ASSOCIATION FOR LIBRARY SERVICE TO CHILDREN

Learning Beyond

21st Century **SUMMER** *and* **OUT OF SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS** *for youth*

Created by the ALSC Summer-Out of School Time Task Force

DEAR ALSC MEMBERS

Summer and out-of-school time have long been a priority for public libraries serving children and families. Finding new and proven approaches to deepen our work with the nation's children is core to ALSC and our vision for service to children. This toolkit and the more than six years of work, thinking, and research that have gone into it through the Planning Task Force and two ALSC sponsored task force terms symbolize the commitment and dedication of ALSC to meeting the changing needs of children in libraries. I would like to thank the teams who led this work for their time and vision.

COVID-19 has shown a bright spotlight on the many disparities facing our children of color and those living in poverty. We need new solutions for serving children in a rapidly changing technological age that is marked by the urgency of working in global teams. This toolkit aligns best practices from around the country with successful strategies for deepening outcomes for all our youth. It builds on ALSC's core competency of equity with a mandate to reach deep into our communities. I am excited for you to take these principles and build on them to develop culturally responsive, outcome-aligned programs with your communities.

Summer and out-of-school time have a new and urgent place in the conversation of the important role of libraries equitably serving youth. I hope this toolkit helps you align your services and widen your path to serving your community with equity, greater access, and with the intent to help close the opportunity gaps for all children.

Lucia Gonzalez
ALSC President

▸▸ SECTION 1

SUMMER IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Contributor: Liz McChesney, Senior Advisor in Youth Services, Chicago, IL

Even before COVID-19, as libraries have settled into the 21st century, there has been a new focus on critical out-of-school-time learning and skill attainment for youth. Coupled with the imperative work to build equity and close gaps for our communities, libraries must rethink how and why programs are offered. As America grapples with racial inequities, and the learning gaps created by loss of opportunity and access, this is the time to find new solutions for the children who need us most.

The foundation of this work was laid by the Institute of Museum and Library Service (IMLS), which early in the 21st century suggested the blurring of a line for *how* and *when* we learn. Furthermore, the ILMS called out the fact that the lines between formal and informal learning were blending in this new century. The IMLS (2009) indicates that library users expect library staff to act as "partners to enhance the learning systems across a community." Dubbed "21st century skills," the IMLS called out the "4 C's" of successful 21st century learning: Communication, Collaboration, Creativity, and Critical Thinking. Building a successful program around the "4 C's" requires us to find new ways to design, create, implement, and evaluate learning.

Summer provides children with an opportune time to take advantage of interest-driven and project-based learning. Children can build on their school-year learning with access to experiential learning in the form of arts-based programs, STEM programs, and programs that are active and engage youth. In fact, research indicates that active learning programs accelerate critical thinking and engagement with content. Active learning deepens critical thinking and concentration skills: all necessary for success in the 21st century.

Building on the success of traditional summer reading programs and expanding these programs to include experiential and hands-on learning is essential for 21st century youth. Libraries can

There are six pillars of successful out-of-school time STEM that are called out by John Baek (2013) and Paul Dusenberry at the University of Washington Institute for Science and Math Education (nap.edu) and can be applied in the public library. Library patrons will:

1. Experience excitement, interest, and motivation to learn about phenomena in the natural and physical world.
2. Come to generate, understand, remember, and use concepts, explanations, arguments, models, and facts related to science.
3. Manipulate, test, explore, predict, question, observe, and make sense of the natural and physical world.
4. Reflect on science as a way of knowing processes, concepts, and institutions of science; and on their own process of learning about phenomena.
5. Participate in scientific activities and learning practices with others, using scientific language and tools.
6. Think about themselves as science learners and develop an identity as someone who knows about, uses, and sometimes contributes to science.

provide access to programs and content that build critical skills for youth success in school, the workforce, and life. Like reading, these skills are essential for a well-equipped developing work force. These skills include adoption of the IMLS standards for 21st century learning such as digital literacy, critical thinking skills, collaboration skills, and growth mindset (being able to learn from failure and persist with grit and stamina). Libraries help children deepen their engagement and learning experience when we deepen our summer experiences and offerings.

TAKING IT DEEPER

Summer and out-of-school time offers tremendous opportunity for youth in the US. It is also the time of immense inequity leading to learning loss for children who lack access to high-quality programs and services, traditionally children of color and those living in poverty. The public library can play an important role in stanching the summer slide when we align to 21st century learning skills. Libraries have traditionally offered a recreational reading-based summer program that is augmented with programs and prizes. But to really help children bridge the divide between the school years, we must find new ways to align our services and programs. Aaron Dworkin, CEO of the National Summer Learning Association, states, "Summer is inherently a time of transition: from one grade to another, from one type of day to another, and as such, it is a time of vulnerability and in that vulnerability comes an openness to learn". Libraries capitalize on this by offering programs aligned with

national 21st century learning priorities such as STEM/STEAM and co-created, youth-voice-driven programs. Building equity into summer is critical. In the 21st century, we must reach well beyond our doors to find new solutions and ways to reach our children who have been most impacted by systemic racism and institutionalized poverty. The expanded library summer learning program is a beautiful bridge that upholds all of ALSC's core values.

