A Report to
United Way of Greater Milwaukee

A formative evaluation of the 2013 and 2014 Milwaukee Summer Reading Initiative

Prepared by IMPACT, Inc.

Fall, 2014
Acknowledgements

This report summarizes the work of the Milwaukee Summer Reading Initiative’s efforts in 2013 and 2014. The Faye McBeath Foundation was the primary funder for the 2013 and 2014 initiatives. Special thanks to Scott Gelzer, Executive Director, and Laura Mullen, Communications Director, for their leadership and coordinating efforts. In addition to the Faye McBeath Foundation’s support, other funders supported the initiative in 2014. The Daniel M Soref Trust, the R.A. Stevens Family Foundation, and United Way of Greater Milwaukee also provided financial support the initiative. The evaluation would not have been possible without the support of United Way of Greater Milwaukee.

More than 60 stakeholders have been engaged in generating ideas and planning the 2013 and 2014 initiatives. A complete list of stakeholders, including mini-grant recipients, can be found in Appendix A. In 2014, a strategy team oversaw the implementation of the project. Strategy team members included Nicole Angresano from United Way of Greater Milwaukee, Scott Gelzer from the Faye McBeath Foundation, Paula Kiely from the Milwaukee Public Library, Carrie Koss Vallejo as the Project Coordinator, Brian Litzy from Milwaukee Public School Recreation, Kathleen Pritchard from IMPACT, Victoria Sanchez from Milwaukee Public Library, Sandy Schroeder from Milwaukee Public Schools, Sherrie Tussler from the Hunger Task Force, and Brooke Vandeberg from the Milwaukee Public Library.

IMPACT staff on the evaluation team included Julie Whelan Capell, Director of Planning and Evaluation, and Michael Stevenson, Research Associate. In addition, Carrie Koss Vallejo, Assistant Planner, created maps for the report.

On the cover: A thank-you note written to the Hunger Task Force by a student who received one of the books distributed at a meal site during the summer of 2014.
Summary

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. This loss of learning 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. 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. Boys are more likely to experience the slide than girls, and the gap in academic achievement gets wider as youth get older.

Research shows that there are ways 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. 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.

The Summer Reading Initiative was a pilot effort launched over the course of two consecutive summers by the Faye McBeath Foundation in 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 possible focus. These included: making books readily available; 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 at the end of 2014, the board was interested in assuring future sustainability of the effort and United Way of Greater Milwaukee has agreed to support the work in 2015. To assure the success and sustainability of the effort, this report documents the initiative’s work from its commencement in early 2013 through the end of September 2014.

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2013 and 2014 Process

Initial Steps
Funding programs for children between ages one and thirteen has been a funding priority for the Faye McBeath Foundation throughout its grant making years. Specifically, the Foundation had interest in improving or maintaining reading skills year round and providing substantive enrichment programs that build student achievement in school, after school, and during the summer.

In the years prior to the initiative, the Faye McBeath Foundation saw an increased need for summer reading programs to reach more youth in Milwaukee. Although there were several successful existing programs in the City, the Foundation thought there was a need for a coordinated effort to reach youth not served by existing programs. The Foundation’s commitment to funding year-round academic programs made them a natural fit to coordinate a summer reading initiative.

The initiative was developed with idea generation as a guiding principle. Idea generation is an early stage in collective impact initiatives. The purpose is to build a strong foundation from which an impact initiative can form. The process emphasizes bringing valuable knowledge and diverse voices together to explore new ideas and build trust. The process also places a stronger emphasis on exploring possibilities and developing relationships than on achieving specific program-related outcomes.

Early in the development of the initiative, the Faye McBeath Foundation engaged IMPACT to support the effort. IMPACT offered technical assistance in identifying best practices, engaging stakeholders, planning, and evaluation.

Identifying Best Practices
Before engaging stakeholders in the initiative, 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.\(^10\)

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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.\(^{16}\)

The best practices identified were presented to stakeholders at planning meetings in early 2013. Stakeholders responded to the findings, confirming that they reflected their experiences delivering programs and working with youth. The identified practices guided stakeholders as they brainstormed ideas and made decisions about future directions of the initiative. Although stakeholders knew it was not possible to incorporate each best practice into a single program, they made sure their collaborative efforts were incorporating a variety of best practices. The list of best practices was also presented on and used throughout the 2014 initiative.

**Engaging Stakeholders**

The Faye McBeath Foundation and IMPACT cast a wide net in early 2013 to generate ideas and gauge levels of interest from community stakeholders. Approximately 20 individuals representing at least 15 organizations attended each of the first two Summer Reading Initiative meetings in 2013. Dates of these two meetings can be found on the summer reading initiative 2013 timeline (Figure 1). For the first meeting, stakeholders were invited to participate by the Faye McBeath Foundation. As the initiative grew, other stakeholders were invited to participate.

Representatives from the following categories were engaged in 2013:

- **The Milwaukee Public Library:** The library has its own summer reading program and one of the goals is to build on processes and practices that are already in place. In addition, it was clear the initiative would benefit from the expertise librarians have in coordinating successful reading initiatives.

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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.


• **The Milwaukee Public School System:** The public school system (including the Recreation Department) delivers reading curriculum to students throughout the school year and over the summer. Professionals from the system were invited to share what works well when they deliver summer programs to youth. They were also invited to consider adding reading components to existing programs.

• **Organizations with existing reading programs:** Organizations that were currently implementing reading programs were brought to the table to share what has worked well for them and how city-wide coordination could maximize their efforts. An example is SHARP Literacy.

• **Organizations serving the initiative’s target population:** Organizations that didn’t necessarily deliver summer reading programs, but worked with a population similar to one the initiative was trying to reach were invited to participate to share their experiences engaging youth and to look for potential ways to incorporate reading into existing programs. An example is the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Milwaukee.

