A REPORT TO
UNITED WAY OF GREATER MILWAUKEE & WAUKESHA COUNTY

In the Photo: The “book fairy” reading books to youth at an Artist Working in Education truck studio event.

A formative evaluation of the 2015
Milwaukee Summer Reading Initiative

Prepared by IMPACT, Inc.
Fall, 2015
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report summarizes the work of the Milwaukee Summer Reading Initiative’s efforts in 2015. Building on the success of the 2013 and 2014 Initiatives led by the Faye McBeath Foundation, United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County stepped up to lead the 2015 Initiative. In addition to the United Way’s support, the Daniel M Soref Trust, the R.A. Stevens Family Foundation, and Brandon Gelzer Memorial Fund also provided financial support the initiative. Many of the books acquired over the summer were donated by the Molina Foundation and through New Threads of Hope. The evaluation would not have been possible without the financial support of United Way and the corporation of the partners.

In 2015, a strategy team oversaw the implementation of the project. The strategy team dedicated resources and time to the Initiative, often times responding to requests with little notice. Strategy team members included Nicole Angresano from United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County (United Way), Danielle Costello from United Way, Scott Gelzer from United Way, Beth Haskovec from Artists Working in Education, Kelly Hughbanks from the Milwaukee Public Library, Marie Jewell from Hunger Task Force, Mary Ellen Jones from United Way, Ashley Kluck from Hunger Task Force, Carrie Koss Vallejo from IMPACT, Brian Litzey from Milwaukee Public School Recreation, Brian McKaig from United Way, Bill Paulin from the Milwaukee Fire Department, Kathleen Pritchard from IMPACT, Andrew Rossa from Milwaukee Public Schools Recreation, Victoria Sanchez from Milwaukee Public Library, Sandra Schroeder from Milwaukee Public Schools, Sherrie Tussler from the Hunger Task Force, and Brooke VandeBerg from the Milwaukee Public Library. Several other people worked to make the implementation a success, some who are acknowledged throughout the report and many who worked behind the scenes to get more books to kids, and get more kids to books.

IMPACT staff on the evaluation team included Julie Whelan Capell, Director of Planning and Evaluation, and Michael Stevenson, Research Associate, with the support of Interns Yoon Kim, Adam Kindred, and Teresa Schlitz.
SUMMARY

Research shows that youth who do not read over the summer experience loss in reading skills, while youth who do read during the summer enhance or maintain their reading ability. The Milwaukee Summer Reading Initiative was formed to explore new ways to prevent or stop this loss, also known as the “Summer Slide.” The goals for the 2015 Initiative were to: 1) Promote and sustain efforts that stop “summer slide” among Milwaukee youth; and 2) Expand proven programs and test new ideas in access to books and reading. To meet these goals, the Initiative organized its efforts under two domains: Getting books to kids, and getting kids to books. The following table highlights the specific objectives under each of these domains and the Initiative’s success in meeting the objectives.

Table 1: Summary of 2015 objectives and their completion status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATUS OF OBJECTIVE</th>
<th>BOOKS TO KIDS</th>
<th>KIDS TO BOOKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Secure 60,000 books</td>
<td>Exceeded. 90,644 books acquired.</td>
<td>▪ Support Milwaukee Public Library’s goal to increase summer participation to 25,000 youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Add a dozen new sites</td>
<td>Exceeded. Twelve playground sites were new this year. New sites also included 24 McDonald’s restaurants and two events at the Summerfest grounds.</td>
<td>▪ Implement one parent engagement activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Engage two to three new partners</td>
<td>Achieved. New partners were the Milwaukee Police and Fire Departments.</td>
<td>▪ Implement one peer led activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Promote summer reading</td>
<td>Achieved. Summer reading was promoted using a variety of mediums throughout the summer, although more attention needs to be given to messaging at distribution sites.</td>
<td>▪ Create a 24/7 information hub</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The report is divided into five main sections: Books to Kids, Kids to Books, Partner Feedback, Media and Outreach, and Conclusions and Recommendations. Using a formative lens, each section describes the activities implemented during the 2015 Initiative, integrating data collected throughout the summer from youth, parent, and staff surveys and information observed through site observations. The report reflects the work of the partnership and not of one particular organization. However, it’s important to note that many of the programs and activities highlighted in the report existed prior to the partnership’s formation.
BACKGROUND

The Summer Reading Partnership was an effort launched by the Faye McBeath Foundation as a coordinated response to the reading achievement gap in Milwaukee. In 2013, the Foundation convened stakeholders and supported “mini-grants” that allowed Milwaukee-based organizations to implement new and creative ways to encourage summer reading. In 2014, stakeholders identified four areas of focus. These included: making books readily available to kids; supporting an easily accessible way for families to learn about all reading activities in Milwaukee; promoting reading to children and families through reading champions, the media and technical assistance; and supporting new ideas for engaging parents, children and residents in summer reading. With the sun-setting of the Faye McBeath Foundation in December of 2014, United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County stepped forward to lead the 2015 Initiative.

The Initiative is informed by research illustrating that youth who do not read over the summer experience loss in reading skills, while youth who do read during the summer enhance or maintain their reading ability.\(^1\) This loss of skills is often called the “summer slide.” A conservative estimate is that youth who do not read during the summer lose approximately two months (or roughly 22%) of what they learned over the school year. Over the course of two or three summers, youth can fall an academic year behind their peers.\(^2\) However, some students are at greater risk for experiencing the summer slide. Students from low-income families are more likely to experience the summer slide than youth raised in middle-income households, who generally experience slight gains in reading skills over the summer.\(^3\) Boys are more likely to experience the slide than girls,\(^4\) and the gap in academic achievement gets wider as youth get older.\(^5\)

Fortunately, there are evidence based methods to reduce the summer slide. Students who receive reading level appropriate and content relevant books at home over the summer show a significantly higher level of reading achievement than students who do not receive books.\(^6\) Therefore, students’ access to reading material is related to the amount of reading youth engage in, which in turn is the most important determinant of reading achievement.\(^7\) An important element of the partnership’s effort is to increase 24/7 access to books in the homes of children and the programs they frequent during the summer months.

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The goals of the 2015 Initiative were to: 1) Promote and sustain efforts that stop “summer slide” among Milwaukee youth; and 2) Expand proven programs and test new ideas in access to books and reading. To reach these goals, the Initiative organized its strategies under two domains recommended by IMPACT Planning Council: “books to kids” and “kids to books.” The Initiative’s leadership developed the strategies and their corresponding objectives with feedback from the strategy team. A depiction of the strategy can be found in figure 1. Although somewhat intuitive, “books to kids” strategies involved meeting youth where they congregated (e.g. free summer meal programs, parks, etc.) and distributing free, new books. “Kids to books” strategies involved engaging and encouraging youth in reading through more traditional means and structured programming or engagement (e.g. Public library summer reading program, summer school programming, etc.).

Four objectives were identified under each of the strategies.

Books to Kids Objectives:
1. Secure over 60,000 quality books for distribution to kids and families.
2. Add at least twelve new community recreation and learning sites involved in book distribution.
3. Engage two to three new partners in increasing home and community access to books.
4. Promote access to books and summer reading to civic and community leaders.

Kids to Books Objectives:
1. Support the Milwaukee Public library in achieving a record goal of 25,000 participants in their summer reading programs.
2. Implement at least one new initiative designed to build parent engagement.
3. Implement at least one new initiative featuring peer-led youth summer reading efforts.
4. Create a 24/7 information hub for summer reading opportunities.

To support the evaluation, the evaluators aligned the strategy with the Initiative’s logic model (appendix A) developed in 2014. For the most part, the logic model aligned with the strategy, but more attention is needed to ensure that strategies directly link to the short, medium, and long term objectives in an updated model. The following sections will describe the Initiative’s efforts in meeting each of the objectives outlined in the 2015 strategy. It should be pointed out that many of the activities described in this report predate the emergence of this partnership. The Milwaukee Public Library and Milwaukee Public Schools, for instance, have had active summer program for decades.
STOP SUMMER SLIDE! MKE Summer Reading Partnership

**GOALS:**
1) To promote and sustain efforts that stop “summer slide” among MKE youth
2) To expand proven programs and test new ideas in access to books and reading

**ACCESS**

**Books to Kids Objectives:**
1) Secure over 60,000 quality books for distribution to kids and families.
2) Add a dozen new community rec and learning sites involved in book distribution.
3) Engage 2-3 new partners in increasing home and community access to books.
4) Promote access to books and summer reading to civic and community leaders.

**Lead partners:** MPS Recreation, Hunger Task Force, MPS, United Way, New Threads of Hope, MKE Fire & Police Departments, AWE, media

**READING**

**Kids to Books Objectives:**
1) Increase access to and participation in MPL summer reading programs—goal is 25,000 kids.
2) Implement at least 1 new initiative designed to build parent engagement. (AWE, MPS)
3) Implement at least 1 new initiative featuring peer-led youth summer reading efforts (Lead2Change)
4) Create a 24/7 information hub for summer reading opportunities.

**Lead partners:** Milwaukee Public Library, United Way, MPS, MPS Rec, IMPACT 211

**EVALUATION**

1) Are partnership activities having their intended effect?
2) Did the partnership meet its goals?
3) What aspects of the partnership worked well and what can be improved?

**Lead partners:** IMPACT Planning Council, United Way, SR Strategy Team

Figure 1: A depiction of the “Books to kids” and “Kids to books” strategy.
BOOKS TO KIDS

In 2015, a goal was set to acquire 60,000 books to distribute over the summer, a modest increase from 2014. By the end of the summer 90,644 books were acquired by the Initiative and approximately 81,000 were distributed, exceeding the goal initially set. The total number of books acquired does not include copies of United Way’s book ‘Show you Care, Share’, of which several thousand copies were distributed. A list of where the books were acquired from and quantities can be found in table 2. The 2015 Initiative collected 34,032 more books than last year’s Initiative.