FIVE THINGS TO KNOW

1. **21ST CENTURY SKILLS.** STEM/STEAM is an appropriate way public libraries can pivot to include critical 21st century skills. These skills were called out by the IMLS as important for learners in the 21st century. The IMLS has adopted these skills for libraries and museums. The "4 C's" of 21st century learning for libraries are Creativity, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, and Communication. By building these into STEM programming, public library programs are positioned to meet the changing needs of our country's youth. The pandemic has spotlighted the urgent need for science literacy and the ability to apply critical thinking skills to make the best decisions possible. Additionally, all learning theories indicate humans learn better through hands-on experiences. Well-crafted STEM learning helps drive positive and appropriate youth outcomes in the library. When we pair experiential STEM learning with reading, we are amplifying success for our youth not only in the "4 C's," but we can also impact empathy and prosocial skills important for social-emotional development and resiliency from COVID-19 isolation.

2. **HABITS OF MIND.** The habits of mind are considered essential for STEM/STEAM learning and academic success. These are 16 traits that help learners solve problems, promote strategic reasoning, and add to the insightfulness and effectiveness of individuals within society. STEM learning helps develop these habits through effective practice, hands-on experience, and modeling. Library staff must intentionally build these into STEM/STEAM programming to help develop youth for future success.

3. **CO-FACILITATION.** Effective STEM/STEAM programming requires library professionals to assume the role of co-learners, a move away from program facilitation. To conduct a high-quality STEM/STEAM program, staff must think with a growth mindset: be open to failing and learning from it and sharing what we learn with our youth audiences. This approach asks us to share responsibility for learning with our communities. We must model the habits of mind and attributes of a good science thinker, which include curiosity, inquisitiveness, and persistence.

4 **STEM/STEAM LEARNING IS FUN!** When youth are having fun, they are more relaxed and willing to take risks, more willing to participate, and are more likely to retain what they learn. Relaxed brains provide greater neuroplasticity, allowing us to learn and retain new knowledge. Make STEM/STEAM learning a fun way to engage multiple learning styles and encourage youth to work together effectively while not being judged or tested.

5 **STEM/STEAM IS AN EQUITY ISSUE.** It is well documented that children from historically excluded communities are traditionally left out of the STEM/STEAM pipeline. This means that millions of US youth do not have the same access to the tools, learning, and skills to be successful in a rapidly changing work environment. Intentionally positioning STEM/STEAM programming to meet communities of color and those in poverty helps to build equity. Additionally, STEM/STEAM programming opens access to library programming for those with learning styles not drawn to 20th century learning.

CASE STUDY

In 2012, Chicago Public Library (CPL) undertook a massive overhaul of the Summer Reading Program after holding focus groups of family members and with children across the city. STEAM learning and academic success were goals for family members across the diverse city, and by adding STEAM learning and art/maker activities to the program, CPL increased academic gains and stopped the summer slide in participating youth as documented through rigorous research with the Chicago Public Schools and the University of Chicago. This was deftly accomplished by partnering with Chicago's preeminent science museum, the Museum of Science and Industry. Museum educators helped train, build hands-on experiences, offered programming, and provided support through evaluation of the revamped program. The Summer Learning Challenge became a nationally recognized model of moving summer reading to learning and increasing STEM/STEAM implementation paired with stories and books.

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▶▶ SECTION 2

BUILDING EQUITY IN SUMMER AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME

Contributor: Marissa Guidara, District Library Youth Services Consultant at Reading (PA) Public Library

As defined by American Library Association (2021), equity means that we create "deliberate and intentional efforts to create service delivery models that will make sure that community members have the resources they need." True equity work means that not everyone needs the same things, and we are duty bound to provide what we can, in a reflective way, to those who need us most. This means broadening summer reading to widen access to a variety of learning styles and moving outside our library to build a program with those who are marginalized and left outside of traditional library service.

TAKING IT DEEPER

During summer learning, libraries offer learning experiences, reading challenges, and resources to help stop the summer slide, or the learning loss that accumulates over the summertime for children in poverty and those historically excluded. But the one-size-fits-all themes and programming, required reading lists, or competitive challenges that pervade our summer learning models perpetuate normative ideologies, marginalize particular students, and even leave frustrated readers and learners behind.

An equitable summer learning program is co-designed and recognizes that youth are starting from different points and cultural backgrounds. It acknowledges socioeconomic hurdles and

learning disabilities, celebrates and incorporates diverse stories and inclusive experiences, and ultimately shares power with the youth we serve. Effective summer learning in libraries delivers more than a prescribed reading list because it builds on youth experience and culture to make learning relevant, contextual, and essential. For libraries to provide equitable summer learning experiences, we must also reach into our communities in new ways that allow us to serve children who may not have access to programs in our buildings.

> "For everyone to have a true opportunity to succeed, we need to acknowledge that we are all starting from different points on the track. From there, we need to recognize that those 'different starting points' are not solely individual, but are related to categories of privilege and marginalization based on race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and other aspects of identity. Only then can we begin to question and disrupt the systems that are responsible for creating and maintaining these differences, and in so doing work for equity."
>
> — Project READY n.d.

FIVE THINGS TO KNOW

There are many ways inequity affects our patrons. The Glossary of Education Reform (2016) outlines several ways inequity can affect children, which we can apply to summer learning:

1. **SOCIETAL (IN)EQUITY.** How does implicit bias affect how children and teens are treated by staff at your library? What can you do to make sure you are welcoming to all people?

2. **SOCIOECONOMIC (IN)EQUITY.** How are children with limited financial resources affected by fines, fees, or program costs at your summer learning program? What can you do to remove financial barriers so children can participate fully?

3. **CULTURAL (IN)EQUITY.** Are children seeing themselves reflected in the books and programs your summer learning program offers? Are you willing to leave "classics" or problematic best-sellers behind to create an inclusive program and collection to celebrate your diverse communities?

