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## Introduction

Summer learning loss, or “summer slide”, is a well-documented phenomenon that can have particularly harmful impacts on literacy development in elementary school students. Studies have shown that students in grades 3 through 5 can lose up to 20% of literacy gains during the summer.<sup>1</sup> Compounding this loss has been the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in disrupted learning structures for students over the past two years. Connecticut state reading data from 2022, highlights some of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on literacy development in young learners with just over one-third of Stamford 3<sup>rd</sup> graders (37%) achieving the state standards on the ELA assessment.<sup>2</sup> Disaggregating these results by race/ethnicity further highlights the inequities facing our Black and Latino students as less than a quarter of Black and Hispanic/Latino students achieved mastery compared to more than half of white and Asian students. Knowing that all students, regardless of their performance on standardized tests, benefit from literacy engagement during the summer, Stamford Cradle to Career (SC2C) has collaborated with our youth-serving community partners and Stamford’s Ferguson Library to run the Stamford Summer Literacy Initiative (SSLI) for the past three years. **In 2022, the SSLI reached 116 students with literacy support across three camps in Stamford.**

Each of the three summers SC2C has run the SSLI have been wildly different presenting a unique set of challenges as we seek to evaluate the impact of this initiative at this critical juncture. This report will provide a summary of the 2022 initiative and outcomes and will also share recommendations for future programming ideas based on a review of the past three years as we seek to determine the direction of this initiative.

## 1. Project Background

The SSLI provides opportunities to reinforce literacy lessons from the school year through small group support and a robust, literacy-rich summer program environment that emphasizes ways children can learn literacy skills through everyday interactions. The initiative is based off a successful model of summer literacy support used by a United Way collaborative in Worcester, MA. The Worcester model provided staff with ongoing professional development and support, and created “literacy rich” environments where, no matter the activity or child’s reading level, students would be exposed to practices that promote the building of literacy skills throughout the summer. Using these combined efforts, the Worcester initiative found it was able to reduce student’s summer learning loss by 85-90%<sup>3</sup>.

### 1.1 Target Population

Participants for the SSLI are drawn from partner summer camp sites with a focus on children in grades K-3, particularly, those who are below benchmark based in specific sections of their end-

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<sup>1</sup> Austrew, Ashley. 2019. “How to Prevent Your Kids from Losing What They Learned in School During Summer Vacation.” <https://www.scholastic.com/parents/books-and-reading/raise-a-reader-blog/summer-slide.html> (September 15, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> [https://public-edsight.ct.gov/performance/smarter-balanced-achievement-participation?language=en\\_US](https://public-edsight.ct.gov/performance/smarter-balanced-achievement-participation?language=en_US)

<sup>3</sup> <https://unitedwaycm.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Impact-Story-Summer-Literacy-Initiative.pdf>

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of-year district literacy assessment known as DIBELS. Although demographic and income data are not collected by SC2C, the children served by our partner summer camps are predominantly from low-income households and are demographically reflective of the populations not meeting benchmark standards within the Stamford Public Schools (SPS). SC2C is able to access end of year reading data through a data sharing agreement with SPS. All participants in our partner programs are offered the opportunity to sign a data release waiver allowing SC2C to share their child’s data with our community partner and literacy coaches to better serve students in need of support. Campers who do not sign the release form, or those from the local charter school and neighboring towns, participate in the large group literacy block and may be included in small group support if the literacy coach at that location identifies a need for additional help based on their interaction with the student.

Table 1 below looks at the children served during the summer of 2022. Some considerations when viewing the table:

- Camps provide SC2C with a list of children who have registered for their program. SC2C compiles these lists into a master document and pulls in their end of year reading scores where applicable. SC2C then recommends the students who would benefit from small group instruction based on cutoffs determined by the literacy coaches. From here, SC2C created attendance tracking documents for those students identified for small group instruction but does not ask coaches to track attendance for all students; this is done through the camps. Therefore, of the 379 children who had signed up for the three camps, SC2C only has attendance for those students who were marked present by literacy coaches during the six weeks.
- Summer school pulled many students out of Boys and Girls Club (BGC) in particular. BGC provided SC2C with a list of students they knew were attending summer school despite having registered at BGC but we noticed some of these students bounced back and forth between summer school and BGC.
- 16 children were flagged for small group support but never attended. 14/16 ended up attending summer school instead.
- 17 children were not flagged initially for small group instruction but were added by the literacy coaches. 9/17 were kindergarteners who received “push-in” support from the literacy coach. 4/17 were second graders attending schools other than SPS and therefore we did not have previous literacy data available. The literacy coach for that grade identified a need so they were provided with support but not a pre/post assessment due to time restrictions. 3/17 were third graders who were flagged as in need by the literacy coach but were not assessed pre/post due to poor attendance.
- Post- tests were given to students who coaches felt received enough support to be reevaluated after the six weeks of instruction. This was left to the coaches’ discretion.