After the first year of the initiative, the Faye McBeath Foundation decided that a smaller, more focused group should coordinate the 2014 summer reading initiative. With representation from the four categories outlined above, the smaller strategy team was responsible for laying the groundwork for an annual Milwaukee summer reading initiative. The primary goals of the strategy team were:

1. To raise broad community awareness of the importance of summer reading;
2. To enhance existing summer programs for children, adding or enhancing a reading component;
3. To provide a platform for new ideas and effective program expansion; and
4. To evaluate the 2014 summer reading initiative to create a better summer reading initiative in 2015.

In addition to the primary goals of the strategy team, a secondary goal from the Faye McBeath Foundation’s perspective was to foster coordination among agencies that may not have previously worked together. The team met once before the mini-grant applications were made available, once during the summer, and once after the initiative was complete. A complete list of stakeholders engaged in 2013 and 2014 can be found in Appendix A. The exact timing of the strategy team meetings can be found in Figure 2.

**Project Coordinator**

During the summer of 2014, the Faye McBeath Foundation supported the hiring of a part-time project coordinator. The need for a coordinator emerged out of a desire to have a dedicated staff person to trouble shoot problems and help implement strategies throughout the summer. In addition, the Foundation thought having a coordinator would help transition the initiative to a different funding agency with the sun-setting of the Faye McBeath Foundation. The Coordinator assisted in the implementation of the summer reading initiative from late April to September for approximately 20 hours per week. The coordinator’s role was to:
1. Serve as the project contact by receiving, directing and monitoring phone calls, email, and other correspondence regarding the Initiative;
2. Respond to and follow through on requests and ideas from the strategy team;
3. Track ideas, suggestions, and activities of multiple efforts to increase summer reading;
4. Suggest connections and add value to ideas generated;
5. Manage resources including delivering books, recruiting volunteers, and assisting with summer reading events; and
6. Set priorities and coordinate multiple efforts occurring in a relatively brief timeframe.

The coordinator also scheduled site visits at mini-grant locations and assisted in collecting preliminary data at the end of the summer. The summer reading coordinator was housed at IMPACT and supervised by staff from the Faye McBeath Foundation and IMPACT.

**Funding**

In May of 2013, the Faye McBeath Foundation approved a $35,000 budget for the implementation of the 2013 initiative. Of the total budget, $10,656 was used to fund mini-grants and $10,000 was awarded to support Marquette University’s Milwaukee Summer Reading Project. IMPACT was awarded $2,750 to provide technical assistance for planning, reviewing grants, convening meetings, and reporting.

In March of 2014, the Faye McBeath Foundation set aside $65,000 to support the 2014 summer initiative. Of the approved funds, $15,000 was awarded to NewThreads of Hope to acquire books, $13,000 was used for mini-grants, $8,000 was allocated to support the summer reading coordinator’s salary and responsibilities, $3,400 was awarded to IMPACT to assist in planning, $2,000 was used to help reimburse the Hunger Task Force for purchasing books, and $1,000 was awarded to SHARP Literacy to recognize their role in book contributions for summer reading. In addition to the funds set aside by the Foundation, the Faye McBeath Foundation also awarded $35,000 to the Milwaukee Public Library to build capacity around summer reading.

Other funders supported the initiative in 2014. The Daniel M Soref Trust provided $5,000 to Next Door to acquire more books at the end of the summer. In addition, the R.A. Stevens Family Foundation and United Way of Greater Milwaukee also provided financial support the initiative.

To help sustain the project after the Faye McBeath Foundation sun-sets at the end of 2014, the Foundation awarded $50,000 to United Way of Greater Milwaukee for the 2015 initiative and $35,000 to the Milwaukee Public Library to continue to build capacity around summer reading in 2015.

**Mini-Grants and Pilot Programs**

Mini-grants developed out of the Faye McBeath Foundation’s desire to support organizations already implementing youth summer programs by challenging them to think of creative ways to add a reading component. Grants were substantial enough to support an organization’s idea, but small enough that the organization could sustain the idea if funding was not available in future years. Grants ranged in size from $500 to $1,500 and supported a variety of projects across the city. Because the grants were relatively small, grantees had minimal reporting requirements.
In 2013, mini-grant applications were made available to stakeholders who had been engaged in the planning process of the initiative. After the strategy team was formed in 2014, mini-grants were made available to a broader audience, although many of the stakeholders who played an early role in the initiative were the primary organizations to apply.

Approximately 20 mini-grant applications were submitted each year of the initiative. Applications were reviewed by the Faye McBeath Foundation with support from IMPACT and the summer reading coordinator. Applications awarded funding were focused on summer reading, were creative in their approach to address the summer slide, and were able to be sustained by the applicant over future summers. Once an applicant was selected to receive funding, they were notified and funds were distributed immediately to the organization.

In 2013, ten mini-grants were awarded to eight different organizations totaling $10,656 in grant money. Table 1 has a list of 2013 mini-grant recipients and a short description describing the focus of the grant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Mini Grant Application Focus</th>
<th>Duration 2013</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Betty Brinn Children’s Museum</td>
<td>Neighborhood night at the museum; open two Little Free Libraries; promote summer reading through their marketing; distribute free books at Back-to-School Resource Fair</td>
<td>JUL-AUG</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys &amp; Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee</td>
<td>Establish a library at Camp Witcomb/Mason; purchase flashlights for campers to read at night; integrate reading time into camp schedule</td>
<td>AUG</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hmong American Peace Academy</td>
<td>Welcome package for K4 students to include a book to support transition into school</td>
<td>AUG</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee Public Library Foundation</td>
<td>Four-day reading festival at Center Street Library; daily reading activities</td>
<td>AUG</td>
<td>$1,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee Public Library Foundation</td>
<td>Reading events at local libraries to engage youth 0-16 and families; story time; book giveaways</td>
<td>AUG</td>
<td>$1,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee Public Schools Foundation</td>
<td>Documentary on impact of classroom and cultural activities; capturing youth voices through print and media</td>
<td>JUL</td>
<td>$955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee Public Schools Foundation</td>
<td>Reading buddies and reading mentors; development of art project; distribution of books</td>
<td>JUL</td>
<td>$1,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood House of Milwaukee</td>
<td>Preschool summer literacy initiative; fieldtrips to public library; purchase backpacks with books kids can check out</td>
<td>AUG</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Threads of Hope</td>
<td>Free book distribution to mini-grant recipients</td>
<td>AUG</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Day School</td>
<td>Reading minute logs; youth create project based on favorite book</td>
<td>AUG</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In 2014, $13,000 was awarded to nine mini-grant recipients. In contrast to 2013, the smallest grant awarded was $1,000. Table 2 has a list of 2014 mini-grant recipients.