4. **FAMILIAL (IN)EQUITY.** How easy is it for families to participate in your summer learning program? Are your scheduled programs flexible to be considerate of busy parents' work schedules? What accommodations do you make for parents for whom English isn't their first language and who want to help their child participate? How do you reach children who are typically unable to access the library due to systemic racism and poverty and its many barriers?

5 **INSTRUCTIONAL (IN)EQUITY.** Is your summer learning program really for everyone or just the youth who already excel at reading? Moving from summer reading to learning opens the doors to children who may not enjoy reading, and inclusive practices ensure that diverse learners feel welcome to participate.

CASE STUDY

In 2018, Pennsylvania libraries made a shift from their traditional themed summer reading program to a more inclusive and equitable model called Summer Quest. This new program's design was a deliberate effort to reach children most at risk for the summer slide.

Summer Quest broadened the focus from reading to include a variety of learning experiences to better accommodate different learning styles and interests. Reading logs that focused solely on tracking books, pages, or time spent reading were transformed into learning logs that included STEM activities, art lessons, and projects families could easily complete together. The broadened focus accommodated reluctant readers and diverse learners, and the variety of activity and reading choices had cross-cultural appeal.

Many libraries also introduced child-driven projects like unstructured makerspace activities, and passive performers were replaced with how-to workshops that focused on sparking new interests and life-long learning. Adding drop-in and self-directed activities that could be accessed anytime made programming more accessible to busy working families. Working with children to create the types of programs they wanted, when they wanted them, helped remove both socio-economic and familial inequities.

Summer Quest also took to the road to meet children where they spent their summers. Library outreach at meal distribution sites, playgrounds, and other local organizations brought library services to at-risk youth who could not get to the library.

By 2020, 76 percent of Pennsylvania libraries have adopted the Summer Quest summer learning program and are using it to collaborate and co-design with families and community partners to further address summer inequities in their communities.

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▸▸ SECTION 3

CO-DESIGNING EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

Contributor: Hennie Vaandrager, Kent District Library, Kent County, Michigan

Ideally, co-design should play an important part in the formation of your summer and out-of-school-time programs. Co-design means collaborating and constructing with the stakeholders in your community. Co-design insists on truly getting to know your community by asking questions and listening, and then sharing the power you have to design programs and services with your community. This requires humility and hard work. Your stakeholders are just as invested in the questions you are raising as you are: they impact their families. So, instead of traditionally designing a program *for* your patron/customer/community, you are designing your program *with* these individuals.

TAKING IT DEEPER

Co-design is key to a thoughtful, well-planned program because it uses collaboration and creativity to make a program that actually serves the needs of your community. Too often we make assumptions about what our community wants or needs. Not only can these assumptions be wrong, but they can be complicit in failing to achieve the participation and interest level you had hoped for. We all want to see that the people who participate in our programs are representative of our community. By using the co-design philosophy to create your program, you guarantee that it is genuinely responsive to your community's needs.

FIVE THINGS TO KNOW

1. **KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY.** Be involved in outside groups, participate in events, and do outreach to really get to know your community.

2. **THROW ASSUMPTIONS OUT THE WINDOW.** Do not presume to know what your community needs.

3. **WELCOME STAKEHOLDERS TO THE TABLE.** Involve local stakeholders in the designing of your program. Stakeholders are just as invested in the success of your program as you are.

> "Rather than guessing what an unfamiliar community might want or need, we encourage you to get to know that community. To spend time in that community. To listen and learn from them. And then, with community partners at the table, to figure out how you can most meaningfully work together to achieve each of your goals."
>
> — Arts Council of Ireland 2019

4. **LISTEN AND TAKE NOTE.** Become a keen and active listener. You may hear hard truths that will ultimately help create a better, more responsive program.

5. **CONTINUE THE CO-DESIGN PRACTICE.** Co-design doesn't end with the launch of your program. Continue to invite community stakeholders to assess and evolve your program.

CASE STUDY

Kent District Library (KDL) in Kent County, Michigan, was committed to changing their summer program from a summer reading model to a summer learning model. As a large library system that includes 20 branches in very different communities, the summer programming team knew that they wanted input from outside stakeholders before they put a plan in place. Using the Design Thinking process, the team invited two teachers (from one rural and one suburban district), one local literacy and technology professor, one early childhood resource community liaison, KDL's community engagement manager, and three staff members representing a range of branches.

Co-designing with these community stakeholders meant that the team were often challenged on their presumptions about the local community. Additionally, valuable insight was given on facets of the community that the team knew little about. There were some significant "aha moments." For instance, at one point, the early childhood resource liaison flat out said that there are many families that will NEVER come to the library because of lack of trust and economic stressors; it is *not* and will *not* be a priority to these families. To reach these families, the library would need to partner with trusted community organizations to reach them where they are. Input like this was invaluable to the group and resulted in a stronger, more responsive summer program.

RESOURCES

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▶▶ SECTION 4

WORKING TOGETHER/ PARTNERSHIPS

Contributor: Robin Howe, King County (WA) Library System

There are many ways libraries come together in partnerships, and we know partnerships help us succeed. Building relationships between patrons and the library is crucial to helping all parties thrive and grow. By providing services and activities to children when out of school, the library positions itself as a primary provider of literacy materials and enriching activities while preventing learning loss with long-term consequences.

Any relationship formed between libraries and organizations serving families must benefit both parties. Reaching into the community to find partners who serve youth we do not typically see in the library is an important start toward building equity. These relationships take time to grow and require trust and commitment. Consider creating a partnership agreement to agree on goals, measurements of success, communication methods, schedule and type of service, ages and headcount of the audience served, ability to call on-site staff who assist in programs and manage behavior, shared marketing and outreach, security of personal data, and funding sources for materials. Since agency personnel may change frequently, any standing partnership agreement should be reviewed and refreshed annually, especially when library services expand or change markedly.

