.

With this large variety in the groups who create the lists, it was difficult to determine an overarching pattern. There did seem to be a tendency for classroom teachers to have greater involvement with lists that served academic purposes. Lists created solely by media specialists, or by media specialists and students, seemed to be more specifically recreational or social. Additionally, it seems that the purpose of aiding parents with reading recommendations was also prevalent among lists originating from media specialists.

Levels of collaboration varied, although most schools seemed to have some collaboration, even if it only involved soliciting opinions about a draft list. Interestingly, the closest collaboration seemed to be among teachers or among media specialists, rather

than between teachers and media specialists. This might be an area for change in the future, particularly in schools that wish to reexamine how they approach summer reading.

Many different members of the educational community work to create summer reading lists, and there seems to be no single configuration that prevails over others in how educators work within their communities to create summer reading lists.

Research Question #3: How do the books chosen for these assigned lists, the structures of the lists, and the associated assigned activities support these purposes?

Quite a large number of different criteria were given for the books that educators choose to include on summer reading lists, and these criteria were often related to the lists' purposes. Some of the more common criteria include the overall appeal of the books to the students, fit with the curriculum, book reading levels, wanting to expose students to specific authors, cultural diversity, consideration of parents' opinions, the date of books and whether they were still in print, and inclusion of a variety of genres.

I found it interesting that most of the participants considered books for summer reading in terms of how they fit into the list as a whole. These participants used such criteria as cultural diversity, gender appeal, genre diversity, reading levels, and content levels in order to create a well-balanced list, rather than trying to apply these criteria to each individual book. This desire to have a balance appears to support the purpose of encouraging leisure reading, since it conveys the desire to include a wide enough variety that every student can find something he or she will enjoy reading.

The consideration of parents' opinions makes sense in light of creating lists for the purpose of assisting parents, but a couple participants remarked that this consideration

sometimes contrasted with trying not to censor or limit books. One participant who mentioned not censoring nevertheless saw considering parents' opinions not as a barrier to be overcome but as fulfilling a trust parents have given her. In an additional variation, one participant at an independent school mentioned this criteria in the context of considering what fits into their school community's mission as a whole.

Participants often mentioned exposing students to specific authors when their lists were intended to fulfill particular curricular purposes. However, introduction to authors was also mentioned when participants hoped to tie summer reading in with an author visit the following school year, or simply to highlight local authors.

The process of creating lists often started with finding lists from other sources, either participants' past experience, organizational lists like the Battle of the Books list or YALSA's Best Books for Young Adults, or award-winning lists. In addition to using these sources, participants made wide use of reviewing sources, particularly when they were not able to read every single book they included on the list. Since only one participant said that she made a point to read every book on her list, but several participants noted the importance of knowing about the books they recommend, these reviewing sources are an important part of creating summer reading lists. The use of outside sources, along with the long list of criteria mentioned, indicates that participants put a great deal of thought into creating their lists.

My discussions with participants did not touch frequently on the structure of their lists, due to the lack of an interview question specifically geared toward this point. This is a study flaw that might be improved upon with further research. When we did discuss the structure of the lists, the two factors considered were the length of the lists and the

amount of choice available to students. Several participants mentioned working to keep their lists to a set length, usually one page or the front and back of a piece of paper. One participant expressed a desire to cut down the summer reading list, both so that more discussion can occur between students when they return to school, and because the long length is too overwhelming. In terms of choice, most lists created for recreational reading allowed students complete freedom to choose, simply through the design of not requiring them to use the lists at all. Lists that were required tended to be both shorter and offer less choice than their non-required counterparts.

The inclusion of written assignments with summer reading lists and subsequent evaluation of the reading certainly reflects the various list purposes. Almost no lists that were intended purely to encourage leisure reading had any written component or formal evaluation. In fact, three of the educators who created these kind of lists used almost the exact same phrasing to indicate that requiring written work would be “too much like homework.” As may be expected, summer reading lists designed to fulfill academic goals more often had written assignments tied to them. Both public high schools indicated that they assigned written work to the students who had a required summer reading assignment. Many schools, however, required instead that students complete an assignment or take part in an activity after they returned to school. Even one of the high schools that assigned written work over the summer gave students an opportunity to complete that work once school began. Another interesting factor is that several schools choose to use non-written activities, including discussion groups and artistic projects. Finally, when discussing the work that was assigned with summer reading, several participants explained that they felt having some kind of evaluation or work to

accompany the summer reading list provides accountability for actually doing the reading. Interestingly, those who did not want to assign work felt that requiring work would turn kids off from doing any summer reading at all. This difference of opinion reflects the debate surrounding summer reading in the literature more than some of the other information provided by study participants.