### Table 2: 2014 mini-grant recipients: focus of application, program duration, and amount awarded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Mini Grant Application Focus</th>
<th>Duration 2014</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artists Working in Education</td>
<td>Integrate visual language arts in Milwaukee parks; one or two free books per youth; art based on literature</td>
<td>JUN-JUL</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee</td>
<td>Development of cabin journals (cabins write a story for future campers to read); personal journaling time</td>
<td>JUN-AUG</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical College of Wisconsin</td>
<td>Literacy promotion activities; free books for children; free reading glasses for adults</td>
<td>JUN-AUG</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee Public Library Foundation</td>
<td>Read-a-LOUDS; activities based on books</td>
<td>AUG</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee Public Schools Foundation</td>
<td>Distribution of five books to youth; summer reading log</td>
<td>JUL</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee Public Schools Foundation</td>
<td>Pairing special education students with regular education book buddies; development of art project; distribution of book</td>
<td>JUL</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood House</td>
<td>Fieldtrips to Bookworm Gardens ; reading about nature and experiencing what was read through activities</td>
<td>JUN-AUG</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neu-Life Community Development</td>
<td>High school students work with elementary students weekly; youth read six books over the summer; complementary activities to books</td>
<td>JUN-AUG</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Day School</td>
<td>Read-a-thon competition; students who read six books over the summer receive awards/prizes; individual and team competition</td>
<td>JUN-AUG</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2014, the Milwaukee Public Library also piloted Feed Your Body, Feed Your Mind: Reading in the Parks as part of the initiative. The program brought two trained library educators to five different Hunger Task Force Summer Meal sites once a week for eight weeks in July and August. The educators read to youth, planned literacy activities, and had youth read to each other. Youth were able to earn books by participating in the program.
**Book Acquisition & Distribution**

A goal of the 2014 initiative was to make new books readily available to a wide variety of readers. To meet this goal, a focus was placed on book acquisition. The Milwaukee Public Library helped determine what books were appropriate to acquire and what audience books would be best suited for. When available, a potential list of acquirable books was reviewed by Milwaukee Public Library staff to determine if the books were quality, interesting to youth, and age appropriate. Throughout the summer, new books were acquired from the following sources:

- **Mini-grants**: Many of the organizations used their mini-grants to purchase new books to give their program participants.
- **NewThreads of Hope**: This Milwaukee-based nonprofit links manufactures and retailers and their surplus products with community-based agencies. In 2014, NewThreads of Hope acquired over 25,000 new books that were distributed throughout Milwaukee.
- **SHARP Literacy**: SHARP Literacy is a Milwaukee-based nonprofit that works with urban youth to inspire them to become lifelong learners. In 2014, SHARP Literacy donated over 20,000 new books to support the summer reading initiative.
- **First Book**: A nonprofit that distributes free and low-cost books to youth, First Book donated 2,700 new books during the summer of 2014.
- **Other Organizations**: Other organizations donated smaller quantities of new books to support the initiative. These included organizations such as Kohl’s, Next Door, The Penworthy Company, and United Way of Greater Milwaukee/Molina Healthcare. Donations ranged in size from 500 to 1,200 books.

In 2013, books were distributed primarily by mini-grant awardees. In 2014, with a greater focus placed on book distribution, books were distributed through mini-grant programs and the Milwaukee Public Library’s pilot program, but also through the Hunger Task Force’s Summer Meal Program. Because the Hunger Task Force is already reaching low-resource neighborhoods through their meal program serving youth, collaborating with them to distribute books was a natural fit. Youth who visited summer meal sites had the opportunity to pick out and take home books a few times throughout the summer.

**Resource Hub & Reading Champions**

In 2014, stakeholders identified a need to create a resource hub. The goal of the hub was to act as a “one-stop-shop” for Milwaukee youth and families to access resources related to summer reading activities. Another component of the hub was to engage media, such as the Metroparent and the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, to report on summer reading activities.

Although the idea was generated and began to be developed in 2014, a resource hub was not implemented in its entirety. However, three articles were published in the Journal Sentinel and four were published in Metroparent. One of the articles in Metroparent highlighted all of the Summer Reading events that were taking place during the month of August. Copies of select articles can be found in Appendix B. In addition to published media, operators of Milwaukee’s 2-1-1 hotline also mentioned
that the Hunger Task Force’s Summer Meal Programs were distributing free books when a caller was looking for a summer meal site.

During the planning stages of the summer 2014 initiative, stakeholders also identified the need to have “reading champions” raise awareness and promote reading throughout the summer. In 2014, the following steps were taken to incorporate reading champions into the initiative.

- **Reading Leaders**: A group of approximately five high school students were brought to a Milwaukee Public School site to read to kindergarten students in late August. In addition to reading to youth, the group served as role models to show the students that reading can be fun.
- **Erin Richards**: A journalist for the Journal Sentinel wrote an article on her struggles with reading as a child and her path to become a professional journalist.
- **Mini-grant Reading Champions**: Several mini-grant recipients built on the idea of reading champions by having older youth read with or mentor younger youth in various activities.

