Scaffolding Choice, Increasing Access: A Summer Initiative to Promote Middle School Students' Book Reading

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READING HORIZONS

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─── **Abstract** ───

Middle schools often mandate summer reading as a means of stemming summer learning loss, but research suggests that many students do not read any books during the summer months. Limited book access and difficulties self-selecting books are two barriers that can impact students' summer reading practices. To address these challenges, students in one Grade 7 classroom participated in an initiative designed to scaffold book choices prior to summer break and to increase students' access to high-interest books. Compared to students in a randomly selected business-as-usual classroom, students who participated in the book scaffolding initiative were more likely to read at least one book over the summer. The author describes ways in which dedicating class time to helping middle school students discover reading interests, coupled with providing free access to books, can impact summer reading practices.

Keywords: *adolescent literacy, summer reading, book choices, book access*

As middle school students return to school from summer break, teachers often find that their reading skills have declined (Alexander & Condliffe, 2016; Downey, von Hippel, & Broh, 2004; Downey, von Hippel, & Hughes, 2008; Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 1997; Heyns, 1978; Quinn & Polikoff, 2017). To minimize learning loss and promote positive reading habits, many schools across the United States mandate summer reading (Ya-Ling, 2009). Yet students often return to school without having read any books during the summer months. In a study of family attitudes and behaviors around books, Scholastic and YouGov (2017) found that 20% of 12- to 17-year-old students did not read any books during the summer. The percentage of students who reported reading zero books during the summer months increased from 2016 to 2018 (Scholastic & YouGov, 2019).

One reason students may not read as much as schools expect is because they have limited physical access to books. As Dickinson and Neuman (2006) explain, "Within the U.S., access to books is essential to reading development: the only variable that directly correlates with reading scores is the number of books in the home" (p. 31). To address the barrier of limited book access, several national initiatives such as Reach Out and Read (Weitzman, Roy, Walls, & Tomlin, 2004) and Reading Is Fundamental have focused on increasing personal book ownership. Studies that have examined the effects of providing free books during summer months to children from high-poverty schools have found positive effects on reading achievement (Allington et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2016).

Difficulties self-selecting books may also explain why some students read less

often or less enthusiastically during the summer months. According to a survey of students ages 6 to 17, students are more likely to finish a book that they have selected for themselves than one that has been selected for them (Scholastic & YouGov, 2019). However, many adolescents have few opportunities to self-select books in middle school and need guidance choosing books that they can comprehend and find interesting (Mackey, 2014; Moje, 2009). As Mackey (2014) explained, "An independent reader, a reader likely to keep on reading for the pleasure of it, knows how to find something satisfying to read. But this skill is often not taught in schools" (p. 521).

The present study examines the effects of a summer reading initiative designed to address two key barriers to middle school summer reading: limited book access and the challenge of self-selecting books. Specifically, the summer reading initiative involved scaffolding middle school students' summer reading book choices and providing three free self-selected books to each student. Through student self-reports and focus groups, I examine the impact of this initiative on students' summer reading practices.

Review of Research on Factors Affecting Students' Book Reading

Efforts to Promote Student Motivation to Read

Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory (SDT) provides a framework for understanding the importance of choice, among other factors, on reading. They refer to three basic psychological needs that must be addressed in order to experience high levels of intrinsic motivation: autonomy, sense of competence, and relatedness. In the context of reading, this theory would suggest that students need opportunities to choose books that they believe they can understand, that relate to their interests and inquiries, and that foster a sense of relatedness to others.

Several case studies have highlighted the ways in which addressing these needs fosters a culture of reading in schools. For instance, Francois (2013a) described one schoolwide effort in which teachers allotted class time to self-selected reading each week and expected students to read at home for up to an hour each night. Teachers made individualized and group book recommendations. They also read books recommended by their students. Although Francois did not specifically cite SDT as a framework that guided educators' choices, these schoolwide efforts created an environment that addressed the needs for autonomy by providing guidance for self-selecting books and relatedness: "Students read to relate to characters, to one another, and to school adults" (Francois, 2013b, p. 141).