Where do children gather outside of school? Locations may include:

- Apartment sites, community centers, neighborhoods, and alternative housing
- Education sites, including public, private and charter schools, and homeschooling cooperatives
- Parks and recreation programs

- Museums, zoos, and planetariums
- Camps and outdoor recreation sites
- Houses of worship

Identify and connect with groups that support and organize families and children, such as:

- Religious service agencies
- Traditional recreation providers: YMCA, Boys & Girls Clubs, and their regional variants
- Childcare licensing and tracking agencies, child-care providers
- Refugee and resettlement organizations
- Outreach agencies focused on ethnicity, country of origin, or language group
- Public health departments
- Community roundtables of collected service agencies

TAKING IT DEEPER

Another important form of partnership is finding a STEM partner to help you advance active learning in your selected subject or STEM content area. These partners can come from the community, civic organizations such as museums, or industries with commitment to education. A good STEM partner will help you articulate and meet your STEM learning goals for your staff as well as for families. Essential to a STEM partnership is a shared sense of purpose, scope, and goals. Good STEM and library partnerships should start with concrete goals, such as "the STEM Partner will conduct one hands-on training for library staff to adapt and incorporate their STEM curriculum into summer learning."

Utilize multiple communication methods to introduce yourself and your services and then keep in touch frequently. Building trust is essential in equity-based community partnerships. This means being responsive, adaptable, and available for conversations in any mode.

Tap other local government agencies to advertise library services through their social media

networks and cross-post on your own accounts. Does your library have an outreach program or book mobile? Jump on the bus and visit sites to share services and materials and tailor services to those who may not have email by carrying your business card and paper flyers.

> "Partnerships make us better together. Partnerships channel the strength of cultural institutions, the breadth of neighborhood service partners, the richness of our school districts, and the force of our business community to build the ultimate outcome for children and families: successful summertime and out of school time learning."
>
> — McChesney and Wunar 2017

FIVE THINGS TO KNOW

1. **BUILD EQUITY.** Consider who you do and do *not* traditionally see attending your programs in the library. Build equity through new partnerships in communities, sharing power to co-design services based on community input and concerns, and then invite unique, vetted program providers into your library who reflect the diversity of the communities you serve.

2. **RESPECT ALL LEARNING.** Market materials in all available formats (books, e-books, audiobooks, etc.) and by offering materials in languages reflective of your community.

3. **PARTNERSHIPS AMPLIFY LEARNING OUTCOMES.** When partnering with a STEM specialist, you can accelerate your library staff's learning and deepen the learning outcomes for your audience. Developing the partnership takes communication, shared goals, and level-setting expectations.

4. **ALL PARTNERSHIPS ARE RELATIONSHIPS.** Whether with a local elementary school, a community-based program site, or a STEM provider, every partnership is based on mutual trust, shared understanding of goals, and time for frequent check-ins and evaluation. Build trust by going above and beyond what is expected of you. Communicate your goals and your constraints so you can work together.

5. **ENGAGE YOUR COMMUNITY WITH HUMILITY.** Continually assessing needs and analyzing changing trends and demographics of whom you serve allows for deeper equity-based outcomes. Ask parents, extended family networks, and, of course, youth themselves what is critical for their learning. What is important to your community members? Knowing this allows the library to serve the community with relevant and interesting experiences.

CASE STUDY

Where do kids congregate in the summer? Camp! In 2013, the King County (WA) Library System joined YMCA summer camp programs across Greater Seattle to lend reading materials to school-aged youth once a week. This is one type of partnership, called a service provider partnership, and it allows the library to reach children they may not normally see through the doors of the library. To keep kids (and their counselors) connected to the libraries and the summer reading/learning program, it takes a few eager librarians with a van, a range of high-interest books in waterproof totes, some picnic tables, and a covered area. Children choose their own materials, comparing their favorites with title suggestions from librarians. Of benefit for counselors: KCLS librarians curate themed backpacks of materials used throughout the week to support camp curriculum. This effort to "reach beyond the building" cultivates young readers, engages and supports teens and children, provides personalized assistance, and connects with culturally diverse populations during extended out-of-school time.

RESOURCES

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▸▸ SECTION 5

EVALUATING SUCCESS

Contributor: Denise Lyons, Deputy Director of Statewide Development, South Carolina State Library

For years, libraries have collected statistics and counted what is commonly called "outputs" or things like people walking through the door, directional questions, computer sessions, book checkouts, and children at storytimes. But these numbers on their own hold little meaning. Stakeholders want to know "So what?" and to be accountable; we need to know this as well. Getting away from door counts and program participant numbers is challenging. While outputs may still be required and still shared in annual reports, there is a power to owning outcomes in your programs, and there is a space where counts (outputs) and impact (outcomes) can live together. Your summer learning program is the perfect way to combine the statistics of who participated with the kind of evaluation that tells the story about the true impact your program had on your community's youth.

TAKING IT DEEPER

Libraries are learning the importance of asking "So what?" as they move through the program-planning process because ultimately the result (benefit) can better justify the library's investment. Because resources are limited, it is no longer enough to simply count what goes in or out but to learn about the ultimate benefit these inputs and outputs have had on the patrons, which is called the outcome.