**Timeline**

Timelines of key events and milestones for the 2013 and 2014 summer reading initiative can be found in Figures 1 Figure 2. The timelines provide a broad overview of the timing of events over the first two summers. The timelines are not comprehensive of all activities that occurred over each summer.
Figure 1: 2013 timeline of key events, deadlines, and milestones.

Milwaukee Summer Reading Initiative 2013

June 25, 2013
Mini-grant applications are released.

JUN–AUG 2013
Mini-grant: Small grant ($500 to $1500) designed to support Milwaukee-based initiatives helping low-resource youth avoid the summer slide.

JUN–AUG 2013
$10,555 in total funds are distributed between 10 mini-grants recipients.

January 23, 2013
The Faye McBeath Foundation starts a conversation with IMPACT Planning Council about engaging stakeholders around the summer slide.

February 28, 2013
Approximately 20 stakeholders from area summer reading programs are convened to discuss the possibility of a coordinated effort to address the summer slide.

March 6, 2013
The Faye McBeath Foundation Trustees allocate $35,000 to support the first year of the initiative.

September 24, 2013
Mini-grantees share their experiences, what worked well, and what could be improved in future years.

Summer Slide: Approximately 2 months of learning loss (22%) students who do not read over the summer experience.

Idea Generation: The first two years of the Summer Reading Initiative were guided by the principle of ‘Idea Generation.’
Figure 2: 2014 timeline of key events, deadlines, and milestones

**Milwaukee Summer Reading Initiative 2014**

- **April 29, 2014**
  Mini-grant request for applications released.

- **May 16, 2014**
  Mini-grant applications are due to the Faye McBeath Foundation.

- **May 28, 2014**
  $13,000 in total funds are distributed among 9 mini-grant recipients.

- **June-August 2014**
  52,219 books are distributed to youth through the Hunger Task Force Summer Meal Program.

- **June-August 2014**
  3,301 books are distributed to youth through mini-grant programs.

- **January 22, 2014**
  Summer 2014 kick-off meeting with over 20 stakeholders.

- **February 13, 2014**
  2nd planning meeting for 2014.

- **March 10, 2014**
  The Faye McBeath Foundation Trustees set aside $60,000 to support the second year of the initiative.

- **April 8, 2014**
  A strategy team is put together with diverse stakeholders to help coordinate and plan the 2014 initiative.

- **May 2014**
  A Summer Reading Coordinator (0.5 FTE) is hired to oversee summer reading efforts.

- **July 28, 2014**
  Mid-summer strategy team meeting.

- **July-August 2014**
  Mini-grantee site visits are conducted by the Summer Reading Coordinator.

- **September 22, 2014**
  Debrief meeting with mini-grantees.

- **October 7, 2014**
  Strategy team debrief meeting.

- **October-Dec 2014**
  Process documentation and evaluation by IMPACT Planning Council.

*Idea Generation:* The first two years of the Summer Reading Initiative were guided by the principle of 'Idea Generation.'
A thank-you note written to the Hunger Task Force by a student who received one of the books distributed at a meal site during the summer of 2014.
Early Indicators and Feedback on the 2013 and 2014 Initiatives

The focus of the first two years of the initiative was “idea generation.” Because emphasis was placed on engaging stakeholders and generating ideas from which future initiatives could build, reporting on outputs and outcomes was kept to a minimum during the first two years. However, there are some early indicators related to who the initiative has reached and how the initiative is functioning.

Data on mini-grants highlighted in this section is from mini-grant applications from 2013 and 2013, as well as a brief survey completed by recipients of the 2014 mini-grants. To solicit additional feedback on the perceived progress of the initiative, both mini-grant recipients and the strategy team participated in debrief meetings facilitated by IMPACT in October 2014. Questions asked during these meetings were 1) What worked well? 2) What might be improved? 3) When should we start next year? 4) Who else should be at the table? Three stakeholders from the strategy team were also engaged in key informant interviews to collect more specific feedback on what has worked well and what can be improved for future efforts. Questions asked in the key informant interviews can be found in Appendix C.

General Feedback from Stakeholders on the Initiative

In general, mini-grant recipients, the strategy team, and key informants believed that planning for the initiative should begin earlier. Although different stakeholders suggested different start months, the consensus was to begin planning in early winter to help move key dates (such as the mini-grant application deadline) and book acquisition earlier in the year. Stakeholders noted that the current timeline was rushed and that ideas were not able to be fully developed and implemented.

Mini-grant recipients, the strategy team, and key informants also noted that each program tracked reading differently. For example, some projects used the Milwaukee Public Library’s Super Reader method of tracking minutes, while other programs counted the number of books youth were reading. Some programs were not tracking this information at all. Mini-grant recipients suggested that the strategy team recommend a single way for programs to document reading. In addition, two key informants also mentioned that it was important to select one metric because it would shape the message the initiative sends to the community. For example, is the initiative putting emphasis on the number of books youth read, or is emphasis on having youth develop a habit of reading?

Lastly, mini-grant recipients and members of the strategy team suggested that work continue to be done by the initiative to ensure that programming is offered through the month of August. It should be noted that six out of nine mini-grants awarded in 2014 continued programming into August. However, one key informant suggested that these programs were reaching few youth in comparison to the scope of the issue and that the initiative should continue to think about ways to reach more youth through August programing.

“The community needs a simple metric, a simple message.”

-Key Informant
Demographics of Youth Served

Data on the number of participants and their demographics were not recorded during the first year of the initiative because focus was placed on generating new ideas and testing a process upon which the 2014 initiative could build. In 2014, mini-grant recipients self-reported these numbers. Table 3 shows the approximate number of youth served by each mini-grant program in 2014 by age, gender, and race.

