

UConn

NEAG SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

READING AND LANGUAGE ARTS
CENTER

A person wearing a cap and glasses is shown in profile, reading a book. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter and is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the page.

Designing an Effective Summer Reading Program for Your Students

Engaging students in a summer reading program can be a challenge.

Summer is an important and exciting time in students' literacy development, but it can be tricky to fund, staff, and design exciting and engaging summer reading programs.

For creative strategies and fresh ideas you can use in designing your summer reading program, explore the top recommendations compiled here by UConn's Reading and Language Arts Center in collaboration with literacy leaders from across Connecticut.

In addition, check out two noncredit, online courses at UConn this summer; each course is designed for educators interested in bringing their summer reading program effectiveness to the next level.

A Three-Part Approach

Consider a multidimensional approach when planning your summer reading program:

Culture of reading

(How can I motivate my students to engage in summer reading?)

Your Summer Reading Program

Cognitive skill development

(What skills and knowledge do I want to see instilled in my students through summer reading?)

Social and community elements

(How, with whom, and why should I engage with available community resources to promote summer reading?)

5 Key Strategies

1

Build on community resources. Connect with libraries, parks and recreation departments, or local businesses or chambers of commerce.

2

Consider new ways of staffing your program. Partner with local universities by offering student internships or give high school students a chance to fulfill community service requirements; hire one point person to locate necessary resources; allow your staff a flexible schedule to maximize their availability.

3

Reach your students where they are. Create engaging social opportunities: Host a school-community get-together for students, teachers, and families; hold events in settings beyond schools (a park or local bookstore); make a personal phone call inviting a student and their family to an event.

4

Reading practice may need support. Some students may need support in order to learn from independent reading, while others may benefit from enrichment and challenging texts. Connect students to teachers they know or older classmates they trust. Invite students to make their own summer reading choices and set goals based on their individual interests.

5

Keep programming fun. Honor the other ways in which students are reading — whether that's through comic books, video games, cookbooks, or audiobooks. Invite them to come together via social media, such as through TikTok videos or Facebook groups, to talk about their reading choices.

Summer Reading Activity and Engagement Ideas

- Community book fairs that offer free/low-cost books to students
- Gamified activities such as geocaching and scavenger hunts
- Prizes, including writing journals, audiobook subscriptions, movie tickets, or apparel (joggers, hats)
- Summer reading kickoff event at a local library or parks and recreation location
- Free giveaways of books and journals for students
- Book lists (invite student recommendations!)
- Author visits
- Virtual writing and storytelling spaces or classes
- Connections with other readers and writers, including YouTube videos by authors or students or podcast episodes for kids



Join Us for UConn's Noncredit Courses

Check out one or more of our online summer courses available beginning in June 2021. Register online at reading.education.uconn.edu.

- **Tutoring That Makes a Difference** — Research shows that minimally trained tutors can make a significant difference in reading growth in a short amount of time. This introductory course is designed for individuals without previous teaching experience interested in tutoring students in reading. Learn 5 key research-based tools and strategies that will ensure high-powered outcomes from informal tutoring (Beach¹, 2021).
- **Targeted Tutoring for Acceleration** — This set of special topics courses are designed for educators working with students who have struggled with reading development and need intensive, expert support. Research indicates (e.g. Kelcey², 2011; McCutchen et al.³, 2009) that teachers with greater knowledge of reading processes produce more significant effects on students' reading comprehension, vocabulary, and word reading. Develop this expertise by engaging with self-paced, scenario-based mini-courses focused on common challenges in literacy development from grades K-12. Topics include moving past the plateau after mastering short and long vowel patterns, using writing to support word recognition, children, reading multisyllabic words, inclusive and antiracist literacies and more. All courses are designed through collaboration between reading researchers, and full time educators with decades of practical experience generating and vetting research evidence in practice (see the [RLAC Fellows page](#)).

Take two or more courses for a 10% discount, or get access to all available courses for a total of \$250. Group discounts are also available. Visit reading.education.uconn.edu for additional information and course offerings!

¹ Beach, K. D., & Traga Philippakos, Z. A. (2021). Effects of a summer reading intervention on the reading performance of elementary grade students from low-income families. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 37(2), 169-189.

² Kelcey, B. (2011). Assessing the effects of teachers' reading knowledge on students' achievement using multilevel propensity score stratification. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 33(4), 458-482.

³ McCutchen, D., Green, L., Abbott, R. D., & Sanders, E. A. (2009). Further evidence for teacher knowledge: Supporting struggling readers in grades three through five. *Reading and Writing*, 22(4), 401-423.

Additional Resources

Whether you want to help students accelerate their literacy skills or continue to engage them in reading, there are a wealth of additional possibilities at your fingertips.

In need of funding? Apply for a grant!

- [Believe in Reading](#)
- [Build-A-Bear Literacy and Education Grants](#)
- [Fund for Greater Hartford](#)

Looking for staff? Consider those individuals in your community who may be able to serve as teachers, tutors, event or transportation staff, or a point person for your reading program who can field questions or distribute materials.

- Paraprofessionals
- College student volunteers
- Retired community members
- High school students who need to fulfill community service hours

Want to reach families in your community?

- Partner with your [local library or parks and recreation department](#)
- Personally invite students or their families through phone calls, Facebook event invitations, or emails
- Allow your students' siblings to attend events
- Connect virtually with your audiences through Facebook groups, TikTok videos, your school's Twitter feed, etc.

Developing curriculum?

- General curriculum resources:
 - [Reading Rockets Summer Reading Featured Resources](#) and [Adventures in Summer Learning](#)
 - [Richard Allington on Summer Reading](#)
 - [Donalyn Miller and Colby Sharp on Book Access](#)
- [Parent-friendly resources for young children](#)
- Upper elementary, middle school, and high school resources:
 - Gholdy Muhammad on [Historically Responsive Literacy](#)
 - [Lesson Plan Examples](#)
- For students of all ages:
 - [Learning Expeditions](#)
 - [Resources on Building a Summer Expedition](#)
 - [Instructables](#)

Seeking further insights?

- ConneCT Kids: [Connecticut-Specific Resources](#)
- [Summer Bootcamp Series](#)
- ASPIRE Survey: [Mine your community for meaningful engagement](#)
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