Similarly, adolescents have reported that efforts that scaffold autonomy and promote relatedness influence the frequency with which they read and talk about books outside of class (Ivey & Johnston, 2013). In a yearlong effort to promote reading for pleasure in one middle school, educators "decided to focus on student engagement by supporting autonomy and personal relevance" (Ivey & Johnston, 2013, p. 258). Teachers gave book talks during the first week of school and introduced new books throughout the school year. They fostered relatedness by encouraging students to recommend book titles to one another and to talk with each other about books they had read. By addressing the needs of autonomy and relatedness, the yearlong initiative fostered a culture of reading at the school (Ivey & Johnston, 2013).

Although findings from these studies suggest that schools can promote reading for enjoyment among adolescents by addressing the needs for autonomy and relatedness, research suggests that students might benefit when schools address the need for competence

as well. Students are more apt to read when they believe that they can effectively read a text (Stack, Moorfield-Lang, & Barksdale, 2015; Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2004). A reader's self-efficacy—one's confidence in the ability to accomplish a reading task—has been associated with persistence (Guthrie et al., 2007) as well as the decision of whether to read at all (Henk & Melnick, 1992). Efforts to promote reading by appealing to students' sense of competence have ranged from using algorithms to match books to students' reading levels (e.g., Kim, 2007; White, Kim, Kingston, & Foster, 2014) to instructing students on how to self-select "just right" books (Boushey & Moser, 2014). Collectively, studies that have examined instructional practices that foster adolescents' engagement with reading have highlighted the importance of addressing students' needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence.

Efforts to Increase Book Access

Over a decade of experimental studies on increasing students' book access during the summer have shown positive effects on reading behaviors and achievement (e.g., Allington et al., 2010; White et al., 2014). At the same time, efforts to increase book access may be most effective when they address basic psychological needs of intrinsic motivation. For instance, although several studies of READS for Summer Learning—a home- and school-scaffolded summer reading program in which children receive free books—found positive effects on students' reading comprehension for low-income students (Kim & White, 2008; White et al., 2014), one version of the study had no effect on reading comprehension or vocabulary (Kim & Guryan, 2010). Whereas successful implementations of the program involved giving students books well matched to their reading levels and interests, students in Kim and Guryan's (2010) study tended to self-select books that were well above their reading levels. The researchers speculated that the self-selected books may have been too difficult for many students to comprehend, thus not meeting the need for competence.

Other research, however, has found positive effects of free access to self-selected summer reading materials. In a 3-year longitudinal experimental study, elementary students from high-poverty schools who received 12 self-selected books that they reviewed at a book fair outperformed control group students who received no books on a state-mandated assessment (Allington et al., 2010).

Both reader motivation and book access research have informed the present study, which examines an initiative to increase adolescent reading over the summer months. Experimental studies have aimed to increase students' book access during the summer (Allington et al., 2010; White et al., 2014), but these rigorous studies have focused on elementary students and provided minimal to no scaffolding regarding self-selection of books. Case studies have highlighted the importance of choice, competence, and relatedness on students' reading engagement. Yet this research has largely examined the effects of these practices during the academic year. The present study aimed to remove the barrier of book access to summer learning while also capitalizing on practices that address the psychological needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence. It addresses this research question: What is the impact of scaffolding middle school students' book choices and providing free access to self-selected books on summer reading experiences?

Methodology

Research Setting and Participants

This study took place at one public middle school serving approximately 700 students in a large, urban school district in a northeastern state. Based on state assessment

data, the school was classified as requiring assistance or intervention. At the time of the study, seventh- and eighth-grade students in the district were required to read a minimum of three books during the summer. The district provided a list of approximately 150 suggested book titles, but students were free to choose any three books to read during the summer. The suggested book titles were organized by genre, but the list provided no other book data, such as book descriptions. The recommended books ranged from literary classics to popular contemporary fiction. School district liaisons responsible for developing the district-wide summer reading requirements frequently received teacher feedback that many students did not read a single book.