Table 3: Approximate numbers of youth served by age, gender, and race for each 2014 mini-grantee.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MINI-GRANTS</th>
<th>Artists Working in Education</th>
<th>Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee</th>
<th>Medical College of Wisconsin</th>
<th>Milwaukee Public Library Foundation</th>
<th>Milwaukee Public Schools Foundation</th>
<th>Neighborhood House</th>
<th>Neur-Life Community Development</th>
<th>Urban Day School</th>
<th>Milwaukee Public Schools Foundation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL YOUTH SERVED</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>1687</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>120</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&lt;3</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 to 5</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 8</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 to 10</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>24%</td>
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<td>11 to 13</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
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Youth served through mini-grants were primarily between the ages of four and thirteen. With the exception of the mini-grant awarded to the Milwaukee Public Library, it appears that most mini-grants primarily served Black or African American youth. A couple of mini-grants also reached multiracial and Hispanic or Latino youth. It also appears that the mini-grants are reaching both females and males equally.
In addition to mini-grants, 345 youth were also engaged in programming through the Milwaukee Public Library’s *Feed Your Body, Feed Your Mind: Reading in the Parks* program. Still more youth received books through the Hunger Task Force Summer Meal Program. In 2014, the meal program served over 800,000 meals in low income neighborhoods throughout the city. Youth who attended some of these sites were gifted 52,219 new books to take home to read.

**Mini-Grant Locations**

The initiative’s target audience was youth living in low-resource neighborhoods. Low-resource neighborhoods were defined as those that are both low income and have limited access to a public library. Figure 3 shows where mini-grant sites were located in relationship to census poverty data and Milwaukee Public Library locations. Although these maps are helpful in identifying where mini-grant sites are located in relationship to low-resource neighborhoods, location did not determine if a mini-grant was awarded.

*Figure 3:* 2013 and 2014 mini-grant program locations, Milwaukee Public Library locations, and poverty levels by census track.
When discussing strengths of the 2014 initiative, mini-grantees mentioned the use of public space, (e.g. county parks, public libraries) to deliver programs. Grant recipients thought the locations were accessible to youth. To continue to build on this in future years, mini-grantees suggested that multiple programs consider using the same space so youth can attend multiple programs in a day or attend a reading program through another summer program at the same site.

Although mini-grantees and the strategy team thought they did a reasonable job reaching the target population, one key informant stressed the importance of continuing to make sure all elements of the initiative are focused on reaching the desired target population, low income youth and families.

**Number of Books Distributed**

The number of books distributed in 2013 was not recorded because focus was placed on generating new ideas and testing a process upon which the 2014 initiative could build; however, the number of books distributed in 2014 was documented.

During the 2014 initiative books were distributed through mini-grant programs, the Hunger Task Force’s Summer Meal Program, and through the Milwaukee Public Library’s *Feed Your Body, Feed your Mind: Reading in the Parks*. In total, 3,348 books were distributed to youth by mini-grant recipients. These books were primarily purchased with money awarded to mini-grantees. In addition to these books, 52,219 books were distributed to youth through the Hunger Task Force’s Summer Meal Program, and 345 were distributed through *Feed Your Body, Feed your Mind: Reading in the Parks*. Table 4 describes how the books were acquired and where they were distributed. In total 56,612 books were distributed to youth during the 2014 initiative.

During debrief meetings, the strategy team and mini-grant recipients discussed the availability of new books as a strength of the 2014 initiative. Youth were able to pick out free, new books at various sites throughout the summer. The strategy team agreed that involving the Hunger Task Force was a key factor in the initiative’s ability to successfully get books into the hand of a large number of youth. Although the organization does not provide literacy services, meal sites served as a distribution site for new books.

<table>
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<th>Acquired through:</th>
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<td>Kohl’s</td>
<td>Meal site</td>
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<td>Feed Your Body, Feed your Mind: Reading in the Parks</td>
<td>Meal site</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>56,612 books</strong></td>
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</table>

NOTE: Meal site= Hunger Task Force Summer Meal Site locations.
A key informant stressed the importance of continuing to make sure the books distributed are high quality, interesting, and age appropriate. The key informant also suggested that book distribution be accompanied with trained staff to help youth select appropriate books.

**Best Practices Utilized**

In 2013 mini-grant recipients were provided with a list of best practices—characteristics of successful summer reading programs—to consider while planning their programs. Although it was understood that no one program could utilize every best practice, mini-grantees were asked to be intentional about incorporating best practices to build on the success of other summer reading programs.

The 2013 mini-grant recipients were not asked to report on the best practices used to implement their program, but discussed them at a debrief meeting. At the end of summer 2014, mini-grant recipients self-identified the best practices they used in their program. Table 5 is a list of best practices, and the number of mini-grantees who self-identified incorporating the practice in the design and implementation of the program. Two of the best practices, *make learning fun* and *integrate hands-on activities*, were adopted by all 2014 mini-grantees who reported on use of best practices. Only one mini-grant incorporated *staff development activities* and *included readers from cradle to grave* into its programming.

Stakeholders engaged in 2014 also discussed best practices during the debrief meetings. 2014 mini-grant recipients discussed the strengths of intentionally building programming around a theme. According to mini-grantees, pairing books and activities with similar content enhanced the literacy experience for youth, keeping them engaged in the program. An example provided by a mini-grant recipient was reading books about mammals when activities about mammals were being undertaken.

During the debrief meetings stakeholders also discussed best practices that they thought needed more attention in future years. Mini-grant recipients noted the need to more intentionally engage families in their programs. Proposed ideas for engagement included holding a family celebration at the end of the summer so youth can show their families what they accomplished and broadening the defined target audience to more explicitly include families. One member of the strategy team interviewed stressed that engaging families was key to the success of the program and that more attention should be given to this next year. Members of the strategy team also recommended that the initiative reach out to other low resource neighborhoods that may include non-English speakers.
2014 was the first year a smaller group of individuals was responsible for overseeing the implementation of the initiative. Overall, the development of the strategy team was seen as a strength of the initiative. Specifically, members of the strategy team praised the work that had been accomplished collectively. They said people worked well together and responded to the call for action.