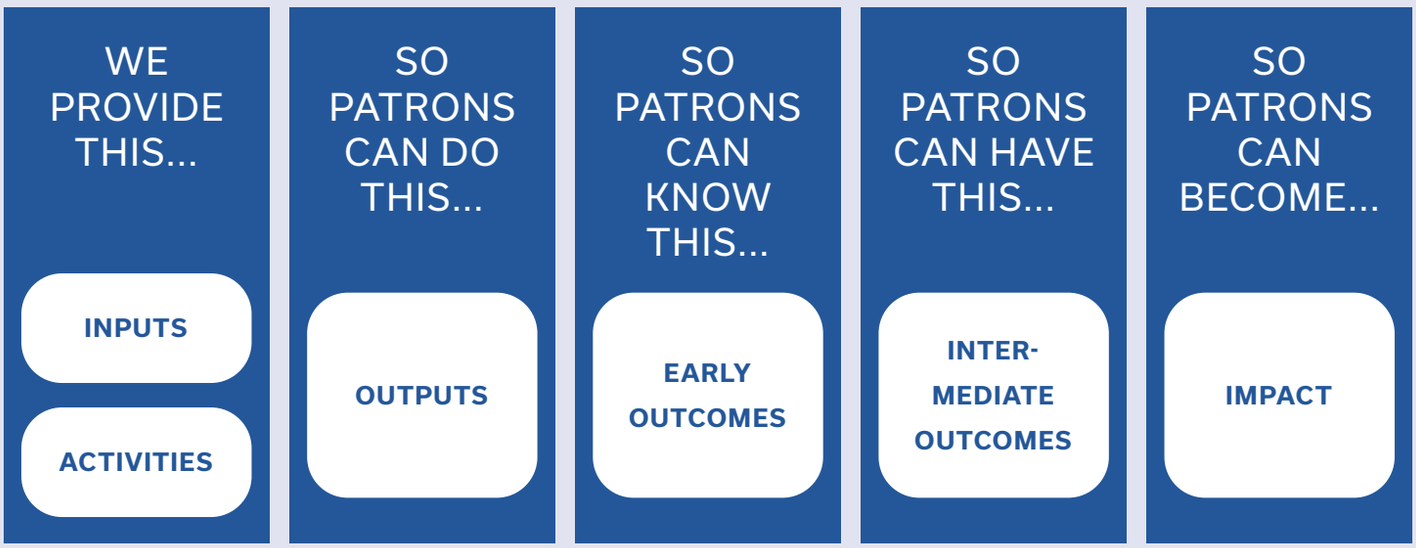
The IMLS defines outcomes as benefits to people: specifically, achievements or changes in skill, knowledge, attitude, behavior, condition, or life status for program participants. The expectation is that all funded projects should demonstrate outcome goals, which is commonly achieved through using outcome-based evaluation, or "OBE." OBE is a systematic way of assessing the

extent to which a program has achieved its intended result. The results can help to communicate the true value of the work. Did participants report the desired change after the implementation of the program? What are the short- or long-term results reported by participants? The acts of reviewing inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impact are all part of evaluation and can help you determine if your program has met your strategic goals.

Effective evaluation can help to identify needs, define and measure program activities, and inform program improvement. This information can and should be used to plan for the future. Becoming more skilled at measuring outcomes rather than simply just counting the activities or items can demonstrate to community stakeholders how the library is helping to achieve community goals and objectives.

So how do you measure outcomes? There are several ways, and many are simple. One way is to conduct a survey. To help libraries become more comfortable with evaluation, the Public

THEORY OF CHANGE



SOURCE: TASCHA/US IMPACT

Library Association launched Project Outcome, a free toolkit designed to help public libraries understand and share the impact of essential library services and programs by providing simple surveys and an easy-to-use process for measuring and analyzing outcomes. There are many resources and trainings (a few links are provided in the "Resources" section below) offered on outcome-based evaluation to help make your evaluation successful. The most important thing to remember is that your numbers are important, but they do not convey the impact of your library's programs and services on your community, which ultimately may help you to apply for grants or advocate for local library support.

FIVE THINGS TO KNOW

1. **NUMBERS ALONE WON'T TELL YOUR STORY.** It is important to continue to keep your counts (outputs) but if you want to know about changes or impact, library staff need to shift to an outcome-based evaluation.

2. **OBE CAN HELP YOU SHARE A COMPELLING STORY TO YOUR STAKEHOLDERS.** When you are able to talk about the impact that your services have in the community, you are more likely to make a convincing case for support. Funders want to know how their investment benefitted the target audience. Service counts alone do not provide this information.

3. **OBE CAN ANSWER QUESTIONS THAT CAN BE VERY BENEFICIAL TO YOU AND YOUR COMMUNITIES.** As you plan a summer learning program, OBE can answer questions such as "Who is being served?" and "Who is not?" If your service goals are to align your services to the needs of your community, this type of evaluation will help you be successful.

4. **THERE ARE EASY WAYS TO CONDUCT EVALUATION.** These include surveys, focus groups, and observation with resources available from the IMLS, PLA, RIPL (the Research Institute for Public Libraries) and state libraries that can assist you.

5. **YOUR SUMMER PROGRAMS ARE A KEY COMPONENT IN LIBRARY SERVICES.** You can use easy methods of evaluation that will help you showcase the benefit that these programs provide. Discuss outcome goals prior to launching your program so you can see what impact you have achieved by the end.