Research Question #4: How are these lists and purposes communicated to students and parents?

Participants shared summer reading lists with the students and parents at their schools by mailing the lists home, giving them out to students in class, making them available in the media centers or in classes, posting them on school and media center websites, and sending them to public libraries and bookstores. Occasionally, parents are e-mailed, particularly when the main way of sharing lists is by posting them on a website. In some cases, students must request a list, such as when the list is tied to a specific course in high school or when the school does not make provisions for sending home a print copy with every student.

Students and parents often learn about the purposes behind the summer reading lists at their schools through the instructions included with the lists, if there are any, or through the way the list creators market the lists. A few participants mentioned booktalking books on the summer reading lists just before the end of the school year, and one participant indicated that the popularity of books booktalked throughout the school year was a criterion for summer list inclusion.

Additional Results

Although not addressed in the research questions, the following information that participants supplied provides valuable additional insight into the use of summer reading lists. Most participants make their lists near the very end of the school year, in April or May. A few participants who start earlier do so either to be able to read all the books or because they create an entirely new list each year. Another participant who starts earlier does so because his school's summer reading includes three different components, including a required book for upper grades, separate recommended lists for every grade, and the "one book" program for the whole school. Only one participant mentioned getting the lists ready with enough time to ensure that the public library can make the books available.

The availability of books in general seems to be a less-considered part of the summer reading process. Some participants indicated that students were expected to buy books for required summer reading, but many more reported that they thought students went to the public library or bought the books, without being sure. A couple educators allowed students to check out books from the school library media center for the summer, but only one actually would come in during the summer to allow check-outs. This participant worked at a school small enough that parents could contact her directly to arrange for a check-out; no schools appeared to offer regular summer hours. One media specialist pointed out that her school system did not pay for media specialists to work during the summer in order to keep the school library media center open.

Another area that is less explored is collaboration with the public library. While a fair number of participants sent their lists to local public libraries, only 2 actively worked

with the public library to create lists, and many assumed that the public library would have books available without checking first.

One fascinating piece of reading encouragement programs is the current increase in the use of audiobooks. Five participants mentioned using audiobooks for both in-school and summer reading, and one participant in particular noted that she encouraged parents to read aloud to their children as much as she encouraged the students themselves to read. Another participant's school included the list of books that teachers had read aloud to each grade during the school year with the summer reading list. Although the emphasis on listening to reading is somewhat tangential to the current study, I found it interesting that participants mentioned it as often as they did.

There are a couple other points that only one or two participants made, but that are worth noting for the sake of future researchers. An English teacher pointed out that block scheduling has made the use of summer reading more challenging, since not every student now takes English during the first semester of school. Two of the interviews I completed were with participants who help create system-wide lists for their grade levels, and this piece of collaboration seemed to work particularly well at their schools. Finally, a couple participants mentioned that bookstores actively sought to work with the school library program in general, and specifically to know what the contents of the summer reading lists. One participant noted how the bookstores had become increasingly attentive in recent years—are they perhaps filling a gap that could be filled by public libraries?

Implications of Research

As there are so many different purposes that educators use summer reading to fulfill, one implication of this study may be that instead of trying to advocate one philosophy for all summer reading lists, researchers may better use their time helping professionals determine how best to use summer reading in the context of their local school community. One participant noted that she did not feel her summer reading program achieved its goals. Perhaps simply formulating goals before beginning the process of creating a summer reading list is a necessary step to improving the use of summer reading lists overall. Also, while summer reading certainly serves a variety of purposes, the purpose of encouraging leisure reading was mentioned nearly universally; for this reason and because of the benefits described in the literature, this may be a purpose that educators should consider a priority as they work to formulate their summer reading goals. Given the large amount of effort that educators expend in the actual creation of lists, some extra planning about the goals of having a summer reading list does not seem an unreasonable use of time and energy.