In addition, stakeholders noted that they were able to leverage resources as a result of the collaborative nature of the initiative. This included things such as working together to acquire books and solicit additional funding.

Although the creation of the strategy team was seen as a success, stakeholders thought the team should continue to examine who participates in the team. One recommendation was to include organizations focused on fatherhood. A key informant built on this idea emphasizing that engaging hospitals, barbers,
the police department, the fire department, and faith based organizations would add value to the team as they think about alternative ways to reach youth. Both mini-grantees and the strategy team also suggested getting youth engaged in the planning stages of the 2015 initiative to provide perspective that was missing from the planning in the past two years. Members of the strategy team suggested involving counselors and teachers earlier in the process to brainstorm new ideas to engage youth. According to the strategy team, these frontline staff have important insights that can be valuable for engaging youth in meaningful ways.

**Summer Reading Coordinator**

Similar to the strategy team, the role of the coordinator was new to the initiative in 2014. This role was valued by the strategy team and the key informants. The stakeholders discussed the value of having someone who was able to promptly respond to emails and other requests in a timely manner. One informant noted that this role was “critical” to the initiative. In addition, there were a couple things that the informants thought were accomplished in 2014 that wouldn’t have happened without the coordinator. They include:

1. **Acquiring books:** According to a stakeholder, the opportunities to acquire large quantities of books often happened with little notice and were somewhat time intensive. The coordinator was able to oversee the acquisition of these books by dedicating the amount of time needed to recruit volunteers and coordinate delivery.
2. **Responding to media:** Opportunities to feature the initiative in media also happened with a relatively short amount of time to respond. The coordinator was able to gather the necessary information from multiple stakeholders to meet media deadlines.

**Resource Hub & Reading Champions**

Key informants mentioned the need to continue to develop the resource hub. Specifically, informants thought it was important to utilize media that reaches the parents the initiative is trying to serve. Although the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and Metroparent play a prominent media role in the community, one key informant did not think they were reaching the target population. Another key informant thought that more neighborhood specific news sources could be better utilized to disseminate the initiative’s message.
According to key informants, the use of reading champions was also underdeveloped in 2014. Two key informants noted that it was important that they feature youth who “look like the kids.” It was thought that these youth could be featured in media targeted at youth encouraging them to read. Stakeholders also suggested that youth become involved in the initiative by becoming book ambassadors through a program similar to *Earn and Learn*, which would compensate youth for helping implement programs at mini-grant sites across the city.
Logic Model and Measuring Success

Throughout the first two years of the initiative, stakeholders participated in a series of meetings to generate ideas on what the initiative might look like. In the second year these ideas became more concrete and focused. Based on meeting notes capturing stakeholders’ point of view, IMPACT drafted a logic model to begin to formalize some of those ideas. Key stakeholders were engaged in providing feedback to ensure that it was accurate and relevant. A copy of the logic model can be found in Figure 4.

In particular, how the initiative measures reading achievement will need attention from the strategy team in 2015. There are two common ways to track the success of programs designed to reduce the summer slide: record the number of minutes a student reads or record the number of books. Recording the number of minutes a student reads is used by the Milwaukee Public Library for their summer reading program. Although tracking minutes is common among summer reading programs, the number of books read during the summer has been consistently related to academic gains. It has been found that as reading four to five books is potentially large enough to prevent a decline in reading achievement. However, children in every income group who read six or more books over the summer gained more reading achievement than children who did not.


**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.

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<th>Activities</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Summer meal sites</td>
<td>Number of times resource hub accessed</td>
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**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 (verses other programs offered).
Recommendations

Information gathered for this report via a review of program documents and by key informant interviews suggests that following recommended next steps for the initiative:

**Begin planning the initiative earlier in the year:** Feedback from the mini-grant recipients, strategy team members, and key informants noted that the timeline should be adjusted for future initiatives to allow for earlier planning to occur. Among the suggestions were to reconvene the strategy team in December and move mini-grant deadlines earlier in the spring. A proposed timeline can be found in figure 5 suggesting when key events and planning stages could occur.

**Continue to convene a strategy team and support the hiring of a summer coordinator:** The strategy team and the summer reading coordinator were new to the 2014 initiative and both were seen as positive additions. Although the composition of the strategy team may evolve over time, it is recommended that a small, nimble team continue to prioritize strategies and oversee the coordination effort. Having dedicated staff available to assist with the day-to-day implementation of strategies will ensure the initiative is able to meet its goals.

**Pick one metric for measuring summer reading, and use it universally:** Moving forward, it is recommended that the initiative select one method to measure summer reading (6 books or number of minutes read). Although both methods were discussed in the planning stages of the initiative, a consistent method has not been universally used and this has been confusing for the various stakeholders engaged in the initiative. Increased clarity would also make it easier to create consistent media messaging.

**Continue to focus on integrating best practices into mini-grants, specifically:**

- **Engage readers from cradle to grave, including parents:** Only one mini-grant recipient in 2014 included readers from cradle to grave. The initiative should consider supporting programs that include a broader range of readers. This may be accomplished by partnering with organizations such as the Department on Aging. Additionally, four mini-grantees included parents in their programing. Engaging parents will help build relationships that are important for youth to be successful in reading.