**Table 1: Participant Population**

Indicator	Overall		BGC		ROSCCO		INTEMPO*	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<b>Total Children Signed Up for Camp</b>	<b>379**</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total Flagged for Small Group Support</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>49%</b>
<b>Total Children Attended 1+ Days</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>46%</b>
<b>Total Children Attended 5+ Days</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Total Children with Pre/Post Assessment</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Kindergarten	22	34%	17	31%	5	45%	N/A	N/A
Gr. 1	11	17%	10	19%	1	9%	N/A	N/A
Gr. 2	23	35%	18	33%	5	45%	N/A	N/A
Gr. 3	9	14%	9	17%	0	0%	N/A	N/A

\* INTEMPO only met for three weeks at the end of the summer. Though literacy coaches did do a pre/post with some students, the limited contact with literacy support (max 5 or 6 days) compared to students in the other two programs does not support the use of these assessments towards the larger analysis.

\*\* Three children attended both BGC and INTEMPO or ROSCCO and INTEMPO. They are included in the total for each camp, but the overall value is the **unique** number of children served.

## 2. Project Setup

Using the Results Based Accountability (RBA) model for outcomes measurement, SC2C designed the SSLI around the following goal statement and three key questions:

*Goal: Stamford children participating in select summer camps will engage in literacy-rich activities that foster a love of reading, while offering opportunities for select students to receive personalized instruction to boost their reading abilities.*

- 1) How much are we doing?
- 2) How well are we doing it?
- 3) Is anyone better off?

A full breakdown of the SSLI RBA framework can be found in Table 3.

The SSLI program ran for six weeks across two partner locations, Boys and Girls Club (BGC) and ROSCCO. A third location, INTEMPO ran a literacy camp for three weeks at the end of the summer after the other two programs had ended. Four literacy coaches and a literacy coordinator provided support to the partner organizations. All coaches were trained educators with literacy credentials. **New in 2022, each location instituted a dedicated one hour “literacy block”.** This literacy block was a need identified by coaches in previous years. With earlier planning and program coordination we were able to execute this idea in 2022. During the literacy block

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coaches either pushed-in to the classroom working with all students in small groups or pulled out students requiring more help for small-group instruction while the remaining students read or did other literacy-focused activities. As in 2021, scheduling presented a challenge for consistency in instruction and is something to discuss further in planning for future program iterations.

In discussion with the literacy coaches prior to the start of the program, the cutoff for small group support used the Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) section of the DIBELS for grades K and 1 and the Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) and MAZE sections of the DIBELS for grades 2 and 3. Students not meeting benchmark in these areas were flagged for support. Children who did not have data release forms were recommended but their scores not shared so coaches only knew they would benefit from instruction but were unable to see how far off benchmark they were and in which areas.

Unlike previous years, literacy coaches in 2022 approached their student support differently based on their assigned grade and number of children flagged for support. At ROSCCO, there were fewer children meeting the cutoff for literacy coach support, so this location had one full-time coach and our literacy coordinator supported as needed, particularly with any EL students. Boys and Girls Club had our largest number of students which necessitated three coaches and the support of the literacy coordinator. The volume of kindergarteners in need at BGC lead to the coach for this grade making the decision to push into the full classroom and provide support using a different model than other grades. The models of instruction used by each coach are detailed in Table 2 below.

One of the challenges evaluating this program across the three years has been the changing way instruction is delivered to students. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the delivery of instruction in our first year, with the entire program being run virtually. In 2021, coaches were in-person, but the way instruction was conducted was different than 2022, based on the number of students and preference of the literacy coaches. Identifying a more consistent method of delivery, while leaving room for professionals to adapt to the needs of their students, must be a key consideration for future programming.