Table 2: Book Acquisition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where acquired</th>
<th>Number of books</th>
<th>Donated or purchased</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Threads of Hope</td>
<td>50,045</td>
<td>Donated/purchased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molina Foundation #1</td>
<td>30,084</td>
<td>Donated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholastic books (Spanish)</td>
<td>5,915</td>
<td>Purchased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molina Foundation #2</td>
<td>4,600</td>
<td>Donated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>90,644</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Books were distributed at 202 unique sites throughout the summer, including sites in both “kids to books” and “books to kids” strategies. A map showing the locations of the various sites throughout Milwaukee can be found in figure 2. Books were distributed at each of these sites at least once over the summer.

Throughout the summer of 2015, staff and volunteers distributing books at various sites consistently suggested that there was additional demand for books that were not available. Specifically, books for older kids (i.e. middle school to high school readers) and books that would appeal to all genders were not always available in adequate numbers. Because this feedback was common across distribution method and observed at sites by the evaluators, a closer look at acquired books took place at the end of the summer. Book titles were available for 88,582 of the 90,644 books acquired. Publisher reading levels were found for each of the books. Figure 3 shows the quantity of books by suggested reading level. For the purpose of this analysis, suggested reading levels were grouped into early reader (i.e. pre-K), first to third grades, fourth to fifth grades, and teen (i.e. the same categories as how books were sorted for distribution.) The analysis supported what staff and volunteers suggested. Although the quantity of teen books is similar to the other categories, teen books encompass a large range of readers (i.e. sixth through twelfth grade). In addition, when looking at the number of teen books in compassion to the other categories, there was approximately one teen book for every two and a half books for youth below fifth grade.

To get a better grasp of the distribution of books by gender book titles were also reviewed, but in a much more limited capacity. To avoid assigning a “gender” to a book, one specific category of books was looked at based on volunteer and staff feedback. Among the 63,773 books that had titles available, all “princess” themed books were grouped together. Of those titles, 15,858 (about 25%, or 1 in 4) were tagged as “princess” themed. These included titles in the Sofia the First and Minnie Mouse book series. Although a more detailed analysis would need to be completed, looking at one group of the books...
supports the feedback received from staff and volunteers at book distribution sites about needing more gender neutral books. Another category to look at may be “Vampire” themed books.

Figure 3: Approximate number of books acquired by reading level for about 90,000 of the books acquired.

At the end of the summer, there were approximately 9,600 books that had not been distributed. The number of remaining books was in part due to an unanticipated donation of over 30,000 books made in July by the Molina Foundation. It was also a result of some of the new book distribution pathways using fewer books than they had originally been allocated. Remaining books were to be distributed by Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) but when the number was larger than expected, MPS offered to store the majority of the remaining books for the summer of 2016. MPS received approximately 2,850 books (1,835 early reader books, 1,015 for grade one to three readers) to distribute to kids before winter break at select schools. As a result, approximately 6,750 books remained for 2016, 3,409 books for readers below middle school reading level and 1,910 for teens.

Books were distributed through several different pathways over the summer at 202 unique sites. Distribution outlets in the “Books to kids” strategy included Hunger Task Force summer meal sites, Milwaukee Public Schools Summer Academies, Milwaukee Public Schools Recreation sites (including Community Learning Centers), and methods implemented by the Milwaukee Fire Department and the Milwaukee Police Department. The following sections will describe each method. Although distribution pathways are organized by partner agency, each section does not solely reflect the individual success of the agency, but rather the efforts made by the partnership.
Figure 2: A map illustrating where books were distributed in 2015.
**Hunger Task Force**

The primary book distribution method (i.e. in terms of number of sites) during the 2015 Initiative was through Hunger Task Force (HTF) summer meal sites. There were 165 different meal sites in 2015. Youth who visited summer meal sites had the opportunity to pick out and take home books at least one time over the summer. Hunger Task Force Meal sites are located throughout Milwaukee County, with concentrations in low-income neighborhoods in the City of Milwaukee and West Allis. The work of HTF is pivotal to the partnership’s book distribution efforts and is provided in-kind.

In addition to serving as a book distribution pathway, the HTF also played a key role in receiving, sorting, storing, and delivering the books. This year HTF volunteers with help from volunteers recruited by United Way sorted all of the books that came from the Molina Foundation, New Threads of Hope, and Scholastic into smaller, more manageable boxes that could easily be delivered to sites. Volunteers sorted books by age level (i.e. early reader, first to third grades, fourth to fifth grades, and teen) and made sure a variety of titles were in each box. Books were primarily stored at the HTF warehouse until HTF staff delivered the books with meals to sites, or staff from other distribution methods picked up books at the warehouse. In early July, HTF reached its capacity to store additional books. Milwaukee Public Schools quickly responded to a request to store overflow books in one of its warehouses, provided in-kind.

To learn more about how many books youth were reading over the summer and to help quantify how many books youth received from meal sites over the summer, the evaluators added a few questions to a survey about hunger that HTF already administered to youth. As the surveys were administered on an ongoing basis throughout the summer, the responses were collected at various points in time. However, most of the surveys were collected in the last month of the program (i.e. August). Six hundred thirty-two youth completed the survey in 2015. Youth were asked how many books they read this summer so far, 160 (25.3%) read one or fewer, 251 (39.7%) read between two and five books, and 221 (35%) read six or more books. When asked how many of the books they had received at summer meal sites, almost half (279 of 625, 44.6%) said none. Over a third of the respondents (209 of 625, 33.4%) received one or two books and the remaining kids (137 of 625, 21.9%) reported receiving three or more books at meal sites.

Questions were also added to the HTF survey administered to parents to learn if parents knew what the “summer slide” was and to better understand how parents were engaging their kids in reading. A small number of parents (N=38) completed this survey. Only seven, or 18.9% of parents said they knew what the summer slide is. This is important because one of the goals of the Initiative was to raise awareness of summer slide and educate the community on its impact. In addition, parents were also asked what reading activities they did with their children. Parents could check all options that applied. Twenty-two (or 57.9%) of parents said they encouraged their children to read, 16 (or 42.1%) said they read with their children, nine (or 23.7%) said they helped their child pick out a free book at the meal site, and six (or 15.8%) said they go to the library with their children.
At the end of the summer, HTF site staff provided feedback about their participation in book distribution via an electronic survey. Of the twelve staff that completed the survey, eight brought books to their sites about once per week, two brought them every other week, and the remainder brought books to their sites less frequently. Eight of the staff reported that they spent less than two hours per week delivering books, although four noted that they spent four or more additional hours per week delivering books. Generally, feedback from staff was positive. When asked to describe the response to receiving the books, most said that the books were well received by youth and parents. One staff member said, “The kids loved them.” However, some staff suggested that there needed to be more book options at each site, both in terms of age range and titles. “[The books were] very well received overall. Sometimes, sites got too many books of the same kind, or for the same age range. Would like to see more diversity in the books,” another staff member wrote. When respondents were asked to describe how book distribution could be improved, a few staff suggested that sites should be responsible for picking up their own books at HTF. However, several other staff suggested that they were fine taking books to sites. In addition, one staff member suggested that there was a need for a little more direction on how the books were intended to be distributed. One staff member wrote, “[The Initiative] should ensure coordinators of sites know the best way to distribute the books and engage children in reading.”

Two site observations at summer meal locations were completed by project evaluators at meal settings in order to gain a better understanding of how books were being distributed and where best practices were being used. A sample site observation form can be found in appendix B. This form was filled out at all site observations completed during the summer. Overall, site observations showed the diverse methods used to distribute books; however, it’s important to recognize that the observations only reflect the time that the evaluators were at a specific site. Findings from the two meal site observations can be found in tables 3 and 4. These sites were also Milwaukee Public School Recreation sites. Both sites had parents engaged, helping their kids pick out books. Both sites had a need for books in Spanish, but neither received books in Spanish.

To explore potential ways of getting future input at one of the sites, youth were asked how they felt about their new book with an interactive survey. Kids were given a one question survey and were asked to tear on a dotted line through their response. The question at this site was ‘How do you feel about your new book?’ Response options where a thumbs up (i.e. good), sideways thumb (i.e. so so), and a thumbs down (i.e. not good.) All (13 of 13) who completed the survey gave their book a thumbs up. Figure 4 shows an example of what the survey looked like.

“The kids always seemed really excited to get the books, and the staff always asked me to bring more” –HTF meal site staff
Figure 4: An example of the survey piloted during 2015 at distribution sites to better understand if kids liked the books they were receiving.

Table 3: Mitchell Park Site Observation, July 21, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MITCHELL PARK SITE OBSERVATION – MPS Rec and Meal Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approximate number of kids:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were kids able to select the book?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were Spanish books available if needed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did staff or volunteers help kids select books?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were parents/families engaged?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was a message about reading shared?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were kids reading the books?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution method:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other notes:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4: Clarke Square Site Observation, July 22, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>CLARKE SQUARE SITE OBSERVATION – MPS Rec and Evening Meal Site</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approximate number of kids:</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender:</strong></td>
<td>12 boys, 13 girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Were kids able to select the book?</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Were Spanish books available if needed?</strong></td>
<td>No Spanish books were available, but there was a need. Staff said that at previous distributions young kids took home the English books and had their older siblings read to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Did staff or volunteers help kids select books?</strong></td>
<td>Yes, a staff member was present at the cart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Were parents/families engaged?</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Was a message about reading shared?</strong></td>
<td>No, not during the observation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Were kids reading the books?</strong></td>
<td>A couple kids were playing with stickers from the sticker books.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distribution method:</strong></td>
<td>Books were put on a cart and kids could select the book they wanted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other notes:</strong></td>
<td>Staff mentioned that a lot of the books were traditionally more appealing to young girls.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Milwaukee Public School’s Summer Academy**

Throughout the summer, books were also distributed at 25 different Milwaukee Public School Summer Academies. Summer Academies are five-week extended learning opportunities for elementary school children when school is not in session over the summer. Students participate in math and reading curriculum as part of the academy. On the last day of the Summer Academies, two site visits were completed by the project evaluators to observe book distribution. While the site observations took place on the last day of the summer academies, books were distributed throughout the five-week sessions.