- **Increase librarian or teacher involvement in implementing summer reading programs:** A best practice of summer reading programs is to utilize librarians and teachers in implementing programs. In 2014, two out of eight mini-grants self-reported using this best practice. To increase the use of this best practices the initiative might want to consider purchasing public librarians, school librarians, or library science masters student’s time to consult with mini-grant recipients. Utilizing this expertise might strengthen programs by offering expertise they may not have internal access to.
Include more non-English learners in mini-grant programming: In 2014, five mini-grantees self-reported engaging non-English learners in their programs. Making non-English programming more widely available would allow the initiative to reach more youth in their target audience.

Continue to embrace new ideas and engage new stakeholders, but dedicate the time and resources necessary to implement existing strategies: It is important that the initiative continue to be open to new ideas presented by various stakeholders. However, it is also important the initiative dedicate the time and resources necessary to implement existing strategies the strategy team already has consensus on-- the resource hub and reading champions.
Figure 5: A proposed 2015 timeline of key events, deadlines, and milestones.
Appendices

Appendix A: 2013 and 2014 Stakeholders
Appendix B: Select News Articles
Appendix C: Key Informant Interview Questions
## Appendix A: 2013 and 2014 Stakeholders Engaged in the Initiative

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<th>Name</th>
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Appendix B: Select Media Articles

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: June 21, 2014

PREVENT A SUMMER READING SLIDE, by the 2014 Strategy Team-- Imagine a city where every child reads at grade level and returns to school in the fall prepared to start the school year where he or she left off. Imagine the impact on our community and economy when children are performing at or above grade level. Reading over the summer can prevent summer slide and bring all children closer to this goal. This is our vision.

The risk of summer slide — the loss of knowledge and skills learned during the school year — is a serious problem. We know that children who don’t read over the summer lose approximately two months of school progress. This loss is more common among boys, children in low-resourced neighborhoods and children from low-income homes. This loss is cumulative. Research shows this loss accounts for up to 80% of the achievement gap between low- and high-income students.

This summer, a new community effort spearheaded by the Faye McBeath Foundation and joined by the Milwaukee Public Library, Milwaukee Public Schools, Milwaukee Recreation, Hunger Task Force, IMPACT Planning Council, United Way of Greater Milwaukee, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Metroparent and others will get books into the hands of those who need them most.

This commitment will stress the importance of reading in some of the hardest to reach areas of the city — places where poverty is widespread and most children receive their meals for the day at a Free Summer Meal Site. This effort will bring the library to them. It will ensure access to interesting and appropriate books, and provide adult guidance for selecting reading materials that interest children. Every child deserves this opportunity.

Starting June 23, Free Summer Meal Sites will begin serving thousands of free meals in parks and on playgrounds throughout the area. We know children who lack access to food also likely lack access to books. To meet this need, the Milwaukee Public Library will visit a different Milwaukee Recreation playground each day — Mitchell Park, Carmen Park, Merrill Park, Woodlands playground and Modrzejewski playground — Monday through Friday with library books, read alouds and book-related programs from 2:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. throughout the summer. Free books will be given to children who spend time reading at the sites. Hunger Task Force will also distribute thousands more free books at other meal sites thanks to a donation from New Threads of Hope and United Way of Greater Milwaukee.

Reading is fundamental to success in school and life. With 43% of our city’s children living in poverty, we must all ask what we can do to help kids read this summer. Here’s how you can help:

- Encourage kids to choose their own books — summer reading should be pleasure reading.
- Read aloud to children.
- Stock the Little Free Libraries in your part of town: littlefreelibrary.org. Take the children in your life to get library cards and sign them up for the reading program: www.mpl.org/SummerReading.
- Volunteer. Call Heather Aschoff at Milwaukee Public Schools for summer reading volunteer opportunities (414) 773-9823.
- Donate books to the Hunger Task Force for distribution at summer meal sites. Find a list of recommended books for reading at: www.mpl.org/SummerReading or call Brooke VandeBerg (414) 286-3032.
- Sort donated books. Call Marie Jewell at the Hunger Task Force to sort books that will be distributed at summer meal sites (414) 238-6498.

This commentary was written by Scott Gelzer of the Faye McBeath Foundation; Paula Kiely of the Milwaukee Public Library; Sherrie Tussler of the Hunger Task Force; Nicole Angresano of the United Way of Greater Milwaukee; and Kathleen Pritchard of IMPACT.

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Metroparent: June 30, 2014

8 THINGS YOU CAN DO THIS SUMMER TO KEEP YOUR CHILD READING, by Erin Richards-- I entered 1st grade not knowing how to read. I was 6, and my family had moved from a suburb close to St. Louis to one farther from the city, where children learned the basics of reading in kindergarten. The school I left didn’t teach reading until 1st grade. I was placed in the lowest literacy group, and because I wasn’t accustomed to being placed in the lowest anything, I was devastated. I caught up. And I eventually started to devour Billy and Blaze storybooks, then the Saddle Club series (I was into horses), and Roald Dahl novels and Shel Silverstein poetry and Calvin and Hobbes comics.

According to researchers, all that time I spent reading extra books over summer vacation likely gave me an advantage over my non-reading peers at the time, especially those from low-income families with less access to intellectually stimulating material over a two-and-a-half-month break from school.

A new perspective- Now, as the education reporter for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, I spend an enormous amount of time studying how children learn, from their first day at kindergarten to their last month of senior year.

I sit in tiny chairs in classrooms and whisper questions to my neighbors. I study homework assignments and look at quizzes. I interview teachers, parents, principals, superintendents and lawmakers daily.

They all agree: If students don’t learn to read well, their prospects of performing well in high school, graduating and going to post-secondary school or vocational training go down. Their prospects of dropping out, being under-employed, and relying long-term on public assistance go up.
That’s why this summer, several organizations already invested in education—like the Milwaukee Public Library and Milwaukee Public Schools—are strengthening partnerships to bring even more attention to the importance of summer reading.

Why? Because the simple act of reading just six books over summer can stem the tide of the so-called summer slide, or the well-documented loss of up to two months of learning that afflicts children, especially low-income children, who don’t read or do much of anything education-related over break.