CASE STUDY

The Sumter County (SC) Library created Read, Learn, Grow (RLG) outreach boxes to work with preschool-age children and their families. This project targeted childcare centers whose clients were eligible for benefits. The library also reached out to Sumter Title One schools, where more than 30 percent of students were not meeting English language arts, math, or science standards. The boxes contained quality literature on diverse topics for reading enhancement and building vocabulary, math- and science-related activities, and educational brain teasers/STEM toys. They included educational CDs and DVDs that would promote exercise and movement. The RLG boxes were designed to promote hands-on learning with real-world applications to develop a variety of skill sets, including creativity and 21st century skills. With the library closed and the bookmobile out of service due to the pandemic, the library wanted to connect these centers to library resources and promote the type of activities that would be offered at storytimes and outreach visits. The 16 monthly rotating boxes were meant to be an extension of the learning curriculum filled with exciting activities that spark imagination and eye-catching interactive read-alouds. The library hoped the contents would increase communication within the classroom, improve vocabulary, build positive relationships between the library and the centers (including, by extension, their families), and enrich the learning environment by motivating teachers, children, and parents. Partners in the project included the University of South Carolina's Cocky's Reading Express, which features USC student volunteer readers bringing the university's mascot to the learning centers to read to students. They are doing this virtually as well as and will be in person once the public health concerns have subsided. The children make a promise to read every day and Cocky gives each child a book. The City of Sumter Fire Department is providing bookmarks to promote reading and emphasize fire safety.

The evaluative methods included one-on-one discussions to assess boxes usage. They used a call log to track progress with the centers. The questions were designed to provide details about the needs of the children in the centers as well as information about how the boxes are being used. The library also provided a short survey about the items in the box to assist with adjustment or improvement. The questions used a Likert Scale to rate the following statements from strongly agree to strongly disagree:

- My class learned something by using the materials in the Read, Learn, Grow box.
- The box is easy to use.
- I used the box materials in my classroom.
- I know I can request needed resources for my classroom from the library.
- I am more likely to use other library resources and services.
- I am likely to participate in another library activity or program.

They also had three open ended questions: (1) What did you like most about the boxes? (2) How does the box benefit your class? (3) What could the library do to better assist?

When it is safe to meet in person, the library will set up a few focus groups from the staff of the learning centers to see how the contents helped their teaching as well as what may need to be adjusted and why. Assessment will be done monthly so boxes could be adjusted.

Sumter County Library received a $6,227 project grant to create RLG boxes for reaching out to the different learning centers in the Sumter community. They are currently serving more than 400 children with these outreach boxes. There are 37 boxes with 2 added for teachers to share for a common theme at HeadStart. More than 75 percent of the returned surveys indicate high positivity.

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▸▸ SECTION 6

REFLECTION—THE MEASUREMENT TOOL OF WHY

Contributor: Sue Abrahamson, Children's Librarian, Waupaca (WI) Area Public Library

Making meaning from our experiences is considered critical to learning. Commonly referred to as "reflection," this denotes how learners contextualize their learning and deepen their understanding. Long considered a way to "close the learning cycle," reflection gives each participant in your summer program an important opportunity to link a new idea to failure or success. In this way, we connect a summer learner to grit, perseverance, habits of mind of good science learning, and critical 21st century skills. Building time to reflect on a book, an art or makerspace project, or a STEM activity helps to learn from mistakes, put our new learning into a context with what we already know, and talk about ways to strengthen and self-direct our future work. This is also an important way for library staff to evaluate if the experiences that have been offered youth are appropriate and if additional supports need to be added for individual learners.

TAKING IT DEEPER

Library programs are rich learning environments. Children are encouraged to explore and discover in creative, nonlinear activities. This can be a new experience for the child, and often for their accompanying caregiver. When the desired outcome is the process and not the product, everyone delights in the discovery. Librarians are motivators to help participants rethink their

experience by adding variants to the activity. Allowing time for "what if" thinking in library programs helps enrich the new experience. Older children may be able to utilize learning journals or visual representations to help them with the reflection process.

Waupaca Lego Robotics Camp teammates spend the last 15 minutes of each camp day discussing their frustrations and successes, making plans for the next session.

> "The material of thinking is not thoughts, but actions, facts, events, and the relations of things. In other words, to think effectively one must have had, or now have experiences which will furnish . . . resources for coping with the difficulty at hand."
>
> — J. Dewey, American philosopher, 1916

In the same way children use reflection as a learning tool, librarians can utilize the same model in assessing the impact of their work. By building in intentional time for reflection in planning and implementing a library program, library staff can ensure the program matches the desired outcomes and can help measure impact for advocacy purposes. This could look as simple as a short post-program quiz: Did this program meet the desired outcome? If not, what could be done differently to achieve that goal?

FIVE THINGS TO KNOW

1. **REFLECTION ALLOWS FOR KEY LEARNING TO HAPPEN AND FOR LESSONS TO BE APPLIED.** It closes the learning cycle. Children can clearly describe a concept and the context for using it.

2. **REFLECTION CAN TAKE MANY SHAPES.** from video productions to peer sharing to oral book reporting, make reflection shine back on individual learner strengths. Providing a variety of ways to reflect builds confidence in children (oral, written, graphic, etc.) and gives them choice and voice.

3. **REFLECTION IS AN IMPORTANT TIME TO BUILD TRUST WITH YOUTH IN PROGRAMS.** It requires vulnerability by both the child and facilitator. By admitting we don't have all the answers, reflection allows us to all learn together, eases anxiety, and models a growth mindset.

4. **REFLECTION DEEPENS LEARNING.** Strong reflection helps youth to understand key

concepts and experiences. Learners can reflect *in* action and *on* action, both in decision-making while engaged in the activity and after the learning event.