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**Table 2: Literacy Support Focus by Grade and Partner Location**

Location	Grade	Small Group Literacy Focus	Larger Class Focus
ROSCCO	Kindergarten & 1 <sup>st</sup> Grade (combined)	2 Groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group 1 – focused on blending and decoding, CVC (consonant vowel consonant words, recognizing and producing rhyme via games, working on decodable text.</li> <li>Group 2 – focused on beginning and ending sounds and matching letter names with sounds</li> </ul>	Literacy coach provided packets for camp staff to conduct read-alouds and other literacy focused activities like coloring sight-words, rhyming activities, RAZ kids books with teacher linked activities.
ROSCCO	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	2 Groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group 1 – children with lower skills and higher need to build reading skills so focus was on this.</li> <li>Group 2 – more experienced readers so focus was on comprehension.</li> </ul>	
ROSCCO	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	1 Group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus was on reading followed by comprehension via conversations about character, plot, solutions, setting.</li> </ul>	
BGC	Kindergarten	Met everyday with literacy coach “pushing” into classroom to work with all students due to the large number of students requiring support. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>M/W/F – children listened to a teacher read aloud with a focus on comprehension and retelling.</li> <li>T/Th – Literacy coach did a rotation of stations with children using resources from the Florida Center for Literacy. Counselors and coach would rotate tables and do activities centered around CVC words, syllable segmenting and sorting, beginning sounds and BOB read aloud books.</li> </ul>	
BGC	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	3 Groups of students pulled out for support. Met with them daily. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Started with Hegerty, then did read aloud for comprehension. Children also did OG boards for blending focusing on silent e recognition and blends</li> </ul>	Children not pulled-out would do a mix of independent reading, literacy worksheets, read alouds, and partner reading overseen by BGC counselors.

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Location	Grade	Small Group Literacy Focus	Larger Class Focus
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students also did journaling to practice writing skills using prompts</li> </ul>	
BGC	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	5 Groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literacy coach would read picture books aloud to students then ask questions about retelling the story to work on comprehension.</li> <li>Focus on character traits, 5 finger retelling, as well as some writing worksheets.</li> <li>Also did activities focused on sight word reviews and word writing practice.</li> </ul>	Counselors would read chapter books aloud to the larger remaining group and ask questions about what was read. They would then do some literacy games focused on rhyming with students. Counselors read a total of 4 books throughout the summer.
BGC	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	4 Groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Started with large group story time then pulled out students needing additional attention.</li> <li>Each meeting started with a book read then the focus shifted to writing to help children with comprehension and storytelling. Students journaled about their favorite part of the story, the characters, solutions, and settings.</li> </ul>	Large group story time read aloud for all students.

**Table 3: SSLI RBA Framework**

Question	Measure
<b>How much are we doing?</b>	# of students receiving literacy support (attended 1+ days)
	# of hours of literacy coach instruction
	# of students assessed with pre and post literacy assessment (DIBELS)
	# of PD sessions
	# of hours of PD sessions
<b>How well are we doing it?</b>	% of students assessed pre/post on literacy development
	Average number of days attended by students
<b>Is anyone better off?</b>	% of students whose assessment score did not decline (DIBELS)

## 2.1 Professional Development

Since its inception in the 2019/20 school year, the SSLI started with a series of professional development workshops throughout the year. These workshops are designed to help our out-of-school-time providers learn more about the way children develop literacy skills, how Stamford Public Schools teaches literacy, and how staff can engage in activities that reinforce these skills. These workshops, run by Stamford Public Schools leadership responsible for elementary curriculum development and assessments, tackle the development of literacy skills in three parts: oral language, phonemic awareness, phonics, with additional workshops covering assessments and other literacy related topics as time allows. **Since the inaugural year in 2020, SC2C and SPS have conducted 12 workshops totaling 16.5 hours of professional development.**

**Table 4: Professional Development Opportunities (2020-2022)**

Date	Workshop	Hours	Total Attended
24-Jan-20	EGR Training 1: Oral Language	1.5	49
28-Feb-20	EGR Training 2: Phonemic Awareness	1.5	40
24-Feb-21	EGR Training 1: Assessments	1.5	25
24-Mar-21	EGR Training 2: Oral Language	1.5	27
28-Apr-21	EGR Training 3: Phonemic Awareness	1.5	24
26-May-21	EGR Training 4: Phonics	1.5	14
23-Jun-21	EGR Training 5: Summer Reading	1.5	9
23-Jun-22	EGR: SSLI PD for Boys & Girls Club	1	32
23-Jun-22	EGR: SSLI PD for ROSCCO	1	49
19-Jul-22	EGR: SSLI PD for INTEMPO	1	3
25-Jul-22	EGR: SSLI PD for INTEMPO	1	8
15-Nov-22	EGR PD1: SPS Assessments	2	25

## 2.2 Literacy Instruction & Engagement

As mentioned earlier, instruction in 2022 varied by grade and location due to class size and need. The primary objective of the SSLI is to infuse literacy into all parts of the student’s experience at



each camp. This could be playing a rhyming game while waiting for the bus to go on a field trip, to having staff do a story read aloud during the designated literacy block. A big improvement in 2022 was the creation of a dedicated literacy block at each location. Lasting one hour, this time was used to provide targeted support to students in need, allow all students to participate in free reading, and to reinforce literacy concepts through read alouds to the larger group. Each location had one hour dedicated to reading daily, with Friday's generally reserved for events and field trips.