At the time of the study, the school employed a two-level tracking system in which students were placed into college-level or honors classes based on both test data and teacher recommendations. All teacher and student names have been changed to pseudonyms. Two college-level seventh-grade ELA classes taught by the same teacher, Mrs. Sullivan, were randomly assigned at the classroom level to participate in the summer reading initiative (SRI) or to receive business-as-usual (BAU) instruction. The student composition at the school is racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse; approximately 30% of students identify as White, 40% as Hispanic, and 20% as African American. Nearly 20% of students are English language learners and approximately 60% of the student population is considered economically disadvantaged. Mrs. Sullivan's class demographics generally mirrored those of the school, though the percentage of White students was slightly lower and the percentage of African American students was slightly higher than the school average.

As described below, the SRI group received introductions to a wide range of books during the last month of school before summer break, and they received three free books of their choice during the last week of school to keep. Consistent with district norms, students in the BAU group received a handout with the recommended summer reading books but did not receive any book introductions or free books.

Summer Reading Initiative

The summer reading initiative aimed to increase the number of books that middle school students read over the summer by scaffolding students' book choices and giving students their three top book choices to take home the week before summer break to keep. Specifically, it encouraged autonomy by scaffolding students' book choices through various book exposure activities. It promoted relatedness by personalizing book recommendations from teachers and peers, and it addressed competence by giving students tools and time to evaluate their comprehension of a text. To reduce the barrier of book access, students received three free self-selected books at the end of the school year.

As she introduced students to a wide range of books, Mrs. Sullivan encouraged students to reflect on the extent to which they were interested in the book and felt a sense of competence in comprehending the book. She introduced students to the PICK strategy in which students were encouraged to reflect on their **P**urpose for reading, **I**nterest in the topic, **C**omprehension of the text, and **K**nowledge of the vocabulary (Boushey & Moser, 2014). Students in the summer reading initiative received a PICK strategy bookmark and were encouraged to reflect on each of these four considerations for self-selecting books as they encountered new books over the course of 3 weeks.

As students reviewed the back book cover and first few pages of a book, they reflected on whether they could read it with comprehension. Students were not explicitly encouraged to read books at a particular level of challenge but were encouraged to consider

whether they would feel competent in independently reading the book during the summer months.

In addition to using the PICK strategy (Boushey & Moser, 2014), students recorded their reaction to each book that they encountered in the program on a "book tracking" handout. The left side of the handout included the author, title, and brief description of each book featured in class. The right side of the handout provided a space for students' "notes or reaction" to the book and a column with three emojis representing thumbs down, okay, or thumbs up. Immediately after Mrs. Sullivan finished introducing a book through whole-book introductions, "book speed dating" (library sessions in which students previewed several books during a short time frame), or recommendations, she prompted students to record their reactions to the book and to circle one of the emojis to represent their level of interest in the book. Mrs. Sullivan also asked students to reflect on why they were or were not interested in a particular book that they encountered. Students later returned to these book tracking handouts to select the three books they wanted to read during the summer.

Whole-group introduction to books. Over the course of 3 weeks, Mrs. Sullivan introduced students in the SRI classroom to 10 books at the beginning of class. When available, she showed students either an age-appropriate book trailer for the book or a video of the author discussing the book. The featured books were deliberately selected to appeal to a wide range of reading interests and purposes for reading. Featured books included *The Crossover* (Alexander, 2014), an award-winning book (Newbury Award and Coretta Scott King Award) that addresses topics and themes relevant to middle school students, including sports and youth relationships; *Child Soldier* (Chikwanine & Humphreys, 2015), a nonfiction graphic novel that tells the firsthand experience of a young boy forced to become a child soldier in the Republic of Congo; El Deafo (Bell, 2014), a semiautobiographical graphic novel about a young girl's experience with hearing loss; and *Posted* (Anderson, 2017), a story of bullying in middle school.