Tables 5 and 6 summarize the two site observations. The book distributions were well received by the students at these sites. Differentiating themselves from other book distribution pathways in the Initiative, these students had peer volunteers, teachers, or school administrators help them select an appropriate book. One example of staff helping youth select an appropriate book was an administrator making a call to a parent to get permission for the child to take home the book *SOLD*, a nonfiction book about a girl sold into human trafficking. This example demonstrates the effort the staff at these sites made to get an appropriate book to a child. Once a book was selected at these two sites, the child’s name was written on one of the first pages. Another observation that differentiated this site from others was the number of youth reading the books on site after they received it. At Summer Academy sites, more youth were observed reading books after they were distributed.
Table 5: Greenfield Site Observation, July 30, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GREENFIELD SITE OBSERVATION – MPS Summer Academy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approximate number of kids:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were kids able to select the book?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were Spanish books available if needed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did staff or volunteers help kids select books?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were parents/families engaged?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was a message about reading shared?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were kids reading the books?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution method:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other notes:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Zablocki Site Observation, July 30, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ZABLOCKI SITE OBSERVATION – MPS Summer Academy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approximate number of kids:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were kids able to select the book?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were Spanish books available if needed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did staff or volunteers help kids select books?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were parents/families engaged?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was a message about reading shared?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were kids reading the books?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution method:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Milwaukee Public Schools Recreation Department

In 2015, books were distributed at three different Milwaukee Public Schools Recreation Department (MPS Rec) sites, including sites with meal programs, Community Learning Centers (CLCs), and MPS Rec playground sites (new in 2015). Site observations at MPS Rec sites with meal programs were described in tables 3 and 4, in the Hunger Task Force section of the report.

Two site observations were also completed by evaluators at Community Learning Centers. CLCs offer education, recreational, and social activities for youth and adults before school, after school, on weekends, and over the summer. Similar to the Summer Academies, the youth at these sites began to
read the book they selected on site either by themselves, with a peer, or with an adult after receiving the book. More observations from visits at CLCs can be found in tables 7 and 8. At the observations, younger children were given a survey piloted during this year’s initiative asking them how they felt about their new book. Most (38 of 47) gave the book a thumbs up, with a few giving it a neutral thumb or a thumbs down (5 of 47 and 4 of 47, respectively). Older children were asked if they would read their new book. Eleven of 18 youth said they would read it by themselves, five said they would read with a friend, two said they would read it with an adult, and none said they would not read it. A sample of the survey administered to older kids can be found in figure 5.

One CLC staff member at the observations went above and beyond to make book distribution happen throughout the summer. When she learned that books were available to CLC sites, she decided to pick up books and deliver them to sites, acknowledging that CLC staff would not have time to pick up books at the warehouse. At times, she even took the books home and resorted them on her living room floor to make sure a variety of appropriate books went to the sites. Communicating on the quality of the books, she said, “I wouldn’t use them as a teacher, but the kids liked them… If the kids liked them, it’s okay with me.”

Table 7: Cass Street School Site Observation, August 11, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASS STREET SCHOOL SITE OBSERVATION – CLC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approximate number of kids:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were kids able to select the book?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were Spanish books available if needed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did staff or volunteers help kids select books?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were parents/families engaged?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was a message about reading shared?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were kids reading the books?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution method:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other notes:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8: Pierce School Site Observation, August 13, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PIERCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SITE OBSERVATION – CLC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approximate number of kids:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were kids able to select the book?</td>
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<td>Distribution method:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other notes:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Survey](image)

**Will you read your new book?**

*Tear all that apply*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes, I will read it to myself</th>
<th>Yes, I will read it with a friend</th>
<th>Yes, I will read it with an adult</th>
<th>No, I will not read it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Figure 5: An example of a survey piloted with older youth during 2015 at distribution sites to better understand if youth planned to read the book they received.

As mentioned earlier, playground book distributions were a new distribution pathway this summer. Distributions at these sites were led by MPS Rec staff at the sites. Books were picked up from the HTF warehouse and delivered to sites by site leads. Twelve playground sites received books at least once over the summer in 2015. This includes Woodland Park which is currently not an MPS Rec site. Overall, staff at these sites responded positively to book distribution as an activity, most saying that they were very satisfied with book distribution on an end of the summer staff survey.

Two site observations at MPS Rec Playground sites were completed by program evaluators. Unfortunately, on the day of the visits it rained, so attendance at the sites was substantially lower than
usual. Similar to other sites, there was a need for books in Spanish at both sites, but neither had them available on the day of the observation. Although attendance at the sites was limited, the evaluation team was able to engage in informal conversation with staff at the sites. Overall, staff were excited about passing out books to kids; however, one staff member was uncertain if kids would actually read the books. At one of the sites there was a particularly meaningful interaction a parent had with her child illustrating the importance of summer reading. After selecting a book, the parent said, “You can read this when you go back to school- or actually you are supposed to read this summer.” This interaction demonstrates the way the parent was thinking about reading over the summer, and remembering that it was important for kids to read over the summer. More details about the observations can be found in tables 9 and 10.

Table 9: Ohio Park Site Observation, August 7, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OHIO PARK SITE OBSERVATION – MPS Rec playground</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approximate number of kids:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were kids able to select the book?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were Spanish books available if needed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did staff or volunteers help kids select books?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were parents/families engaged?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was a message about reading shared?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were kids reading the books?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution method:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other notes:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Holt Park Site Observation, August 7, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOLT PARK SITE OBSERVATION – MPS Rec playground</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approximate number of kids:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were kids able to select the book?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were Spanish books available if needed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did staff or volunteers help kids select books?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were parents/families engaged?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was a message about reading shared?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were kids reading the books?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution method:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other notes:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Milwaukee Fire Department**

As a new partner in the 2015 Initiative, the Milwaukee Fire Department (MFD) partnered with United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County (United Way) to distribute books at two of their summer outreach events. The first distribution was in June at Children’s Day at Summerfest. During the event, children went through the MFD’s mobile Survive Alive House. The Survive Alive house gave kids the educational experience of escaping from a house fire. Children were given a brief instructional introduction and then were ushered into a bedroom. Cinematic smoke was pumped into the room and children were given an opportunity to demonstrate how they would get out. Staying low below smoke, feeling the door, and yelling for help were all reinforced during this unique learning experience.

Once kids finished going through the house, United Way volunteers distributed books to the children. Approximately 1,700 books were distributed to kids at this event, including several hundred copies of United Way’s *Show How You Care Share*. Although books were intended to be distributed throughout the five hour event, very few books were left after three hours of distribution. Volunteers who were involved in the distribution noted that they may have run out of books because there was a consistent flow of children taking books. Volunteers also noted that a few children took more than one book. To encourage children to select one book to take home, volunteers said things like “Those are some neat books. Are you ready to pick your favorite to take home and keep?”

A survey to get feedback from kids about the books they received was also piloted at the Summerfest event. After a child selected a book, he/she was given a paper survey with the question ‘How do you feel about your new book?’ Kids tore their response on the sheet. One survey had responses of a thumbs up, sideways thumb, or a thumbs down (figure 5). The other survey had response options of a smile face, expressionless face, and a sad face (figure 6). The survey was intended to better understand if the children were excited about the books they were receiving (i.e. they were appealing to them) under the assumption that kids who are excited about a book, are more likely to read it. Results from the survey show that overall kids were satisfied with the books they selected, with most giving the books a thumbs-up (57 of 71) or smiley face (43 of 45). Only two kids expressed that they did not feel good about the book they received.

Figure 7: Books being distributed at Summerfest.
Building on the success of the Summerfest event, the MFD also gave out 1,500 free books during Mexican Fiesta in late August. Similar to the Summerfest event in June, volunteers from United Way passed out books in front of the Survive Alive house after kids completed the activity. In response to a request from the Public Library, the books at this event were stuffed with Milwaukee Public Library bookmarks to promote the Library’s reading programs.

**Milwaukee Police Department**

The Milwaukee Police Department (MPD) was another new partner in the 2015 Initiative. During the month of August, the MPD stocked temporary mini-libraries at 24 different McDonald’s restaurants throughout Milwaukee. United Way helped the MPD purchase the mini-libraries and provided the books distributed during the project. The project was initiated by SHARP Literacy and MPD.

Police officers agreed to monitor and stock the libraries throughout the month. Officers could pick up boxes of 50 books, specifically sorted for MPD from the HTF or MPS warehouses, to restock the shelves. In addition to keeping the library stocked with books, officers were encouraged to engage with kids at McDonalds, either by reading to them or talking with them.

Site observations at four McDonalds were completed by project evaluators and project staff while the Initiative was being implemented. One of the four sites did not have the display installed. Another was out of books, but the display was still present and the messaging (i.e. read over the summer) on the display could still reach children or adults. At the third site, the book display was behind the counter but well stocked with a variety of books. Staff behind the counter were looking at the books when they were not waiting on customers, giving the impression that they were excited about having the books available. Through the duration of the site observation, a teen boy was reading a book for about 30 minutes. The boy confirmed that he got the book at the McDonalds and said it was “Awesome!” when asked if he liked the book. No other youth were present in the McDonalds during the observation. At the fourth site, McDonald’s staff were engaged in conversation. Staff said that the books were popular and that both youth and parents took the books. When the display was low on books, McDonald’s staff said they restocked the shelf from a stash of books they had behind the counter.

