



COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS PACESETTER

VERO BEACH

Category: Summer Learning

The Learning Alliance of Vero Beach, a small city north of Miami on Florida's east coast, is dedicated to the goal of having 90 percent of area students achieve literacy by the end of third grade. A critical component to achieving this goal is effective summer learning programs that are compatible with ongoing school reform efforts.

The Learning Alliance enhances summer learning through the use of evidence-based reading programs that fill curricular gaps, research-based teaching methods that enhance student engagement and learning, professional development programs to deepen and sustain literacy expertise, parent education programs and afterschool and summer tutoring programs.

In 2010, the Learning Alliance designed a Summer Scholars tutoring program, modeled after an initiative that members observed at The Shelton School in Dallas, Texas, to provide low-cost summer tutoring to children struggling with reading. The school district recruited 30 teachers to be trained during the winter and spring as Master Coaches to supervise the summer programs and oversee one-on-one tutoring by trained community tutors.

The Summer Scholars program was located at area elementary schools and three local civic youth organizations: the Gifford Youth Activity Center, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Indian River County and the Daisy Hope Center. After the first summer of programming, organizers found that the usual 25 percent summer regression in reading skills had been replaced by gains of approximately 15 percent. This pilot program laid the foundation for the development of Master Coaches in each school who have become the in-house literacy experts and coaches for the classroom teachers.

In the summer of 2011, The Learning Alliance had even greater success. While the primary goal for the summer program was to prevent the summer slide, the student's reading scores climbed by more than 100 percent. The teachers who received training during the school year were able to share their knowledge with the administrators and volunteers at the civic youth groups, and the children who struggled during the school year were able to move successfully from school to summer programs and back to school.

STRATEGIES

- Set a goal of 90 percent literacy by the end of third grade for area students
- Designed a Summer Scholars tutoring program to provide low-cost summer tutoring
- Recruited 30 teachers to be trained as Master Coaches to supervise summer programs
- Students in Summer Scholars program made in excess of 100 percent gains in their reading scores