5 **READING REFLECTION ALLOWS YOUTH TO ANALYZE TEXT CLOSELY AND USE METACOGNITION SKILLS TO DEVELOP DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF TEXTS.** Children who reflect on what they read are building vocabulary and critical thinking skills so they can better express themselves.

CASE STUDY

The Waupaca Area Public Library held a three-day Lego Robotic Summer Camp with the desired outcome of introducing and demonstrating the "4 C's" of 21st century learning (Collaboration, Communication, Creativity, and Critical Thinking) and promote STEM learning outside the school setting. The project centered around team building, engineering design challenges, and highlighted time for reflection each day. Teams of children age 8 to 11 answered daily prompts and wrote in team journals to help them understand both their successes and failures and articulate their challenges and how they learned how to overcome those challenges. Additional reflection time came from the facilitators, who were able to note such specific program elements as participants struggling with varying degrees of prior knowledge and how to address this, time management, and strategies to engage every member of the team.

Findings from this were valuable for participants and the facilitator, and it takes intentional time to reflect for it to become a part of practice. Dedicating time for journaling helps build writing skills as well as critical reflection, and staff modeling reflection leads to continuous improvement and adaptation. Reflection is critical for understanding our successes and failures and learning from them in the library setting.

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▸▸ SECTION 7

ONLINE AND DIGITAL PROGRAMMING

Contributor: Liesl Jacobson, Assistant Director of Community Engagement, Salt Lake City (UT) Public Library

An inclusion of online summer learning as part of your summer program plan can help extend learning opportunities for families who may not be able to typically participate. Online summer learning can make libraries accessible to those who live too far away to frequent a library branch or who are vacationing away from their local library, or it may be the only option for continued summer learning during a pandemic quarantine. Virtual programs are more accessible to working parents, who can view them with their children during nontraditional programming hours.

TAKING IT DEEPER

Before COVID-19, 92 percent of young teens were online everyday (Collins and Halverson 2018, 75). Post COVID-19, that number is bound to be higher, although we know that systemic racism and poverty will continue to impact access, a human rights issue of the 21st century. Research about youth and digital learning shows that youth use the internet to access information, for communicating with peers, for recreation, and certainly for informal learning. In this process they move from learners to co-creators of their experience and actually contribute content, which is a seismic shift from earlier generations.

The diverse digital world has been a transformation that has taken hold in less than one generation of youth (Collins and Halverson 2018). Children move through what Mimi Ito (2009) in her foundational model of HOMAGO calls Hanging Out, Messing Around, and Geeking Out. Essentially, youth work through consuming digital learning and move from learning to contributing or actually creating their own content. This is a significant shift in how youth experience informal

learning and is an important model for how libraries can develop future online learning experiences in the summer and out-of-school time.

> "Even as libraries begin to offer curbside services and open library doors, it seems likely that alternative options will take the place of in-person programs for the foreseeable future. Virtual programs are a valuable way to connect with our communities regardless of crisis."
>
> — ALSC n.d.

FIVE THINGS TO KNOW

1 VIRTUAL SUMMER LEARNING EXPANDS LEARNING OPTIONS.
Building a component of summer learning that is accessible to youth who cannot visit the library during a pandemic or otherwise broadens access that is critical to developing equity-based programming. This may require also providing kits with devices and connectivity.

2 DIGITAL LEARNING MOVES CHILDREN FROM CONSUMER TO CO-CREATOR.
Developing robust digital learning allows youth to model other digital learning strategies and should include moving the learner from consuming information to collaborating and co-creating with others. This contribution to content development is an essential part of effective digital learning and 21st century skill building.

3 DEVELOP A VIRTUAL SUMMER LEARNING PROGRAM PLAN. Define expectations and best practices for staff. Define standards that will help virtual programs contribute to learning goals of the summer learning program plan.

- Will your plan include tracking both reading and learning activities?
- Will your library offer virtual learning programs?
- Is the program accessible to the majority of your service area?
- How can it support those who may not have access to technology? Will the online summer program be fully functional on a smartphone?
- Will you utilize an existing platform to run the program, or will you develop a program in house?
- Are staff trained in the technology that will be used to create and publish online programs?
- Does your program plan include opportunities for play, social connection, and independent choice?

4 **KEEP COPYRIGHT IN MIND AS YOU PROGRAM PLAN.** ALSC (n.d.) has developed an in-depth guide to navigating copyright for virtual programs in four key areas: public domain, seeking permission from copyright holders, temporary and limited permissions, and fair use factors.

5 **INCLUDE PARTNERS IN THE PLAN.** Partner organizations can contribute expertise to your online summer program. Reach out to planetariums, zoos, museums, etc., to see if they would be willing to contribute or share already-created virtual programs or develop something collaboratively with your library.

CASE STUDY

The COVID-19 pandemic caused libraries around the US to enter various states of closure that affected summer learning programs. Many libraries needed to convert their programs to online-only models. The following case studies show how two public library systems chose to proceed based on the circumstances each organization faced.

SALT LAKE CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Salt Lake City Public Library (SLCPL) staff who manage the summer learning program, Super Summer Challenge (SSC), convened to brainstorm how the program could function whether branches were open or closed. SLCPL had a healthy budget and two existing platforms that made it possible to convert to an all-virtual program.

Converting in-person programs was a challenge. Staff contacted performers and partners to ask if they had the equipment and/or skill to provide a filmed version of their programs. Programs were included as virtual collections in a platform that SLCPL had just launched. Many things were considered when switching to virtual programs, including how to approach copyright, filming comfortability and skill, staff/performer/partner familiarity with technologies, etc. Coordinators at SLCPL created guidelines for virtual programming, which assisted staff with best practices, filming tips, and expectations.