Additionally, educators who work with summer reading lists may want to consider increasing the amount of collaboration with the lists. Currently, educators are collaborating as they prepare summer reading lists, and in most cases that collaboration results in high quality summer reading lists. Even so, thinking beyond their current arenas of collaboration may make the lists even more useful and more unified. In particular, media specialists may want to involve classroom teachers more, and vice versa,

especially if they choose to reconsider their overall goals in having a summer reading list. Additionally, educators should consider collaborating more purposefully with the public library, particularly in terms of assuring book availability. Since summer reading occurs during a time when educators cannot be present to help students, it makes sense that they use this opportunity to expose students to public library services.

Future Research

Several participants who do collaborate with the public library suggested I interview public librarians to learn about their contributions to summer reading lists. Although this was not within the scope of this study, it would be an excellent way to further study summer reading lists, particularly since the lists seem to have originated in the public library sphere. In addition to interviewing public librarians about their experiences with summer reading lists and their understanding about how the lists are and should be used, it might be interesting to study how summer reading lists work in the context of public library summer reading programs.

A more in-depth look at the lists and books themselves presents an additional opportunity for further study. Although Linda Williams has already contributed an overview of the summer reading choices available throughout her state, it might be interesting to study another state or region. It also might be useful to complete a case study of one school, interviewing those who create the list, analyzing the list and books, and then interviewing students after the summer ends. As a middle ground, concentrating on one level (elementary, middle, or high school) or one type of school might also yield more detailed data.

Finally, a survey of a larger sample of educators might provide a clearer picture of how summer reading lists are used throughout the country and create data that are more easily generalized.

Conclusion

Summer reading lists serve many different purposes in the educational community. Although encouraging leisure reading appears to be a primary purpose, it is far from the only purpose and, contrary to the literature, does not always seem to be at cross-purposes with other summer reading goals. Many different educators work to create summer reading lists, and they put a great deal of effort into selecting books for and evaluating summer reading. In order to make best use of this effort, it may serve educators well to take additional time to carefully formulate their goals in having a summer reading list and to collaborate with their school community as a whole and the public library.

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Appendix A: Interview Schedule

Formal Interview Opening (Individual Interviews)

"I am studying summer reading lists for my master's paper and would like to ask you some questions about the process of creating the summer reading list or lists at your school. Before beginning, I would like to ask you to read this consent form and let me know if you have any questions before signing it. Please note that I would like to take an audio recording of this interview if you give consent. You have no obligation to consent to being recorded, and can indicate your decision on the consent form."

Formal Interview Opening (Focus Group Interviews)

"I am studying summer reading lists for my master's paper and would like to ask you some questions about the process of creating the summer reading list or lists at your school. Before beginning, I would like to ask you to read this consent form and let me know if you have any questions before signing it. Please note that I will be audio recording this interview, and that your agreement to participate indicates an agreement to be recorded. Also note that, while I will make efforts to protect your privacy and ask that all participants maintain confidentiality, I cannot guarantee that confidentiality because of the nature of a group interview.

Formal Interview Body

1. What is your job title and role within the school?

2. How does your particular role deal with student reading?

3. What is your role in creating the summer reading lists?

4. Are there other people in the school community who help make the lists? Who are they? How do you work together to create the lists?

5. What do you see as the main purpose in assigning summer reading?

6. How does the summer reading list fit in with the school's philosophy as a whole?

7. What is the process you go through when creating the summer list?

8. What criteria do you use when considering which books to put on the list?

9. I have a copy of your list from last year that I obtained at Borders' bookstore. Is this a complete and accurate copy?

10. What were some of the reasons for choosing these specific books last summer?

11. Why do you [not] choose to assign written work to supplement the reading list? How do you feel this enhances the summer reading experience?

12. How is summer reading evaluated?

13. What is the time frame for the creation of the summer reading list?

14. When the list is ready, how do you communicate it to students and parents?

15. Who else do you make the list available to?

16. Do you work with anyone else in the community, such as the public library or bookstores, in creating or communicating this list?