Mrs. Sullivan then led students in a discussion about their reactions and personal connections to the featured book. She asked students to think about what, if anything, surprised them, hooked their interest, and resonated with them. For instance, after watching a video of Malala Yousafzai discussing the life experiences described in *I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Changed the World* (Yousafzai & McCormick, 2014), students commented on their surprise and dismay that girls around the world were denied access to education and shared that they wanted to learn more. Students recorded their personal reaction and level of interest to each book on their book tracking handout.

Book speed dating. During the second week of the SRI, students met in the library for two class periods to participate in a book speed dating activity. Carpinelli (2012) outlined the ways in which "speed dating with books" can provide the dedicated tools, time, and space needed to help students self-select a book well matched to their interests. These book exposure events typically involve examining a wide selection of books for 3–4 minutes per book to find "the perfect one" (Carpinelli, 2012, p. 29). In the present study, eight tables, each representing a different genre of books, were set up each class period. The genres featured were sports, animals, poetry, historical fiction, biography, adventure, graphic novels, mythology, young adult, horror, fantasy, humor, nonfiction, mystery, multicultural, and science fiction. Approximately 16% of the books featured in this study were nonfiction, including *World Without Fish* (Kurlansky, 2014) and *How They Croaked: The Awful Ends of the Awfully Famous* (Bragg & O'Malley, 2012). The list also included several books that addressed questions of identity and struggle (Stockdill & Moje, 2013),

including *George* (Gino, 2015), which portrays the experiences of a transgender child addressing questions of gender identity, and *Ghost* (Reynolds, 2016), a National Book Award finalist that explores a young person's experience running from and confronting violence and family trauma.

Students rotated through each of the tables. Mrs. Sullivan encouraged students to read the back cover, skim the book for text organization, and read the first few pages of the book. Students previewed up to three books at each table for 2–3 minutes per book. In total, there were 110 book titles available for students to preview over the course of two class periods, although each student examined approximately 25 of those books each session. Before rotating to the next table, students were encouraged to recommend and pass one book that they had enjoyed previewing to a classmate at the table. Throughout the process, they were encouraged to use the PICK strategy (Boushey & Moser, 2014). After previewing each book, they tracked their reactions and level of interest in learning more about the book on the book tracking form.

The book tracking forms for the book speed dating sessions were also customized to include one teacher-recommended book (selected in consultation with the researcher) for each student in the SRI classroom. Mrs. Sullivan explained that these recommendations were based on students' written responses and ratings of books previewed during whole-class book introductions. Students were not required to preview these books, but they were made aware that all students had one recommendation specifically for them. At the end of the library session, students were free to peruse the shelves and use the library database to explore other book options of their choice.

Peer recommendations. During the final week of the initiative, students worked in small groups to recommend to their classmates one of their favorite books from the book speed dating event. Students briefly described what they understood about the content and structure of the book based on their preview and why they thought their peers would enjoy reading it. Students passed around a physical copy of the book to show their peers. Students added peer-recommended books to their book tracking sheets and used the same process for ranking their level of interest in each book.

Final book selections. On the final day of the project, students self-selected the books that they wanted to read over the summer. All books from the whole-class book introductions and book trailers, as well as those from the library book speed dating event, were available in the classroom. Students reviewed their comments and ratings of featured books on their completed book tracking form. They had a final opportunity to examine the books to which they gave their highest ratings.

Mrs. Sullivan emphasized that students in her class—like all students in the district—had free choice about the books that they could read over the summer, thus they were not limited to choosing from the list of books they examined in class. They were permitted to list the titles and authors of any books they wanted to read during the summer months. Students recorded the titles and authors of the three books that they wanted to read and receive for free immediately before summer break. All students in the SRI classroom received their top three book choices during the last week of school.