Figure 6: An example of the survey piloted during 2015 at distribution sites to better understand if kids liked the books they were receiving.
At the end of August, the eight MPD officers involved in stocking the mini-libraries were asked to complete a short survey electronic survey developed by the evaluators to learn more about their experiences, what worked well, what could be improved, and to capture any stories officers had when they successfully engaged with kids. Of the eight officers, three completed the survey. Several attempts were made to increase the response rate, including personal outreach to officers. The officers’ responses to the Initiative were mixed; some had positive experiences with the Initiative and others did not feel as optimistic. One of the officers who completed the survey was responsible for three restaurants, one was responsible for five restaurants, and the other oversaw all 24 sites. Two of the officers visited each site about once per week. When asked what worked well, one officers talked about the ability to coordinate this distribution method in a short amount of time, while another thought that communication with the managers at the McDonalds worked well. When asked what could be improved, one officer suggested that there was a need to get more buy in from officers. Another suggested that there be better advertising at the McDonalds around when officers would be around. The third officer suggested that the effort not be continued next year. Although there was mixed response from the officers who completed the survey, all three officers interacted with kids while at McDonalds. One officer in particular had a meaningful interaction with a child. “A seven year old was very reluctant to speak with me initially, but after approximately 15 minutes ...I was speaking with him and [he] sat down next to me as I read a story.”—MPD Officer

KIDS TO BOOKS

The “Kids to books” umbrella included efforts to engage youth in activities that brought them to existing summer reading programs, or engaged kids in activities around reading. The following sections outline areas or strategies that were implemented in 2015. Like the sections under “books to kids” these activities are organized by partner agency, but each section does not solely reflect the individual success of the agency, but rather the efforts made by the partnership.

Milwaukee Public Library

The Milwaukee Public Library (MPL) offers comprehensive programming to youth over the summer. MPL’s summer reading activities have existed for many years and are a cornerstone of the Library’s programming. This includes both in-house programs, where youth come to a library to participate, and outreach programs, where MPL educators go out to sites in the community to deliver programming. Examples of in-house programming include the Super Reader program for ages birth-12, child care in-house programming, Put Your Face in a Book program for teens, and weekly educational and experiential programs for youth birth-18 years offered at all library locations. Outreach programming provides direct service to child care centers and organizations serving school aged children (e.g.
playgrounds, MPS CLC sites, MPS Rec sites, etc). In addition, MPL also loaned 7,397 books through the “Tubs of Books” program at 65 outreach sites.

In 2015, MPL set a goal to have 25,000 youth enrolled in its summer reading programs. To meet this goal, MPL implemented several new strategies to encourage youth to sign up for the programs offered through the library. Strategies included:

- **Increasing outreach at child care centers.** Previously this program served kids five and under at child care centers, but in 2015 the program was expanded to include school aged children.
- **Distributing MPL folders to all students in the City of Milwaukee before school ended for the summer.** The Parent Coordinators at MPS schools played a key role in distributing the materials at MPS sites. MPL staff also visited schools to promote the program and get youth excited about the programs. This resulted in a larger number of children participating at their library location (in house).
- **Increasing the number of school aged outreach sites.** There were 107 school aged outreach sites in 2015, an increase of approximately 20% from 90 in 2014.

The Summer Reading Initiative supported MPL in reaching its goal by:

- Including bookmarks that promoted the Library’s programs in books distributed at some sites.
- Putting promotional materials for the library in select boxes of sorted books that were delivered to book distribution sites.
- Hosting a presentation to United Way agencies on the MPL summer programs.
- Arranging for additional publicity through mainstream media, i.e., the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.
- Seeking feedback from MPL during the summer about any steps that could be taken to help reach MPL goals.

The Milwaukee Public Library exceeded its goal of having 25,000 youth participate in 2015, with 25,265 youth participating in its programs. A breakdown of the total by program can be found in table 11. This is a 21.3% increase in participation from 2014. In addition to increasing the number of youth who participate in their program, MPL provided in-kind support to the broader initiative in several areas. This includes having librarians review book titles from New Threads of Hope to ensure general quality before they were acquired. The Library also offered suggestions and feedback on other partnership projects and actively participated in the Strategy Team. This support was provided in-kind by MPL.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Number of Youth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-house Super Reader</td>
<td>10,663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put Your Face in a Book (teens)</td>
<td>1,003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care In-House</td>
<td>2,667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care Outreach</td>
<td>8,159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>25,265</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The Library’s weekly educational/experiential programs had over 15,000 attendees, which is not included in this total.
Auer Avenue School, Parent Engagement

Auer Avenue School in Milwaukee has adopted a community school model, which builds the school’s capacity to align with community partners in order to serve the whole child. In 2015 the model guided Auer as it extend education and community-based activities into the summer, including several literacy-based activities. An example of a summer literacy activity was a music and literacy adventure camp hosted at Auer in partnership with the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music and the Milwaukee Public Theatre (who provided financial support for the program). The camp was designed to teach literacy and elements of music through picture books and applied music making, movement, drama, and art activities. An article about Auer Avenue School in the Journal Sentinel can be found in Appendix D.

One goal of the 2015 Initiative was to engage parents in reading with their kids. To support this effort, a mini-grant was awarded to Auer Avenue School in Milwaukee for an intergenerational chess and literacy activity. The activity was designed so youth and parents could work together around literacy-based activities connected to the game of chess. Students were to learn the game of chess alongside family members, then participate in age-appropriate reading activities together. In addition, students were to take home books. The activity was held twice a week throughout the duration of the Summer Academy, and approximately 15 children and five parents participated on any given day.

One of the teachers involved during implementation described the program as having structured literacy activities from 10:30-11:30am and parents and kids could play chess together from 11:30am-12:30pm. For the first hour students would rotate through activities, spending about 20 minutes on each. Structured literacy activities included vocabulary activities, learning how to play chess, and reading the book ‘Alex and the Wednesday Chess Club.’ Although parents were not engaged in the reading components of the activities, the teacher said that there was informal messaging around the importance of reading over the summer when parents were around. When asked about messaging, the teacher said, “Oh definitely... that was nothing formal that we did we all went into the courtyard and showed them the book they were reading and then they would play chess. You know, we would talk about the importance of reading. It wasn’t an organized kind of thing where we had an activity around it or anything.”

The teacher spoke highly of the quality of chess themed books used during the activity. However, the teacher suggested that another picture book focused on chess would be useful. “If I could find another picture book... The picture book that told a story was good.” Youth who participated in the activity were not able to take home the chess themed books, but youth at this site received books through the MPS Summer Academy distribution. Children also received books packs that were purchased through the MPS Summer Academy Program.

One challenge experienced with the activity was getting more parents engaged. A staff member overseeing the activities at Auer Avenue School thought that parent engagement might have been higher if the activity took place in the evening when more parents might be available.

The teacher emphasized that they activity was well received by the students, and ultimately supported their reading and learning. In particular, she suggested that the literacy activities were valuable. The teacher stated, “The round robin groups really worked well-- the 20 minutes they would do the literacy component with me, the 20 minutes they would do vocabulary game with vocabulary words and then
they would play chess... and then they would go on the computer if there was time. So I think that was very good because it held their interest more because they were switching activities quickly.”

**Lead2Change, Peer Led Activities**

Lead2Change is a youth leadership organization with a mission to empower and inspire youth to be catalysts for change in their communities. Through Philanthropy, College and Career Readiness and Neighborhood Engagement, young people are involved in activities that assist with enhancing their leadership and employability skills. In 2015, the Summer Reading Initiative engaged Lead2Change youth in participating at book distribution sites as part of a pilot effort to involve older youth at sites. This work was a new addition to the partnership.

In early July 2015, fourteen peers participated in a training led by a Milwaukee Public School literacy coach. This training was a pro bono MPS contribution to the effort. The training focused on the goals of the Initiative, the importance of summer reading, and provided peers with strategies they could use to help kids find the ‘right’ book. An example is the five finger rule. The strategy suggests that you open a book to a random page and have the kid read the page out loud. Each time a kid comes across a word she/he doesn’t know to raise a finger. If by the end of the page all five fingers are raised, pick another book because it is too difficult for the child.

In addition to helping youth select an appropriate book, Lead2Change peers were also encouraged to engage kids in reading, either reading a book one-on-one with a child, or reading a book out loud to a group of children. Lead2Change peers also administered a survey they developed to participants, as part of their non-summer reading activities.

After the training, Lead2Change peers had the opportunity to participate at three different book distributions. Book distributions were held at Clarke Square (7/22/15), Lindsey Park (7/28/15), and Columbia Park (7/25/15). Of the fourteen that participated in the training, eleven (or about 80%) were engaged at a distribution site. At the end of the summer, Lead2Change peers were asked to complete a survey about their experiences. Five (35.7%) of the peers that participated in the training completed the survey. Although evaluators made several attempts to interview peers over the phone to learn more about their experiences, the attempts were not successful. Feedback from the survey included:

- One peer thought that there needed to be a larger variety of books at the sites.
- Another peer suggested that they get to know the children a little bit better before helping them pass out books.
- Generally, participants felt that the MPS training prepared them to engage children in reading activities at book distribution sites (one felt ‘very prepared’ and four felt ‘somewhat prepared’).
- Although the training was geared toward helping children select a book, it also helped the peers. “The literacy training gave me a better [understanding of] the kids and made me realize that reading is actually a good habit.” Another suggested that they would apply the training to other areas, “I appreciate this experience because now I can help my niece and nephew read when they are old enough to understand.”

“The literacy training... made me realize that reading is actually a good habit.” – Lead2ChangePeer
Staff from Lead2Change expressed concerns about logistics of the book distribution. The staff member said, “When we arrived we had to figure out what to do with the books and where to read to the children. I thought this part would already be taken care of.”

Some of the peers had successful interactions with the kids. As one peer said, “One little girl at a site was very excited about the book giveaway. She had her eye on a book before we even got started. I encouraged her to read the book out loud to the group. She struggled through the book, but then I told her I would read and she could act out the story. The kids enjoyed it very much.”

**Artists Working in Education**

Artists Working in Education (A.W.E) read to and distributed books to kids though its summer Truck Studio. The Truck Studio is a free, drop-in summer enrichment program that creates an art studio at neighborhood parks and playgrounds. Programming was offered each afternoon for three hours at four different MPS Recreation sites per week, for six weeks throughout the summer. In addition, The Truck Studio offered programming in the evening at Milwaukee County Park Concert Series.