17. How do you ensure that books will be available to students over the summer?

18. Is there anything else about summer reading that you think it is important for me to know?

19. Is there anyone else in the school who you believe I should talk to?

Interview Closing and Debriefing

“Those are all the questions I have. Is there anything else you’d like to mention? Thank you very much for your help with my research. I’m hoping to get a better idea of why educators assign summer reading lists and how the lists fit those purposes. Would you like me to contact you with my final report when my study is complete?

Appendix B: Sample Schools

School Type	*Participant Descriptions*	*Grades Targeted*
Public high school	English teacher	9th-12th grades
Public high school	Declined participation	11th-12th grades
Public high school	Media specialist	9th-12th grades, at teachers' discretion
Independent Quaker middle and upper school	One media specialist/English teacher, one media specialist	6th-8th grades and 9th-12th grades
Independent middle school	One media specialist, one English teacher	8th grade
Independent middle school	Media specialist/ English teacher (one participant)	5th-8th grades
Public school system, including elementary and middle schools	One elementary media specialist, two middle school media specialists	Kindergarten-5th grades and 6th-8th grades
Parochial K-8 school	Media specialist	Kindergarten-8th grades, at parents' request or teacher's discretion
Independent Christian K-10 school	Headmaster	Kindergarten-5th grades and 6th-10th grades

Appendix C: Codes from Data Analysis

A Codes: Purposes

Code	*Explanation*	*Number of interviews in which code is mentioned*	*Levels mentioned for*
A1	Encouraging reading for fun	10	elementary, middle, high
A2	Preventing loss	3	elementary, middle, high
A3	Academic purposes (specific purposes mentioned in memos)	7	elementary, middle, high
A4	More than 1 purpose	10	elementary, middle, high
A5	Expected in school/community	4	middle, high
A6	Protecting institution of reading	2	elementary, middle, high
A7	Maintain school community during summer/encouraging social reading	4	elementary, middle, high
A8	Expected/requested by parents	6	elementary, middle, high
A9	Facilitate independent or lifelong learning	5	elementary, middle, high
A10	Encourage students to try new kinds of reading/take on a challenge	3	elementary, middle, high
A11	Providing “quality” books	4	middle, high

B Codes: Who helps create the lists

Code	*Explanation*	*Number of interviews in which code is mentioned*	*Levels mentioned for*
B1	Media specialist *helps* teachers (as requested)	5	elementary, middle, high
B2	Media specialist	5	elementary, middle, high
B3	Students have input	3	middle, high
B4	Group of media specialists	2	elementary, middle
B5	Group of teachers	3	middle, high
B6	Teachers have input, not actually creating	2	elementary, middle, high

B7	Public library	2	elementary
B8	Individual teachers	3	elementary, middle, high
B9	County level educators	1	high
B10	Group of administrators	1	elementary, middle, high

C Codes: How books chosen, list structures, and assigned activities support purposes.

Code	*Explanation*	*Number of interviews in which code is mentioned*	*Levels mentioned for*
C1	*Criteria for book selection*	---	---
C1A	Cultural diversity	6	elementary, middle, high
C1B	Curricular fit	7	elementary, middle, high
C1C	Reading levels	7	elementary, middle, high
C1D	Content levels/Age appropriateness	5	elementary, middle, high
C1E	Overall appeal to students	8	elementary, middle, high
C1F	Total length of the list/assignment	3	middle, high
C1G	Avoiding overlap	4	middle, high
C1H	Gender appeal/diversity	3	elementary, middle, high
C1I	Exposure to author/local author	7	elementary, middle, high
C1J	Use of previous lists (either previous versions/years of current lists or lists from participants' earlier experience)	5	elementary, middle, high
C1K	Considering parent opinions	6	elementary, middle, high
C1L	Not censoring/choosing books that are "on the edge"	2	elementary, middle, high
C1M	Date of books/in print	6	elementary, middle, high
C1N	Variety of genres	6	elementary, middle, high
C1O	Use of Battle of the Books list or other outside sources, including reviewing sources	5	elementary, middle, high
C1P	Have actually read the book	1	high
C1Q	Familiarity with book through reviews, etc.	2	elementary, middle, high
C1R	Inclusion of graphic novels	3	elementary,