**Everyone should participate**—The Journal Sentinel and Metroparent are getting involved in the ramped-up effort as well. A literate population is important to the economy and to the health of our city, region and state, and we’re all negatively affected if young people don’t grow up well-prepared for life after school.

In short: We all stand to benefit if more kids read over the summer.

Here are eight things you can do during the summer break, at home or for the community, to also reinforce the importance of reading:

1. **Host a family** literacy celebration, such as inviting adults that know your kids to attend an event focused on the importance of families reading together. I spoke at Ben Franklin Elementary’s reading day this school year, about my work and how it involved reading and writing every day. Meanwhile, all the children were dressed up as their favorite books, from Laura Ingalls Wilder to Where’s Waldo. It was great fun for everyone.

2. **Listen to books** on CD together. Pop in an engaging novel during road trips and long car rides around town. Talk about what the characters are doing.

3. **Share reading time.** Read the same book at the same time so you can talk about it. And don’t underestimate story time for big kids. Carver Academy in Milwaukee, a tough K-8 school that’s going through a lot of changes, has middle-school teachers read out loud to their kids for 10 minutes or so when they come back to their classrooms from lunch. Leaders say it’s done wonders to calm students down after a normally bumpy transition from a rollicking lunchroom.

4. **Don’t forget to read in public.** Or read around the house, not just when you get into bed. Model the behavior you want your children to find important.

5. **Have lots of books around.** Seems simple, but experts say it’s important to always have a variety of reading material handy for children to choose from.

   *And in the community?*

6. **Donate the right books.** Don’t expect that all your child’s old books are going to be the right kind of books for kids from a different part of the city, or from different racial or socioeconomic backgrounds. Increasingly, literacy organizations are tailoring the kinds of books they offer to needy students and letting them choose from a variety of titles they’ll likely find appealing, rather than simply giving them whatever material comes in. If you’d like to find out what titles
are in high-need, or otherwise get involved in the new summer reading effort, contact the Milwaukee Public Library spokeswoman at (414) 86-3032 or brooke.vandeberg@milwaukee.gov.

7. **Support successful programs.** Participate in the library’s reading program, and sign up for a library card. Find other programs to support with your checkbook or your time, like the Milwaukee Summer Reading Project.

Former MPS superintendent and education activist Howard Fuller created that program four years ago in response to national test score results that showed Milwaukee’s black 4th grade students had lower reading scores than their peers in any other part of the country. Last year the program served 152 elementary school students and helped most improve their reading and literacy skills during a 6-week program at area schools.

Today the project is still going strong. Last year it served more than 120 students, who attended 6-week programs at area schools to focus on reading and literacy activities. All showed improvement in reading and literacy achievement measures.

8. **Buddy up.** If your child attends a high-performing or highly resourced school, ask if the school has any partnerships with less advantaged schools in the area. One private Milwaukee school I wrote about years ago established pen pals with children at a suburban school, and some of the experiences children shared with each other through letters about their lives were profound.

_Erin Richards is a news reporter who covers K-12 education for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. Her favorite book as a kid was Dinah and Virginia, a story about a girl who receives a talking horse._

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**Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: August 15, 2014**

**GROUPS TO FINISH OUT SUMMER READING PROGRAMS AIMED AT PREVENTING ‘BRAIN DRAIN’,**

_by Robert Gebelhoff--_

Milwaukee kids got their hands on an estimated 60,000 brand new books this summer at free meal sites this summer so far.

That’s according to Sherrie Tussler, executive director of Milwaukee’s Hunger Task Force, which was in charge of distributing the books donated by a list of groups interested in improving reading scores among Milwaukee students.

“The effort has been good overall, and the kids love the books,” Tussler said. “When we give out the books, kids look at them and say, ‘Can we keep it?’”

A surplus of studies show that reading outside of school is linked to higher academic gains, and that kids who do not read during the summer months often lose knowledge and skills they learned during the previous school years.
This so-called “summer slide” is especially common among low-income children, and experts say kids only have to read a minimum of six books to stave off the “brain drain.”

The mission to increase summer reading was set at the beginning of the summer to get books into the hands of students, with groups like Milwaukee Public Schools, MPS Recreation, the Boys & Girls Clubs, United Way and the Impact Planning Council signing on to strategies that would increase community emphasis on reading.

In addition, the Milwaukee Public Library put forth efforts to increase participation in its Super Reader Summer Reading Program, with some library staff joining kids at playgrounds throughout the city to share books and reading activities.

Students that complete the program are able to win free books and other prizes.

While the effects of these efforts have yet to be seen in the upcoming school year, Tussler said she is optimistic a change has been made.

“Because they’re being fed and because they’ve been reading, they’ll hopefully come back ready to learn,” she said.

Although school is only a few weeks away, the summer reading programs will continue until throughout the August “end zone.”

The Super Reader program ends Aug. 28, and librarians will continue to join kids at playgrounds until Aug. 22. Other programs through the Boys & Girls Clubs, the Neighborhood House of Milwaukee, New Life Community Development and Urban Day will continue throughout the month.
Appendix C: Key Informant Questions

1. Briefly describe your involvement with the initiative to date.

2. A primary strategy of the initiative has been to award mini-grants to organizations implementing summer reading programs. Can you speak a little bit about what the funding helped the initiative achieve that wouldn’t have been possible without it?

3. Many stakeholders were engaged in the early planning meetings of the initiative. In 2014, it was decided that a smaller group of individuals would coordinate the efforts. In your opinion, what were the strengths of having a strategy team coordinating the efforts in 2014?

4. In 2014, a summer reading coordinator hired. Based on your involvement, what role do you think the coordinator played in the initiative? Is there anything you think that wouldn’t have been possible without someone in this role?

5. Do you have any suggestions or recommendations for the initiative going forward?