

Stabilizing and Increasing Students' Reading Levels through Summer Programming

Woodford County Public Schools

Versailles, Kentucky

The Challenges

Critically low attendance rates for WCPS students during traditional summer programming have impeded the district's ability to prevent academic regression. Often students return to school in the fall with assessment scores below where they were in the spring. Consequently, teachers begin the school year devoting countless hours to review and remedial work rather than promptly building upon previously learned skills.

Although summer programming is intended to prevent the summer slide, the conventional model, which was essentially viewed as a mere extension of the regular school year, had overwhelmingly failed WCPS students. Student attendance rates in recent years dropped to the point where Jimmy Brehm, Chief Academic Officer of WCPS, says educators became unmotivated to teach over the summer. In short, a negative feedback loop developed consisting of educators unwilling to teach, student attendance rates dropping, and reading levels regressing. According to Brehm, "It was frustrating for everyone."

Goal

Upon learning about LitCamp, Brehm instantly recognized its potential to address the attendance challenges facing WCPS during the summer months. Able to target literacy goals without the trappings of an ordinary school day, LitCamp stood apart from traditional summer programming.

DISTRICT SNAPSHOT

The Woodford County Public Schools (WCPS) are located outside of historic Lexington, Kentucky. Comprised of 4,200 PreK–12 students in seven schools, WCPS are committed to the district's mission to provide challenging learning opportunities for all of its students.

ETHNICITY

- White: **76.7%**
- African American: **3.7%**
- Hispanic: **14.3%**
- Asian: **1%**

45%
of students eligible for
free or reduced meal
services

15
languages
represented



Both our staff and students LOVED the camp concept, specifically the bunks and songs. The lesson plans were well developed and easy to follow.

—Shelby Ison,
Northside Elementary Curriculum Coach

Implementation

- **12 Sessions:** In the summer of 2018, LitCamp was offered to WCPS's most vulnerable K–5 students on Tuesday and Thursday mornings for three hours during a six-week period. These “striving readers” were students reading at or below the 25th percentile.
- **Six Sessions:** On Wednesday mornings during the same six-week period, LitCamp was available to all K–5 students, regardless of reading level.
- **Teacher Training:** Educators completed a one-hour LitCamp training session prior to the start of the program.

Results

LitCamp has far exceeded the expectations of educators and administrators across the WCPS district. Not only did LitCamp successfully address the low attendance rates facing WCPS's previous summer programming efforts, it simultaneously stabilized—and increased—students' reading levels.

- Attendance rates rose from below 50% each day in previous years to an average of 80% each day with LitCamp.
- Striving readers' RIT scores rose by an average of three points by the end of 12 LitCamp sessions.



The books were absolutely beautiful and highly engaging. We are looking forward to our next LitCamp!

— Shelby Ison,
Northside Elementary Curriculum Coach

Why LitCamp?

The engaging and accessible theme of LitCamp immediately captured the attention of WCPS teachers and students alike, and promised an entirely different approach to summer programming. Results from the six-week session confirm that the program's literacy-rich, meaningful experiences—using authentic texts—positively impacted student attendance rates and reading levels.

Overall Benefits for Educators

- The LitCamp training session is brief, succinct, and comprehensive—and designed to accommodate the inherent time constraints of summer.
- Teachers and instructional assistants report that the lessons are easy to follow and intuitive.

Overall Benefits for Students

- Increased student commitment to literacy progress as evidenced by significantly higher attendance rates
- Elevated exposure to authentic texts
- Improved or maintained student reading levels for the majority of participants as indicated by pre- and post-program reading assessment data

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