Out of the 120 total book titles featured through book trailers and book speed dating events, students in the SRI classroom selected 34 titles to receive as their free books. Ten book titles were requested by two or more students. The most popular requests were *Child Soldier* (Chikwanine & Humphreys, 2015; n = 7), *365 Days of Wonder* (Palacio, 2016; n = 5), and *El Deafo* (Bell, 2014; n = 4).

Students drew on each of the book exposure strategies to select their books. On average, 1.79 of the books that students selected were featured during the book speed dating events, 1.00 of the books that students selected was featured through book trailers and whole-class discussions, and 0.21 of the books that students selected had been recommended by a peer. Framed differently, all students selected at least one book that they previewed during a speed dating event and nearly 80% of students selected at least one book that they learned about through a whole-class introduction. Moreover, seven students (37%) selected a book that was recommended to them by the teacher during the book speed dating event as one of their top three books. Two students requested one book each that was not previewed in class.

In summary, the SRI condition had two major components. First, it aimed to scaffold students' book choices by addressing three basic psychological needs for intrinsic motivation: autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Specifically, it addressed autonomy by inviting students to select their own summer reading books, relatedness by using both teacher and peer recommendations, and competence by encouraging students to account for their own comprehension of a book when making book selections. Second, it addressed the barrier of book access by giving students the three books that they wanted to read during the summer. These books were free and theirs to keep. The multicomponent nature of this study aligns with prior research aimed to increase summer reading among elementary students by addressing multiple barriers (e.g., Allington et al., 2010; Kim & White, 2008; White et al., 2014).

Business as Usual Instruction

Students in the BAU classroom participated in their regular "do-now" English language arts exercises, which typically included a brief writing prompt or time to review notes from a prior class period. They were not introduced to potential summer reading books. During the last week of school before summer break, students received the district's summer reading brochure, which listed approximately 150 suggested, but not required, book titles. This distribution of the recommended summer reading list during the last week of class was consistent with practice in other English language arts (ELA) classes in the school and in other ELA classes throughout the school district. They did not receive free books at the end of the school year.

Measures

To determine which books students read over the summer, I administered a brief survey in which students reported the book titles, authors, level of enjoyment in each book, and perceived level of complexity of the text relative to their abilities (e.g., very easy, just right, very hard) of each book that they reported reading. Students would later discuss or write about these books in their eighth-grade class.

To understand students' perceptions of their summer reading experiences, I conducted semistructured focus groups with 10 students in the BAU classroom and 15 students in the SRI classroom separately when they returned to school in the fall. Each focus group lasted approximately 40 minutes. The focus group protocol asked students in both groups to describe their summer reading experiences and included questions such as these:

- When you think about summer reading this past summer, what are the first few words that come to your mind?
- Tell me about your summer reading experiences this summer. Did you read? If

so, how much? How did you decide what to read? How did you get the books that you read?

- Some people think that their summer reading programs give them enough choice. Others feel that the summer reading programs don't give them enough choice. What do you think? How much choice do you feel that you had over your reading this summer?

- How hard or easy was it to find a book that was right for you?

- Where did you get most of the books that you read over the summer? How hard or easy is it for middle school students to get books to read over the summer?

Data Analysis

I used descriptive statistics to describe the number of books that students reported reading over the summer on their summer reading questionnaires. To determine whether the number of books that students reported reading over the summer differed between the SRI and BAU groups, I conducted chi-square tests and paired t-tests..

Prior to analyzing the qualitative focus group data, I identified a priori, or etic, codes as a means of beginning to code and organize the focus group data. These predetermined organizational categories included s*ummer reading experience, book choice,* and *book access*. In the first step of data analysis, I read the focus group transcripts and coded data into these broad organizational categories as appropriate. As a next step, I reread the focus group transcripts and added emic codes—those that emerged from the data. Specifically, I attended to repetition of ideas and participants' own descriptions of their summer reading experience. Accordingly, I added the following emic codes: *stress* and *difference between summer- and school-year reading*. Etic and emic codes were identified throughout the transcript and not limited to any single question from the focus group protocol; thus, findings are presented in terms of overall themes from the qualitative data.