			middle, high
C1S	Award winning books	5	elementary, middle, high
C3	*Assigned activities*	---	---
C3A	Notes only/written work for students' own sake during summer	3	elementary, middle, high
C3B	Work assigned *after* return to school	5	elementary, middle, high
C3C	Nonwritten assignments (discussions, activities, hands-on, etc.)	4	elementary, middle, high
C3D	Attempt to lessen amount of work assigned	1	high
C3E	Written assignment during summer	2	high
C3F	Extra credit assignment	2	middle, high
C3G	Summer reading work is a "badge of honor"/rite of passage	1	high
C3H	Work provides accountability	4	elementary, middle, high
C3I	Assigning work would be "too much like homework"	3	middle, high
C3J	No work assigned over summer	5	elementary, middle, high
C5	Lists are modified from year to year (specifically stated)	5	elementary, middle, high
C6	*Evaluation*	---	---
C6A	Teachers evaluate informally (specifically stated)	4	middle
C6B	No formal evaluation	4	elementary, middle
C6C	Evaluation is the result of work done in school	6	elementary, middle, high
C6D	Evaluation is the result of work done over the summer	2	high
C6E	Evaluation takes into consideration the lack of teacher support over the summer	2	elementary, middle, high
C6F	Evaluation shown in long term success/overall school gains	1	elementary, middle
C7	*List structures*	---	---
C7A	Non-required list is long	1	middle

C7B	Required list is short	2	middle
C7C	Choice in the required reading	2	middle
C7D	Greater choice in the non-required reading	1	high
C7E	Desire the list to be shorter	1	middle
C7F	List kept to a set length	2	elementary, middle, high

D Codes: How lists/purposes communicated to parents and students.

Code	*Explanation*	*Number of interviews in which code is mentioned*	*Levels mentioned for*
D1	Posted on website	6	elementary, middle, high
D2	Mailing sent *after* school is out	4	elementary, middle, high
D3	Lists available in media center for pick-up	4	elementary, middle, high
D4	Mailing sent *before* school is out	3	elementary, middle, high
D5	Lists sent to bookstores or public libraries	6	elementary, middle, high
D6	Purposes/directions included on the lists	1	high
D7	Lists given out in class	4	elementary, middle, high
D8	Students must choose to receive lists	1	high
D9	Parents get lists directly at their request	1	elementary, middle
D10	E-mails sent to parents	3	elementary, middle, high
D11	Lists given out elsewhere/to others by request	3	elementary, middle
D12	Talk to students/parents about summer reading	4	elementary, middle, high

E Codes: Other notable information about summer reading.

Code	*Explanation*	*Number of interviews in which code is mentioned*	*Levels mentioned for*
E1	*Public library involvement*	---	---
E1A	Public library involved	3	elementary, middle
E1B	Public library not involved	6	elementary, middle, high
E4	Use of audiobooks/listening to	5	elementary,

	books mentioned		middle, high
E5	*When list creation process starts*	---	---
E5A	April	2	middle, high
E5B	May	7	elementary, middle
E5C	Schools keep public library in mind when getting list ready	1	elementary
E5D	Started earlier in school year	2	elementary, middle, high
E6	*Availability of books over summer*	---	---
E6A	Students buy or are expected to buy books	5	elementary, middle, high
E6B	Students can get books from the school library media center *before* the summer starts	2	middle, high
E6C	Public library expected to have	6	elementary, middle, high
E6D	Availability assumed (general statement)	1	middle
E6E	Students can get books from the school library media center *during* summer	1	elementary, middle
E6F	Schools have programs to help low-income students buy books	1	elementary
E6G	School library media specialist does not take responsibility for assuring availability	1	middle
E6H	School trying out different ways of making books available	1	elementary, middle, high
E7	Block scheduling affects summer reading	1	high
E8	Joint list among a school system	2	elementary, middle
E9	Bookstores solicit collaboration with schools	2	middle, high