In 2015, A.W.E. received a mini-grant from the Summer Reading Initiative to incorporate reading activities into their existing programming. A.W.E staff read at least one book to studio participants daily during the summer, and on occasion, art activities were based on the books that were read that day. It was estimated that A.W.E staff read a minimum of 120 books to kids by the end of the summer. Because of a donation from Half Price Books, A.W.E was also able to distribute 250 used books to kids who participated in the day Truck Studios. Additionally, A.W.E. distributed MPL summer reading folders to kids who participated in activities at Washington Park, Rose Park, and Moody Park.

The mini-grant also supported A.W.E. in purchasing art-themed books for evening truck studios at summer concert series events in the parks. A.W.E. hosted truck studios in eleven different evening events at eight different parks. After kids completed an art activity at the studio, they received a ticket to get two free books. To redeem their books, parents/adults needed to accompany their kids to select their books. A.W.E gave 356 books to kids through their evening truck program, each kid receiving two books. Sixty-two percent of the kids who got the books were birth to third grade.

Two site observations were completed by project evaluators at evening Truck Studio events. Of note was the quality of the books which were art themed and available at a variety of reading levels. A designated “book fairy” helped children select age appropriate books. To engage parents in the process, children who completed the art project
received a ticket for two books but needed to bring an adult back with them to claim the books. One particular interaction with a parent at one of these sites supported the idea that more messaging around the Initiative was needed. In informal conversation, one parent said, “You can give all the books away in the world, but it’s the parents that need attitudes changed. Kids are always excited about books, it’s the parents.” This would have been a good opportunity to share something with the parent to talk about the Initiative’s strategy and approach.

THE PARTNERSHIP

Similar to the first two years of the Initiative, the 2015 Initiative was supported by a diverse group of dedicated individuals and organizations hoping to get more books in the hands of kids, and get more kids engaged in reading activities during the summer. Partners are not directly compensated for their efforts and all provide in-kind support for the project.

Strategy Team & Partners

Similar to the 2014 Initiative, a strategy team oversaw the implementation of the 2015 Initiative. The strategy team was made up of individuals representing a diverse group of stakeholders. New to the strategy team this year were marketing and communications staff from United Way and the Milwaukee Fire Department. A complete list of strategy team members and the organization they represent can be found in table 12.

Table 12: Strategy team members and the organization they represent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2015 STRATEGY TEAM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nicole Angresano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danielle Costello</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott Gelzer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beth Haskovec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly Hughbanks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie Jewell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Ellen Jones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley Kluck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrie Koss Vallejo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian Litzsey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian McKaig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Paulin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathleen Pritchard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Rossa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria Sanchez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra Schroeder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherrie Tussler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooke VandeBerg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other people engaged in the Initiative included Megan Byrne from New Threads of hope, Joseph Devereaux from MPS, Percy Perry from MPS, William Singleton from the Milwaukee Police Department, and Cami Thomas from Lead2Change. The Initiative was staffed by United Way, including Summer Reading Champion Scott Gelzer and Coordinator Carrie Koss Vallejo from IMPACT.
Partner Feedback
In September 2015 a short electronic survey was distributed by project evaluators to members of the strategy team to better understand the benefits partners and/or their organizations experience as a result of participation in the Initiative; the time and resources partners and/or their organization invested in the Initiative; and, collect any suggestions partners had to improve the Initiative next year. Fourteen (or 73.7%) of the 19 partners who received the survey completed it. All major partners were represented by at least one respondent. A copy of the survey can be found in appendix C.

Perceived benefits
Partners listed several benefits they and their organizations experienced as a result of participating in the initiative. One of the most common benefits partners described was working with and building relationships with other agencies. One partner described it as, “Our participation in the Summer Reading Initiative allowed us to build relationships with new and also existing community partners in new ways.” Another common response regarding the benefits associated with participating in the initiative was that kids were able to get books. Lastly, increased visibility for the need to read over the summer and for organizations was another benefit. One partner who served a key role in getting books to kids said, “We receive recognition for feeding children’s stomachs and minds.”

Initiative vision
When asked to describe the overall vision of the initiative, responses were somewhat mixed. Most partners described the vision as raising community awareness about the importance of summer reading and getting books to kids. One partner described the vision as, “To raise broad community awareness of the importance of summer reading. To put books into the hands of our children and support programs that encourage parents and caregivers to read to children. Provide a platform for new ideas and effective program expansion.” However, four of the partners who responded to the survey suggested that the vision needs to be further defined. These partners described the vision as “[it] still needs some work,” and “I think the overall vision needs to be clarified.”

Time and resources
Overall, partners noted that they and their staff were dedicating the time to the project that they expected. A few partners noted that they dedicated more time to the Initiative, only a couple suggested that they spent less time than expected. Partners do not receive compensation for participating in the Initiative, and unlike previous years, most did not receive mini-grant funding. See table 13 for more information about the time and resources partners dedicated.

Table 13: Time and resource commitment from partners (N= 14)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>More than expected</th>
<th>About as expected</th>
<th>Less than expected</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>About how much time have you dedicated to the Initiative this year?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About how much time have your staff dedicated to the Initiative this year?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About how many resources (e.g. using vehicles to transport books, storage space, etc. have you and/or your organization dedicated to the Initiative this year?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notably, almost half of respondents suggested that they dedicated more resources to the project than expected. Respondents described the resources as use of personal vehicles to transport books, storage space, and staff time to sort and distribute books. Participants said things like, “I’ve used my car several times to move books and supplies as needed” and “We used a lot of warehouse space intended for other purposes as the books took longer to distribute than anticipated.” Although some respondents suggested that they dedicated more resources than expected, some suggested that they were able to manage the requests, and another said that they dedicated less time than in previous years. “Sometimes the ‘ask’ was more than we could dedicate,” one participant said. “We had to keep things within the scope of our mission and what we could logistically do so we always kept the resources to ‘as expected.’”

**Suggestions for improvement**

Lastly, members of the strategy team were asked what suggestions they had to improve the Initiative next year. Responses to this question varied drastically. However, some common responses included continuing to strengthen the relationship with the library, starting planning earlier, create a shared vision, and refine metrics for success. Examples of what partners said include:

- “Start planning now. I'm sure if we all get in a room together, assess this year and begin planning for next year - we will continue to make a sustained impact!”
- “Improved communication with the library, which remains seemingly skeptical of the Initiative and the partnership.”
- “I’d like to focus on what all partners bring to the Initiative and how that can benefit a child/family over the summer. Can we broaden the focus on the whole child, not just reading, but all the experiences that reduce summer slide. How do we partner to cross promote? Who is our target audience? The child/family or stake holders or both? Are there other organizations we should be aligning with? How do we align with Milwaukee Succeeds? What specific measurements should each organizations be using to measure success of the partnership?”

**Funding**

To sustain the project after the Faye McBeath Foundation sun-set at the end of 2014, the Foundation awarded $50,000 to United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County for the 2015 Initiative. In addition to the money set aside from the Faye McBeath Foundation, the Daniel M. Soref Foundation, R.A. Stevens Foundation, United Way, and the Brandon Gelzer Memorial Fund also supported the Initiative. A complete list of funders and the amount they contributed can be found in table 14.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2015 Funding Sources</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faye McBeath Foundation</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Way of Greater Milwaukee &amp; Waukesha County</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel M. Soref Trust</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.A. Stevens Foundation</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandon Gelzer Memorial Fund</td>
<td>$600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
United Way allocated the funding pool to various costs associated with the Initiative, which included:

- Contracting with the Summer Reading Champion (Scott Gelzer) and the Program Coordinator (Carrie Koss Vallejo).
- Purchasing book carts for use at MPS Rec and Hunger Task Force sites.
- Funding the third-party evaluation.
- Providing small project grants to MPS, Artists Working in Education, the Milwaukee Police Department – SHARP Literacy - McDonald’s project and MPS Rec.
- Acquiring books for distribution, which was the single largest cost in the budget.
- Providing meeting support including space, refreshments, copying, etc.

It’s important to acknowledge that many of the partners provide a substantial amount of in-kind support to the initiative. It’s also important to note that the many of the books distributed at sites this summer were donated by the Molina Foundation and New Threads of Hope.

**OUTREACH & MEDIA**

Efforts were made in 2015 to increase awareness about summer reading and to promote the efforts of the Initiative. Various methods and mediums were used throughout the summer. This section outlines specific outreach and media activities of the Initiative in 2015.

**United Way Learning Community**

On May 25, 2015 Victoria Sanchez from the Milwaukee Public Library and Kathleen Pritchard from IMPACT presented on the summer slide to community organizations in Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County. Victoria presented on how organizations could connect youth in their programs to Library service. Kathleen presented on best practices in summer reading programs.

Twenty-nine participants from 18 different organizations participated in the learning community. After the presentation, participants were asked to complete a short survey to provide feedback about the presentation. Thirteen (or 44.8%) of participants completed the survey. Overall, participants were satisfied with the presentation and left with a better understanding of what the summer slide is and how their organization can help reduce it. Specifically,

- All respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they had a better understanding of how their organization can prevent the summer slide. 30.8% (or 4 of 13) of participants strongly agreed and 69.2% (or 9 or 13) agreed with this statement.
- 50% (or 6 of 12) of participants strongly agreed that they would promote the Milwaukee Public Library’s program to you in their program. 50% (or 6 or 12) agreed with the statement.
- Notably, one participated said this was the first time they had heard about the summer slide. “I have received a lot of information in the past about Early Literacy but I have never heard about the summer slide and I intend to address it through our work. Thank you!!!”

**Summer Reading Kick-off**

On June 5th, 2015 United Way formally kicked-off the 2015 Initiative. Volunteers sorted over 20,000 books into boxes organized by reading level to get them ready for distribution at sites over the summer. This event received media coverage from the Neighborhood News Service, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Milwaukee Courier, and Channels 12, 4 and 6. The total ad value from media coverage was $24,106 and
garnered over 18,300 impressions from viewers. A kick-off event also took place on July 1, 2015 at Pierce Elementary School. At the event, Bango, the Milwaukee Bucks mascot, distributed books to 3rd and 4th graders.