Findings

As shown in Table 1, all but one student in the SRI classroom (94%) reported reading at least one book during the summer, as determined by questionnaires in which students listed the titles, authors, and evaluations of the books they had read. In contrast, only 56% of students in the BAU classroom reported reading at least one book during the summer ($\chi2 = 6.87$; p = .009). The number of students who fulfilled the summer reading requirement of three or more books did not significantly differ between the two classrooms (38% in the BAU classroom vs. 22% in the SRI classroom; $\chi2 = 0.95$; p = .33).

Students in the SRI classroom primarily read books that they received for free from the project; only two students (11%) did not read a single book that they received. Of those two students, one did not read a single book and the other student read a different book than the ones received. Approximately 44% of students in the SRI classroom read at least one book featured during the book speed dating event and one book featured during the whole-class book introduction; 22% of students read only books featured during the speed dating event, and 11% of students read only books featured during whole-class book introductions. The remaining students (22%) read books that were recommended by peers. On average, students in the BAU classroom tended not to read nonfiction books during the summer (M = 0.13); in contrast, students in the SRI classroom, on average, read about one nonfiction book during the summer (M = 0.72, t = -2.69, p = .01).

Table 1

Middle school students in the summer reading initiative (SRI) classroom and business-as-usual (BAU) classroom who read books during the summer

	SRI Classroom %	BAU Classroom %	$\chi 2$
Students who read at least one book	94	56	6.87**
Students who read three or more books	22	38	0.95

~ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Qualitative analysis of the focus group data revealed that students in the SRI and BAU classrooms differed in their overall evaluation of their summer reading experiences. Students in the BAU classroom described their summer reading experiences as mandatory, unenjoyable, and stressful. Alex explained, "I had no choice, I had to do it because my parents made me. If not, I would have had my phone taken away and everything electronic." Mica, who described herself as "the book worm of the class," argued that summer reading was less enjoyable than reading on her own during the school year: "Summer reading is different than just reading on your own because you are kind of forced. They want you to read over the summer, like they give you a list and everything. But it is not exactly the same as you wanting to do it.… I'm only doing it because I want to keep my grades high." In addition to describing less enjoyment in summer reading than school-year reading, students repeatedly mentioned the stress of summer reading. Emmitt explained, "I think [summer reading] is different because you are under pressure to get it done instead of taking the time and reading the book as you want to read it." Overall, students in the BAU classroom who did read books over the summer did so to fulfill the district requirement.

In contrast, students in the SRI condition used more positive language to describe their summer reading experiences. Although students in the SRI group also used some negative descriptions to summarize their summer reading experiences (e.g., "whack…because I could be doing something better"), they more frequently used positive descriptions. Students repeatedly used the word "interesting" to describe their summer reading experiences. As Cameron explained, "I thought it was really interesting because it had a lot of meaning to it." Nina described summer reading as "really fun because I don't really do a lot of reading during the summer so I am like reading before bed."

Students in the SRI and BAU classrooms also differed in how they decided which books to read during the summer. Nearly every participating student in the BAU focus group who read at least one book mentioned making selections based on ease of access. Melissa said, "I read two books and they were just in my house. I got one from my friend and one from my sister." Emmitt explained, "I read one, and I got it from my older brother because he had a bunch of them, but I only read one." Two students reported reading books that they purchased at book fairs when they were in elementary school. Other students read books that were selected for them by others. Tamara explained, "My mom bought them for me because she wants me to read more." Only one student, Mara, described actively exploring book options: "I just [got] on the Internet and looked up books" related to her interest in horror stories. Although students could select any three books to read during the

summer, students in the BAU classroom often chose those that were most easily accessible and presently available in their homes.