What worked: The SSC ran smoothly all summer. SLCPL received feedback that online summer learning was still fun and encouraged learning and exploration. In addition, virtual programs could be "attended" by patrons who previously were not able to attend live programs.

What could have been better: Online-only summer learning was inaccessible to a large portion of the community. It was inherently inequitable to those who lacked access to devices or the internet. Participation dropped, especially by children, who rely on caregivers to provide access to participation.

SALT LAKE COUNTY LIBRARY SERVICES

Pivoting to online summer learning also proved challenging to Salt Lake County (SLCO) Library Services. The system faced a frozen budget. Limited funding excluded printing costs for paper trackers, promotional materials, or the cost of a host platform for the program. Staff enlisted the library webmaster to construct a summer learning program on their existing website. A tracker that could be self-printed was included. When curbside services began, staff included summer learning flyers in the books that were delivered to patrons' cars.

SLCO Library developed virtual programming that aligned with goals of Read, Create, Learn, Play, and Connect, core concepts that are at the heart of SLCO summer learning. Staff convened a virtual program work group. Best practices and guidelines for digital programs were created. Both privacy and accessibility were considered, and platforms and technologies that support accessibility, such as auto captioning.

What worked: Virtual programs, initially pre-recorded and later moved to live content, were very well received. They found success with storytimes offered on a social media platform, a Teen Lounge on a popular chat app, virtual escape rooms for all ages, book clubs, and an adult lecture series. SLCO Library found that live programs resonated with patrons, and they continue to do so.

What could have been better: Hosting the program on their library website proved to be very challenging. The site was fraught with unexpected issues that needed constant tweaking. SLCO staff recommend investing in a platform that is built to support online learning programs. To build equity, SLCO Library will now offer a hybrid program, one that offers participation online or on paper.

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▸▸ SECTION 8

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Contributor: Liz McChesney, Senior Advisor in Youth Services, Chicago, IL

Positive youth development is a holistic approach that engages communities to ensure youth in programs have positive outcomes that are developmentally appropriate. Youth are offered ways to be both constructive and productive and have a meaningful voice in the work that is created. The overarching concept behind this framework is services, opportunities, and programs all align to help support youth and help them reach their full potential.

TAKING IT DEEPER

Positive youth development comprises an entire system of support from school, home, and community agencies, including the public library. This system builds on the strengths of youth and recognizes risks to community youth. This approach has been deeply studied and researched and involves youth as active participants working in partnership with adults/library staff. Civic engagement and providing youth a forum for expression, creation, and solution development is critical to successful implementation.

Positive youth development includes the development of skills, opportunities, and authentic relationships with youth. This model asks us to take a prosocial (denotes behavior that is friendly and helpful) approach and promotes positive outcomes aligned to life success. While various frameworks exist to understand the components of this, the "5 C's" of positive youth development are widely agreed upon:

- Competence: youth are able to take on tasks that build and practice skills and knowledge.
- Confidence: youth are able to successfully develop agency and solve problems so they grow in confidence and self-assuredness.
- Connection: youth see themselves and their relationships in their community.
- Caring/Compassion: adults understand and empathize with youths' concerns, issues, and trauma and likewise help youth develop these skills and attributes
- Character: positive character development is modeled, and the traits and values of positive character are described and built.

Positive youth development is an **intentional, pro-social** approach that **engages** youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes, and enhances youths' **strengths**; and promotes **positive outcomes** for young people by providing **opportunities**, fostering **positive relationships**, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths.

FIVE THINGS TO KNOW

Positive youth development is guided by the following 5 principles.

1. **STRENGTHS-BASED.** We take a holistic approach by focusing on the inherent strengths of an individual, family, and community and build on them.
2. **INCLUSIVE.** We address the needs of all youth by ensuring that our approach is culturally responsive and centered in healing engagement.
3. **ENGAGES YOUTH AS PARTNERS.** Participation is meaningful and sustained and so are the practices and policies that support them.
4. **COLLABORATIVE.** We create meaningful partnerships to effectively align our work.
5. **SUSTAINABLE.** We address long-term implementation through planning, fundraising, and capacity building to support ongoing engagement and care of youth.

CASE STUDY

Beginning in 2014, The Seattle Public Library (SPL) redesigned their summer offerings and launched the Summer of Learning. This program involves community partners, youth, and families in the development and design of many aspects the program. Through strategic listening sessions with the Somali community, led by Seattle Housing Authority, Seattle Public Schools, and Somali Family Safety Task Force (SFSTF), new library programs were developed to extend the reach and effectiveness of the SPL Summer of Learning. By partnering directly with community agencies, particularly those led by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) individuals, the library is better positioned to collaboratively create and implement programs *with* and *for* the many communities they serve.

This current iteration of the SPL's Summer of Learning is now an assets-based model that celebrates what youth, families, and communities bring to the table instead of the old deficits-based model that served to solve a problem (summer slide) without much input from those served by the program. This approach is based on positive youth development principles and power sharing with community organizations, youth, and families. This project has led to the creation of three published board books created by and with families from the community. From the book topics (alphabet, counting, animals) to the creation of the artwork, to the rough layout and editing, these books are a community-led process from start to finish. Each published book has been accompanied by an author reading from the youth and family authors. Published by the Seattle Public Library Foundation by Commonwealth Editions, the titles include *Baro Af-Soomaali, Baro Tirinta Af Soomaaliga,* and *Baro Magacyada Xayawaanada o oaf Soomaali*.

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