**Print Media**

Efforts made by the 2015 Summer Reading Initiative were featured in several different print sources over the summer. Select newspaper and online articles can be found in appendix D. Information about the partnership was also featured in organizations print materials advertising summer programing. Print media included:

- List of MPS Rec Playground sites that were distributing free books in MPS Rec’s summer activity guide.
- *Students can get a book with a meal this summer*, by Vivian Wang in the Journal Sentinel on June 17, 2015
- **Stop Summer Slide! United Way summer reading partnership kicks off**, by Jillian Kokott in the Milwaukee Courier on June 20, 2015
- **Stop Summer Slide! Bucks join United Way in the Summer Reading Partnership**, by Jillian Kokott in the Milwaukee Courier on July 11, 2015
- **Hunger Task Force also feeds minds with book giveaways**, by Alan J. Borsuk in the Journal Sentinel on July 26, 2015
- **Reading effort aims to help kids sidestep ‘summer slide’**, by Erin Richards in the Journal Sentinel on July 31, 2015
- **Preventing a ‘summer slide’ in reading**, by Ryan Hurley in the Journal Sentinel on September 9, 2015
- **SHARP Literacy unveils mini libraries at local McDonald’s to encourage students reading before school is back in session**, by Michele McCormack on CBS 58 on August 4, 2015

**Stop Summer Slide Public Service Announcement**

United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County created a 15 second “Stop Summer Slide” public service announcement that aired on a local TV station, WISN 12. The ad was created by United Way and was valued at $17,500 (in-kind from the TV station). United Way was guaranteed that the ad would receive 152 spots, but was actually run 234 times and delivered over 124,000 impressions. The ad, targeted at kids, promoted book distribution sites and directed people to call 2-1-1 to learn more about programming in their area.

Figure 9: A screenshot of the service announcement.
**Websites**

In 2015, United Way tested a Summer Reading page on their website. The website gave an overview of the program, acknowledged the partners, and served as a platform for people to make donations to purchase books for the Initiative. To date, the page has had 556 hits and $340.00 in donations were made by seven individual donors in support the Initiative’s efforts. See a screen shot of the website in figure 10.

![United Way Summer Reading Partnership website](image)

Figure 10: A screen shot of United Way’s Summer Reading Partnership website.

Milwaukee Public Schools Recreation department also featured information about summer reading sites on their website, [http://www.milwaukeerecreation.net/playgrounds](http://www.milwaukeerecreation.net/playgrounds).

**2-1-1 Referrals**

IMPACT 2-1-1 is a central access point for people in need. During times of personal crisis or community disaster, the free, confidential helpline and online resource directory makes it easy for residents to get connected to information and assistance. IMPACT 2-1-1 serves Milwaukee, Waukesha, Kenosha, Racine, Ozaukee, Washington, Dodge, Jefferson and Walworth counties.

In 2015, the Summer Reading Initiative partnered with IMPACT 2-1-1 to serve as a central point of contact for families looking for free book distribution sites. Families could call 2-1-1 and be referred to a site that was distributing books. Calling 2-1-1 was primarily advertised through the Stop Summer Slide TV ad that ran on local listings.
The original plan was for 2-1-1 operators to let callers know that books were being distributed at summer meal sites, when they called for meal site information; however, this did not consistently happen. Between June 1st and August 31st, 2-1-1 received 308 calls for summer meal sites and 958 hits on ReferWeb. Although callers who were asking for meal sites were not told that books would also be available at those sites, individuals accessing this information on ReferWeb were able to see that books were available. During this same time period, 2-1-1 received only one specific call regarding book distribution sites. The online version of 2-1-1, ReferWeb, had ten hits.
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The partnership achieved or exceeded the objectives that it set under each of its “kids to books,” “books to kids” strategies. A summary of the status of each of objectives can be found in Table 15. As described throughout the report, partners worked together and contributed in ways that ultimately got more books to kids, and kids to books.

Table 15: Summary of 2015 objectives and their completion status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATUS OF OBJECTIVE</th>
<th>BOOKS TO KIDS</th>
<th>KIDS TO BOOKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Secure 60,000 books</td>
<td>Exceeded. 90,644 books acquired.</td>
<td>Support Milwaukee Public Library’s goal to increase summer participation to 25,000 youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Add a dozen new sites</td>
<td>Exceeded. Twelve playground sites were new this year. New sites also included 24 McDonald’s restaurants and two events at the Summerfest grounds.</td>
<td>Exceeded. 25,265 youth participated in MPL summer reading programs, a 21.3% increase from 2014; the partnership acted in a supporting role.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Engage two to three new partners</td>
<td>Achieved. New partners were the Milwaukee Police and Fire Departments.</td>
<td>Implemented one parent engagement activity Achieved. Two parent engagement activities were implemented (one at Auer Avenue School and one through Artists Working in Education).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Promote summer reading</td>
<td>Achieved. Summer reading was promoted using a variety of mediums throughout the summer, although more attention needs to be given to messaging at distribution sites.</td>
<td>Implemented one peer led activity Achieved. Lead2Change peers guided children in making book choices at three sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Create a 24/7 information hub</td>
<td>Achieved. More attention is needed to increase access and use.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the initiative was successful in meeting all of its objectives, there are some areas were the Initiative should continue to focus to improve quality. Specifically, the partnership should:

- **Ensure that there are an adequate number of books by reading level, gender, and language.**
  Feedback from individuals who distributed the books this summer suggested that there was a need for a greater variety of books. An analysis of book titles on page seven supported staff and volunteers comments. Although the Initiative has little control over some of the donated books, next year Initiative staff should closely monitor books as they come in and supplement gaps in variety with purchased books. This includes looking at books by reading level, topic, and language.
- **Build consensus around a shared message and develop strategies to promote it.** With the support of United Way marketing and communications staff, the Initiative’s strategy for marketing was more targeted and more methods were used to get the message out than in previous years. However, there is still a need to build consensus on what the shared message is among stakeholders, particularly in terms of communicating an achievable goal for summer reading to youth and parents. Initial discussions around a shared message began in an October 2015 strategy team meeting, but should continue in the early planning stages of the 2016 Initiative. An essential component of creating a shared message is determining what the long term goals of the Initiative are.

- **Expand summer reading messaging at book distribution sites.** As the site observations pointed out, little to no messaging is currently taking place at the distribution sites themselves. One could argue that giving a book to a child sends a message, but the message might need to be more clear and explicit to resonate with youth. One suggestion from strategy team meetings is a bookmark or sticker that could be on each book encouraging children to read over the summer.

- **Enhance parent engagement strategies, focusing on meeting parents where they congregate.** This year strategies were implemented to increase parent engagement. Although these strategies supported and facilitated some engagement, this area should continue to be expanded. If a message can be added to books when they are distributed, does the message resonate with both kids and parents? Similar to strategies used to engage kids, can the Initiative meet parents where they congregate?

- **Identify two or three best practices that are important for consistency across distribution methods, and put them on book boxes.** One strength of the Initiative is that book distribution sites are able to distribute the books in a way that best fits with the site. Through site observations, it was observed that sites passed out books in a variety of ways. It is suggested that the strategy team review the list of best practices (Appendix E) and identify two or three that they want to make sure accompany every book distribution. For example, one guideline may be that youth select their own book. These two or three “guidelines” could be printed on a handout and included with each box of books, described to staff at staff meetings early in the summer, or communicated in other ways.

- **Build the partnership and create an intentional structure for the future.** The Initiative has accomplished a lot in the three years that it has been active, which is a result of partners’ willingness to work together and get things done. As the Initiative continues to develop, there should be some intentional conversations around what the partnership ‘is’ (i.e. a more formalized group) and what the partnership might look like in the future. After a few years of working together, many partnerships begin to review their structure to make sure it continues to meet the goals of the Initiative.
**APPENDIX A: 2014 LOGIC MODEL**

**Summer Reading Initiative Logic Model - DRAFT**

**Problem Statement:** Conservative estimates suggest that youth who do not read over the summer experience two months of learning loss each summer (the “summer slide”). This loss affects low income and low resource neighborhoods disproportionately and is less likely among those who use the public library.

**Theory of action:** By distributing new books, creating a resource hub, and awarding mini-grants to organizations delivering summer reading programs, youth in low-resource neighborhoods will read 6 books over the summer.

**Theory of Change:** If youth read 6 books, or a set number of minutes, over the summer they will not experience the summer slide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| People/Partners  
- Milwaukee Public Library,  
- Milwaukee Public Schools,  
- Hunger Task Force  
- Faye McCall, United Way, etc.  
- Strategy team  
- Summer reading coordinator  
- Volunteers  
- Reading Champions  
- Media (JS, Metropolis, etc.)  
- Evaluation staff  | New book acquisition  
New book distribution  
Resource hub  
Reading champions  
Mini-grants | Number of new books obtained  
Number of new books distributed to youth  
Type of books distributed (i.e. subject, language, etc.)  
Location of books distributed  
Number of times resource hub accessed  
Number of reading champions featured in media  
Number of mini-grants awarded  
Amount of money allocated to mini-grants | Community  
1. Media features information about summer reading, through reading champions  
2. Funders and mini-grant recipients become more aware of what the ‘summer slide’ is and who it affects  
3. Mini-grant recipients build capacity to deliver summer reading programs  
4. Youth begin to see reading as “cool” (the image of reading begins to change)  
5. Youth have greater access to reading level appropriate new books that they find interesting  
6. Youth begin to read 6 books (or # minutes) over the summer |

| Financial/Resources  
- Money for books  
- Mini-grants  
- Support for backbone staff  
- Support for evaluation  
- NewThreads of Hope |  |

| Space  
- Meeting space  
- Warehouse for storing/sorting books  
- Summer reading sites (e.g. parks)  
- Book distribution sites  
- Summer meal sites |  |

| Assumptions: | If youth have access to free, reading level appropriate, and content relevant books, they will read. |

| External Factors: | Acquiring enough new books to distribute, funding, youth choosing to engage in summer reading programs (versus other programs offered). |

Draft, updated 11/20/2014
APPENDIX B: SITE OBSERVATION GUIDE

STOP SUMMER SLIDE

Book Distribution Site Observation

Observation date: _____/_____/______  Time of observation: __________ - __________
Observation location: ___________________________________________________________
Observer(s): _________________________________________________________________
Approximate number of kids present: ____  Percent girls: ____  Percent boys: ____
Languages used at site: _________________________________________________________

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Check all that are observed.