In contrast, students in the SRI classroom described choosing summer reading books that challenged them, broadened their perspectives, and matched their interests. As Cameron explained, "It is good to get out of my comfort zone and read some books I haven't heard of." Similarly, Nina said the summer "was different for me because I chose different books than I normally do." Scaffolding students' choices during the academic year and providing free access to self-selected books seemed to allow students in the SRI classroom to direct their time and mental resources toward reading texts that interested them. Tyler explained that the program "was pretty important for me because I was going to spend most of my summer looking for the books." Nina echoed this point: "Most [summers] I don't read because I can't really find a book to read.… I knew I wanted to [read this summer] because they [the books] were good and stuff and I wanted to read." Cameron also noted, "I tend to get books that I don't read so I have like 40 books at home that I don't read, but I felt it was very important because [the program] helped us realize what was really out there." Maria explained, "I know that if I wasn't to get the books from [the program], I wouldn't have done the summer reading."

Although students in the SRI classroom generally found the program helpful for self-selecting books, they still selected books that they did not ultimately enjoy reading over the summer. For a few students, the appeal of a historical fiction graphic novel waned as they read the text more closely. Cameron, who chose a historical fiction graphic novel, said, "I didn't enjoy the [book] when I was reading it.… It didn't really—from page to page—it didn't really go together. I felt like it went from one conversation to the other and it didn't really make sense." Thus, although the program encouraged students to be thoughtful about the books they wanted to read over the summer, students still learned that their early reactions to a book were not always predictive of their final reactions.

Discussion

Like prior research (e.g., Allington et al., 2010; Kim & White, 2008; White et al., 2014), the present study employed a multicomponent approach to promoting summer reading. By allowing students to self-select free books from book fairs, Allington and colleagues (2010) addressed the needs for autonomy and relatedness while increasing book access. By scaffolding reading comprehension through structured activities and mailing elementary students free books matched to reading levels and interests, Kim and colleagues (2008, 2016) addressed the needs for relatedness and competence along with reducing the barrier of limited book access. Although it is difficult to tease apart the effect of any one aspect of a program through a multicomponent approach, providing books without scaffolding choice is inconsistent with the adolescent need for autonomy (Eccles et al., 1991), and encouraging choice without increasing book access would fail to address the reality that many youth, particularly youth from low-socioeconomic-status homes, have difficulty physically accessing self-selected books during the summer (Allington et al., 2010; Kim, 2007). Accordingly, the present study aimed to increase book reading by addressing three basic needs for intrinsic motivation—autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000)—and increasing access to self-selected books.

Although the percentage of students who fulfilled the district's requirement of reading three books over the summer did not differ between students in the SRI and BAU classrooms, a significantly larger percentage of students in the SRI classroom read at least one book compared to the percentage of students in the BAU classroom who read at least

one book. In fact, the vast majority of students in the SRI classroom read at least one book, whereas just over half of students in the BAU classroom read at least one book. Thus, the greatest impact of this initiative may have been encouraging students who might not have otherwise read at all to read at least one book over the summer.

The present study did not examine the impact of reading volume on reading achievement, but prior research suggests that the effect of reading even a single book over the summer may be meaningful (e.g., Heyns, 1978, Kim, 2004). In an early study of summer learning, Heyns (1978) found a positive association between reading volume over the summer and reading achievement. Similarly, in a study of the effect of summer book reading among elementary students, Kim (2004) found that reading one book was positively associated with a one-point difference on standardized reading scores in the fall. The collective impact of scaffolding students' book choices and increasing access to self-selected books may counter the growing percentage of students who report reading zero books during the summer (Scholastic & YouGov, 2019).

Moreover, although all students were free to read any three books of their choice over the summer, students in the SRI classroom tended to express a greater sense of control and choice over their summer reading experiences. Dedicating class time to helping students self-select summer reading books during the academic year also appeared to nudge students away from selecting the easiest to read or most easily accessible books and toward choosing books that they found interesting. Qualitative interviews revealed that dedicating class time to introducing students to potential summer reading books exposed them to books that they would not have otherwise considered and allowed them to their focus their time and energy on identifying and reading books they would enjoy. It is noteworthy that students selected just 28% of the books featured in this study. Although the goal of featuring many books was to ensure that students found at least three books that interested them, further research might explore whether featuring fewer books may yield the same benefits while also minimizing demands on class time and avoiding potentially overwhelming students.