☐ Free books are available  ☐ Parents/family are present and/or engaged
☐ Kids are able to select the book they want  ☐ Teachers or librarians are engaged
☐ Books are available in multiple languages  ☐ Staff/volunteers are supporting kids select books
☐ A variety of books (genres/content) available  ☐ Stop the Summer Slide message is shared
☐ Hands on activities or academic lessons accompany book distribution

Notes:
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

READING OBSERVATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>None</th>
<th>A few</th>
<th>About half</th>
<th>Majority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kids are reading books by themselves</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kids are reading books with peers</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kids are reading books with adults</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX C: PARTNER SURVEY

SUMMER READING INITIATIVE

Partner Survey

1. What benefits do you and/or your organization experience as a result of participating in the Summer Reading Initiative?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

2. How would you describe the overall vision of the initiative?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

3. About how much time have you dedicated to the initiative this year?  
   
   More than expected | As expected | Less than expected | Approximate total hours
   
   | | |
   
   3. About how much time have you dedicated to the initiative this year?
   
   | | |
   
   4. About how much time have your staff dedicated to the initiative this year?
   
   | | |
   
   5. About how many resources have you and/or your organization dedicated to the initiative this year?
   
   | | |
   
   Please explain:
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

4. About how much time have your staff dedicated to the initiative this year?

   | | |

5. About how many resources have you and/or your organization dedicated to the initiative this year?

   | | |

Please explain:
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

6. Name one addition and/or improvement you’d like considered for next year.

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Name (Optional): ____________________________________________
Students can get a book with a meal this summer

By Vivian Wang

This summer, Milwaukee students will get a book and a bite, thanks to a summer reading partnership between United Way and the Hunger Task Force.

Volunteers from both organizations recently gathered to sort more than 20,000 books, the Neighborhood News Service reported Tuesday. The books will be distributed free of charge to students who visit certain schools, parks and other summer meal sites between June 22 and the end of August.

The goal of the program is to help students maintain their reading proficiency during the long summer months, Nicole Angresano, vice president of community impact at United Way, told the Neighborhood News Service. Students will be able to select a new book each time they visit a meal site.

"We are at a critical point in Milwaukee when it comes to academic achievement," she said. "We want to create opportunities over the summer to make sure young people stay on track and get ahead."

United Way hopes to distribute 70,000 books by the end of the summer -- nearly 20,000 more than they distributed last year.

United Way and the Hunger Task Force collaborated with Milwaukee Public Schools to identify the schools that would most benefit from such a program. Those schools were then selected as distribution locations.

Other contributors to the program include the Milwaukee Public Library, Milwaukee Recreation and IMPACT Planning Council.
II. *Stop Summer Slide! United Way Summer Reading Partnership Kicks Off*, by Jillian Kokott in Milwaukee Courier on June 20, 2015.

Over the summer, children can lose 2-3 months of reading skills learned during the school year.

To help combat this “summer slide” United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County is leading the Summer Reading partnership, a community-wide effort to get a variety of books into the hands of children in Greater Milwaukee.

Starting June 22, 70,000 free books will be handed out to children at playgrounds, parks and the Hunger Task Force’s summer meal sites.

The Summer Reading program officially kicked off, June 5, at Hunger Task Force when the first shipment of 20,000 donated books arrived ready to be sorted.

Darriene Davis, a Northwestern Mutual employee, was one of 20 volunteers from the community who volunteered to help organize and pack the books. Darriene was excited about having the opportunity to give back.

“I have a 3-year-old at home who likes to read, so this was a great opportunity for me to be able to give other kids the same opportunity to read as well,” She said.

In the State of Wisconsin 67% of youth do not read at a proficient level. This loss is more common among children from low income homes, and research shows this loss accounts for up to 80% of the achievement gap between low and high-income students.

It is suggested children read 15 minutes a day to stop summer slide. The goal of United Way’s Summer Reading partnership is to have every child read 6 age-appropriate books by the end of summer.

Nicole Angresano, VP of Community Impact at United Way, is not only excited about how that goal will impact children in our community academically but also how it will potentially spark a love of reading they may not have had.
“Whenever we’ve had the opportunity to give a child a book, not just a new book, but a book they pick out themselves, they have this overwhelming sense of joy and it’s just the most wonderful thing to see,” she said.

For more information on where books will be distributed this summer and on how to donate books for kids head to: https://www.unitedwaygmwc.org/Stop-Summer-Slide?utm_source=Newsletterutm_medium=2015%20Newsletter&utm_campaign=Stop%20Summer%20Slide


The Milwaukee Bucks partnered with United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County to distribute new books to summer school students at Franklin Pierce Elementary School July 1st.

Bango, the Milwaukee Bucks mascot, made a surprise visit to hand out books to 3rd and 4th graders as part of United Way’s Summer Reading Partnership.

The students were not only were given books, but also had the opportunity to meet and take pictures with Bango.

Milwaukee Bucks John Steinmiller, Exec. VP of Social Responsibility-Community Affairs, and Keith Carrington, Principal of Franklin Pierce Elementary School helped facilitate this event.

The goal of United Way’s Summer Reading Partnership is to have every child read 6 age-appropriate books by the end of summer.

Maureen Fitzgerald, an employee of the Hunger Task Force, arrived at Merrill Park, at N. 35th St. and W. Michigan St., just before lunch was to be served to 40 or 50 kids one day last week.

But the first thing on her mind wasn’t food. She went to the small building that’s a base for activities, pulled out a blue book cart, and rolled it to near the food table.

"It's empty, so that's good," Fitzgerald said of the cart. "It was full when I left the last time." That meant that over several days, kids had taken books — exactly what those involved in the effort want them to do. Fitzgerald restocked the shelves with several dozen new books.

The Hunger Task Force might not seem a likely candidate for the book business. The organization and its dynamo leader, Sherri Tussler, have been at the front of a lot of changes that have improved the lives of children. But they all relate to food.

A lot more kids getting a decent breakfast in school? More kids qualifying for free lunch? An energized program to provide kids free meals in the summer, when most school lunch programs aren't operating? Check, check, check. All things for which the organization deserves much of the credit, and all things that, ultimately, put kids in better positions to learn in school.

(If you don't think kids should be getting free meals because their parents should do this, you don't know enough about the lives of thousands of children in our midst.)

The task force and other worthy organizations haven't eased by on their commitment to fight hunger.

In fact, Tussler said, this will be the biggest summer yet for offering supper to kids at many sites. Between June 22 and Aug. 28, about 887,000 meals will be served. Federal aid pays for a lot of the cost for breakfast and lunch, but supper is privately funded. A $500,000 grant from Kohl's department stores supports the effort, with other donations picking up hundreds of thousands of dollars of the remaining tab. Lunches are cold (a hamburger in a bun, a piece of fruit, a small container of juice on the day I visited), and suppers are hot.

Summer reading efforts

But as important as food is, let's talk about improving reading, which is a giant issue in Milwaukee. Reading even modest amounts over the summer can go far to prevent the "summer slide" in reading ability that is particularly a problem among low-income kids.
One thing that happens when you give away food, especially in places where there are such things as basketball hoops and splash pads, is you attract a lot of kids, including many who aren't being reached by other summer reading efforts.

Scott Gelzer was executive director of the Faye McBeath Foundation, which "sunset" at the end of 2014, and he has been a longtime advocate of summer reading. In fact, he is now working with the United Way of Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha County, with the title of "summer reading champion."

Gelzer provided a diagram that groups programs into two categories: Kids to Books and Books to Kids.

The list for Kids to Books starts with the Milwaukee Public Library's excellent and important programs. Library Director Paula Kiely said about 20,000 kids have taken part so far this summer, with hopes of reaching a goal of 25,000 by the end of August.

(An important public service message to parents, guardians and anyone else involved with kids: One of the best things you can do this summer is take them to a library.)

But there are a lot of kids not reached by the library and other good efforts in the Kids to Books category. Thus, there is Books to Kids — bringing books to where kids are.

The library is in the second summer of sending librarians out to conduct programs in parks. This summer, the focus is on Carmen Playfield on the northwest side, Lindbergh Park on the north side and Mitchell Park on the south side.

Programs like these allow the building of relationships that can really involve kids in reading. But the reality is that resources aren't there to reach large numbers of kids.

Book giveaways

Enter the Hunger Task Force. "I think our strategy of just sort of blasting books out the door is a good strategy," said Tussler.

Thanks to generous donations, including a large one from the Molina Foundation, based in California, Tussler and Gelzer said they expect about 75,000 books, almost all of them new, to be given away this summer. The books are generally the kind kids would read for fun. Included at Merrill Park when I was there were Disney stories, picture books for young kids and "Twilight" genre stuff for older kids.

One of the best things overall is that a wide range of organizations have been cooperating to maximize effectiveness in helping kids. Milwaukee Public Schools, recreation programs, youth centers, arts organizations, nonprofits, the police and fire departments, and others have stepped up.

"It's an all-out book blitz. There are books everywhere," said Nicole Angresano, vice president for community involvement for United Way. "We want all kids to have books that they've chosen and they love and that they read over and over again."

At Merrill Park, Calvin Searcy walked up to the book cart and asked Fitzgerald if there were any "princess books." Yes, there were.

"She loves her princess books," Searcy said of a daughter who was with him. "This is a pretty good program here."
One-stop help: Some nutrition for the body, some nutrition for the brain and some hope that this princess will be a step closer to a more royal future.

V. **Reading effort aims to help kids sidestep 'summer slide', by Erin Richards in the Journal Sentinel on July 31, 2015**

When teacher Sika Banini welcomes students back to Milwaukee's Parkview Elementary in September, she'll know right away who read during the summer.

"It's obvious," she said.