Building on prior research that highlighted the positive impact of increasing book access on elementary students' reading achievement (e.g., Allington et al., 2010; Kim & White, 2008; White et al., 2014), the present study suggests that scaffolding and increasing access to summer reading choices may be important for adolescents. As students progress from elementary school to middle school, they may benefit from class time dedicated to exploring books that are relevant to their new and changing values, dilemmas, and interests. Just as allocating class time to such exploration is beneficial for middle school students during the academic year (e.g., Francois, 2013a, 2013b; Ivey & Johnston, 2013), helping middle school students explore book interests may impact summer reading habits as well.

Findings from this study should be considered along with its limitations. First, the study included students in only two classrooms taught by the same teacher and librarian. Although findings from this study suggest that middle school students may benefit from greater access to self-selected books, further research is needed to determine whether the effects replicate with a larger sample of students, teachers, and librarians. Second, quantity of books read was the only outcome assessed. Further study is needed to determine whether supporting students' summer book choices impacts a wider range of outcomes, including reading comprehension, attitudes toward reading, reader identity, and reading interests. Third, the study used self-reported data to measure summer reading. Many students freely indicated that they did not read any books over the summer, but it is possible that a greater

percentage of students did not read a single book than the self-reported data suggests. At the same time, it is unlikely that more students in the SRI classroom would over-report the number of books read than students in the BAU classroom. Thus, the use of self-reported data should not have influenced the meaningful difference found between the percentage of students in the SRI and BAU classrooms who reported reading at least one book.

In addition, although a goal of this study was to help students self-select books that they would enjoy reading during the summer months, some students in the SRI classroom reported not enjoying all of their books during the summer. This finding may help to explain why students in the SRI classroom were more likely to read at least one book during the summer than students in the BAU classroom, but were no more likely to read three books than their peers in the control condition. Although all students were told that they could select different books if they did not enjoy a book they were reading, further study might explore whether an option to exchange books that students did not like for new ones might encourage more reading.

The present study also addresses just two of the potential barriers to reading books during the summer months: difficulties self-selecting and accessing books. Other factors, such as activities that compete for adolescents' time, such as social media use (Twenge, Martin, & Spitzberg, 2018), may explain a decline in book reading among adolescents. At the same time, integrating technology into summer reading experiences may serve as a meaningful tool for enhancing students' comprehension of texts (Esteves & Whitten, 2011), motivating students to improve their literacy skills (Li, Snow, & White, 2015), and capitalizing on the benefits of new literacies on learning (Coiro, 2012). Future research might incorporate technology as a tool for fostering adolescent reading during the summer.

Despite these limitations, findings point to simple ways in which educators might help students self-select books to read during the summer. Teachers might solicit book recommendations from faculty, staff, and students to identify a wide range of high-interest, age-appropriate books to introduce students to during the school year. Showing book trailers—often available on book publisher websites—and video clips of interviews with authors has the potential to focus students' attention on the content of texts. Dedicating one or more class periods to book speed dating events gives students exposure to a wide range of genres and book titles in a short period of time. Encouraging peer-to-peer recommendations can facilitate a sense of relatedness to one another and to texts. Promoting self-reflection of books and purposes for reading and encouraging students to keep a log of books that they want to read may help students more easily decide which books to read outside of the classroom. Not all schools can purchase summer reading materials for students, but schools may allow students to take books out of school libraries or work with community partners to increase students' home access to books. They may establish local book drives, explore national book distribution programs, apply for small grants to increase students' personal book ownership, or help students expand their access to books through free digital options (Walker, 2019). By both dedicating class time to helping students explore summer reading options that interest them and increasing home access to books, educators can minimize barriers to summer reading and foster greater reading enjoyment outside of school.

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