Those who haven't seen a book since June struggle with fluency and comprehension in the first few months of school, compared with those who practiced over the summer as a result of reading regularly, Banini said.

Summer after summer, the loss grows. The worst afflicted will never catch up.

The seasonal drain of literacy knowledge among poor kids this time of year often gets little attention in the hand-wringing over the yawning reading achievement gap in Milwaukee — one of the widest in the country between black and white students. Increasingly, however, advocates highlight "summer slide" as a major contributor to that gap while putting more firepower behind efforts to counteract it.

The United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County has committed more than $100,000 this year to a fledgling partnership involving the Milwaukee Public Library, Hunger Task Force, Milwaukee Public Schools Recreation and other agencies to get more books in the hands of children who need them most, especially in July and August.
The library's long-running summer "Super Reader" program and card membership drives are still fixtures, but the new efforts are focused on taking many more books — worth more than $500,000 so far — and trained professionals into the community.

The summer reading effort started small last year with a grant from the Faye McBeath Foundation. The foundation was scheduled to sunset at the end of 2014, and now the United Way spearheads the multipronged effort, dubbed Stop Summer Slide.

One key part of it involves paying teachers to lead reading programs at three playground sites this summer, four times a week for about 90 minutes.

You could find Banini and teacher Barbara Mesropian spread out under the trees at Lindbergh Playground, at N. 16th and W. Nash streets, on a recent day. Blankets and bins of books attracted a few kids from the nearby basketball courts.

Within 30 minutes, about 10 children had grabbed books to read silently, and then aloud with the teachers. More children joined once the group stood to play a word rhyming game that involved tossing a ball back and forth around a big circle.

Mesropian said they choose a theme for each week, such as sports or inventions. The trick is to make reading seem fun and inviting, instead of a chore, and to model it — something many children with low reading skills may not see in their homes or communities.

"I like (reading) because it's relaxing," said Adreana Ruiz, 13, a student at South Milwaukee Middle School who spent her time at Lindbergh reading "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" on her phone.

Achievement gap

The efforts are critical in a city with such low youth literacy skills. Almost 90% of black children in Milwaukee Public Schools cannot read proficiently, compared with 62% of white children, according to the most recent state test score results.

To use another metric: 12% of poor kids in Milwaukee read proficiently; for kids who are not poor, reading proficiency triples to 36%.

It makes sense that all kids would lose some of their academic prowess in the summer. Researchers have found that regardless of income, all kids lose about two months of math skills. But the loss of reading skills in the summer splits sharply along socioeconomic lines. One study showed that while low-income students lost more than two months in reading achievement over the summer, their middle-class peers made slight gains.

Not surprisingly, access to quality reading materials is strongly related to the amount of time children read. And that becomes a major determinant of reading achievement, according to research compiled by Katie Pritchard, vice president of planning and evaluation for the IMPACT Planning Council. The council will be tracking and evaluating the actions of the Stop Summer Slide effort.

Other research obtained by the council shows more than six in 10 low-income families have absolutely no books in the home. For the low-income families that do have books in the home, the average number of children's books on hand is four.
That's why Stop Summer Slide organizers are keen to get many more books to central city families, along with other support.

Hunger Task Force meal sites are distributing free books at meal times. Another new effort involves pairing an MPS literacy coach with teenagers from the group Lead2Change, to train the older students how to help younger peers choose appropriate books, and engage them in reading.

Milwaukee's police and fire departments also are getting more involved.

Officers have walked the parks and distributed books as part of the effort, and a new program kicking off in August will feature police creating and maintaining "mini libraries" at McDonald's franchises in the city for kids to take home free books. Police will have 4,000 books to use to fill the libraries.

"One of the things we've done is expand our outreach efforts related to juveniles in the summer," said Milwaukee Police Capt. Peter Pierce.

Victoria Sanchez, school-age education specialist at Milwaukee Public Library, said she often reminds people how critical summer learning is, and how devastating summer slide can be to low-income children.

"We just need to keep being loud and clear about what we're doing and how imperative it is," she said.

Foundation helps out

Northwestern Mutual Life Foundation is jumping in with a separate focus on literacy.

Last month, the foundation announced it would donate $1.7 million in grants aimed at helping prepare city children to achieve third-grade reading proficiency. The goal is to improve reading instruction by bringing key organizations together to help support schools and teachers.

Nearly half the funding will support community collaborations, such as an ongoing effort at MPS' Carver Academy, 1900 N. 1st St., that has brought the district Schools that Can Milwaukee, City Year and Teach for America together to work on transforming the chronically low-achieving school. Another program getting a boost from the funding provides real-time coaching and training to educators to support reading instruction.

Preventing a 'summer slide' in reading, by Ryan Hurley in the Journal Sentinel on September 9, 2015

Studies show that when young people don't participate in summer learning opportunities they experience a "summer slide" — the loss of reading skills over the summer. "A conservative
estimate of lost instructional time is approximately two months, or roughly 22%, of the school year,“ according to the Johns Hopkins Center for Summer Learning.

In an effort to combat summer slide, Auer Avenue School participated in Milwaukee Public School's Summer Academy accompanied by a variety of community-based partnerships such as the Summer Reading Partnership.

Auer Avenue is one of four Milwaukee Public Schools that has adopted the Community School Model, a strategy that works to build the capacity of schools to better align partnerships and engage the surrounding community in order to serve the whole child. It’s beginning to take root at Auer Avenue, and this year’s Summer Academy allowed Auer to extend educational and community-based activities into the summer for the first time in many years.

This summer, thanks to the Summer Reading Partnership, an initiative of United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County, students participated in a variety of literacy activities such as a chess program that integrated the game with related books and vocabulary games. In a world dominated by fleeting interactions with technology, learning the game of chess integrated with literacy-based activities provided students an opportunity to develop analytical skills and a passion for reading. The Summer Reading Partnership also provided free book distribution during the summer meal program.

Students, families and community partners worked to redevelop Auer Avenue’s courtyard into an outdoor classroom by planting flowers, building picnic tables and installing an herb garden. This space was used throughout the summer for science-based reading exploration accompanied by family and community activities, such as Samba Drumming, thanks to a partnership with Wisconsin Conservatory of Music.

Fourth- through fifth-grade students at Auer worked with a local journalist to document the redevelopment of Moody Park, a Milwaukee County Park located on the same block as the school. Students took photographs of the construction process, researched the history of the park and it’s namesake Calvin C. Moody, and interviewed longtime Amani Neighborhood residents about their past experiences with the park (and the former Moody Pool) and their hopes for the future of the park. At the grand opening of the park in August, students released An Invitation to Moody Park, a book featuring their writings and photographs.

Community Learning Centers also provided extended day opportunities for students throughout the summer. At Auer, COA Youth and Family Services provided a wide variety of educational and recreational activities after Summer Academy. Auer Avenue School, COA Youth and Family Services, the revamped Moody Park and the newly opened Burke Early Childhood Center provide a one-block campus of incredible opportunity for youth and families throughout the summer and beyond.

From preventive health care such as Columbia St. Mary's SMART Smiles and free summer meals thanks to Hunger Task Force to Discovery World's educational adventures, summertime provides opportunities for continued access to rich educational and community-based activities.
The Community School Model views this work as necessary and integrated into the fabric of the school.

Auer students now are returning to a school building filled with their summer photographs and writings, a new outdoor classroom brimming with plant life and an oversized chessboard. These new additions highlight a productive summer and create the foundation for a successful school year.

Ryan Hurley is the Community School Coordinator at Auer Avenue School in Milwaukee. For more information about the Summer Reading Partnership and ways to get involved with helping kids succeed visit: UnitedWayGMWC.org/Stop-Summer-Slide.

VII. SHARP Literacy unveils mini libraries at local McDonald’s to encourage students reading before school is back in session, by Michele McCormack; CBS 58

In partnership with Milwaukee Police Department, McDonald’s, WaterStone Bank, United Way of Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha County and Milwaukee Public Schools, and Hunger Task Force, SHARP Literacy unveiled the creation of mini libraries at nearly two dozen local McDonald’s restaurants.

The libraries will be stocked with books for students to read and take home through August 23, or while supplies last. Books are being supplied by Stop Summer Slide! a group of agencies which, in addition to United Way, MPS and HTF, includes NewThreads of Hope, Milwaukee Public Libraries, MPS Rec, IMPACT Inc., and the Milwaukee Fire Department.

In addition, SHARP has partnered with MPD, McDonald's and WaterStone Bank to promote reading and healthy snacking through a reading challenge for elementary school students, August 3-9.

Through this program, students who pledge to read a book in August and bring it into one of 125 participating McDonald’s restaurants in southeastern Wisconsin will receive a free healthy snack to enjoy. Students may also pledge to read a book at a designated WaterStone Bank branch and receive a coupon for a McDonald’s healthy snack.

The program was featured Monday on "Our Stories with Michele" on the CBS 58 News at 4 p.m.
APPENDIX E: BEST PRACTICES IN SUMMER READING

Before engaging stakeholders in the initiative in 2013, IMPACT researched best practices of summer reading programs designed to prevent the summer slide across the country. Based on the literature, the following best practices were identified:

1. Include readers from cradle to grave.\(^8\)
2. Promote a variety of reading and listening formats as additional ways children and teens can participate.\(^9\)
3. Promote a variety of genres and diverse content in reading and listening materials.\(^10\)
4. Engage readers and listeners in fun activities that provide the opportunity to discuss the books they are reading and listening to, integrate these books into real world experiences.\(^11\)
5. Continue story times for young children and families.\(^12\)
6. Include English language learners and children and teens who speak foreign languages.\(^13\)
7. Partner with teachers and school librarians at local schools.\(^14\)
8. Reach out to and partner with local agencies and organizations that already work with local income and disadvantaged youth.\(^15\)
9. Give away free books for children and teens to keep and/or provide free library cards to children birth through high school graduation.\(^16\)

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\(^14\) Roman, S., Carran, D.T. & Fiore, C.D. (June 2010). *Public library summer reading programs close the summer reading gap*. River Forest, IL: Dominican University Graduate School of Library & Information Science.