Previous years, SC2C had hoped to conduct more outreach to families to continue building awareness about the importance of early literacy skills in children and how families can reinforce these skills at home. However, the pandemic limited our ability to engage the way we had hoped and 2022 provided us with the first opportunity to explore building more engagement with families at our partner sites. During the six weeks, SC2C conducted two "meet-and-greets" during camp pick up at ROSCCO and BGC. We showcased student work, had literacy coaches on hand to talk to families about the work we were doing, and on one occasion at each location worked with the Ferguson Library to bring the Book Mobile and give away free books to families. Only one family event was held at INTEMPO due to their short time frame. In addition to the meet-and-greets, coaches continued the 2021 practice of sending home bi-weekly updates with children so families could learn more about what students were doing and how they could support that work at home. These fliers were in both English and Spanish. However, interviews with the families after the program made clear that, like last year, the reach of these handouts was limited with many families not realizing these items were being sent home.

## 2.3 Data Collection

Data was collected from a variety of sources and focused on both quantitative and qualitative data. Literacy coaches kept track of attendance for only students they met with regularly and recorded assessment results into an Excel spreadsheet. SC2C's data manager conducted a group feedback session with all literacy coaches at the end of the program where they shared their thoughts on specific questions. The data manager also conducted one-on-one interviews with each partner location after the program ended to learn from their perspective what worked well and how the SSLI could be improved. Lastly, Melanie Amador, one of SC2C's parent ambassadors, called seven parents from Boys and Girls Club and asked these parents about their experience with the program. Five out of the seven were aware about our work with students at BGC during the summer but the families were mixed about how much they knew about the actual program despite efforts to send home fliers and conduct meet and greets with families.

## 3. Outcomes

Outcomes based on our RBA framework can be found in Table 5. **Overall, 116 students attended at least one day of programming with 85 students attending at least 5 days of programming. Of the 116 students, 65 students received both a pre and post assessment.**

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The number of children reached in 2022 was similar to our 2021 total. However, the challenge has continued to be tracking the impact of our efforts over time as students average about eight to nine days of attendance across the six weeks. Furthermore, the pre and post-assessments, while easy to administer and helpful, are more surface level screening tools used to understand where additional diagnostics should be used to pinpoint a child’s specific literacy needs. That said, there is a clear need and desire for summer literacy support for young students. Families our parent ambassador spoke with indicated this, families we met during student pick up indicated this, and teachers and camp sites reinforced this perspective in our interviews and debrief sessions.

“Kids should practice more reading so yes keep supporting them please”  
 – *Boys & Girls Club Caregiver feedback*

Table 5 below shows the results of the RBA measures for the SSLI in both 2022 and the three-year totals.

**Table 5: 2022 Stamford Summer Literacy RBA Outcomes**

Question	Measure	2022 Outcomes	2020-2022 Outcomes
<b>How much are we doing?</b>	# of students receiving literacy support (attended 1+ days)	116 students	269 students
	# of students assessed both literacy development (DIBELS)	65 students	170 students
	# of PD sessions	4 sessions	10 sessions
	# of hours of PD sessions	4 hours	13.5 hours
<b>How well are we doing it?</b>	% of students assessed pre/post on literacy development	56%	69%
	Average number of days attended by students	9 days	8 days
<b>Is anyone better off?</b>	% of students whose assessment score did not decline (DIBELS)	65%	78%

### 3.1 Assessment Results

**In 2022, 65% of students given a pre and post-assessment showed no drop in baseline scores.** Though down from previous years, the execution of programming in 2022 varied from that of 2020 and 2021. In 2020, the program worked intensively with a small group of children in a virtual format only. The more individualized attention and previous experience spending the later half of the year under remote learning may have also influenced these results as the EOY scores were lower for students across the board allowing more room for growth. In 2021, coaches had pressed to use a different section of DIBELS that they felt better met their needs for students in that year. In 2021, coaches assessed students using the Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) section and therefore it is hard to know if gains made in this section would have been as positive in 2022. Additionally, in 2021, coaches did not use EOY scores but rather redid the PSF section during the first week of camp using the middle of year benchmarks to better understand how far off the benchmark students were in attainment of this literacy building block

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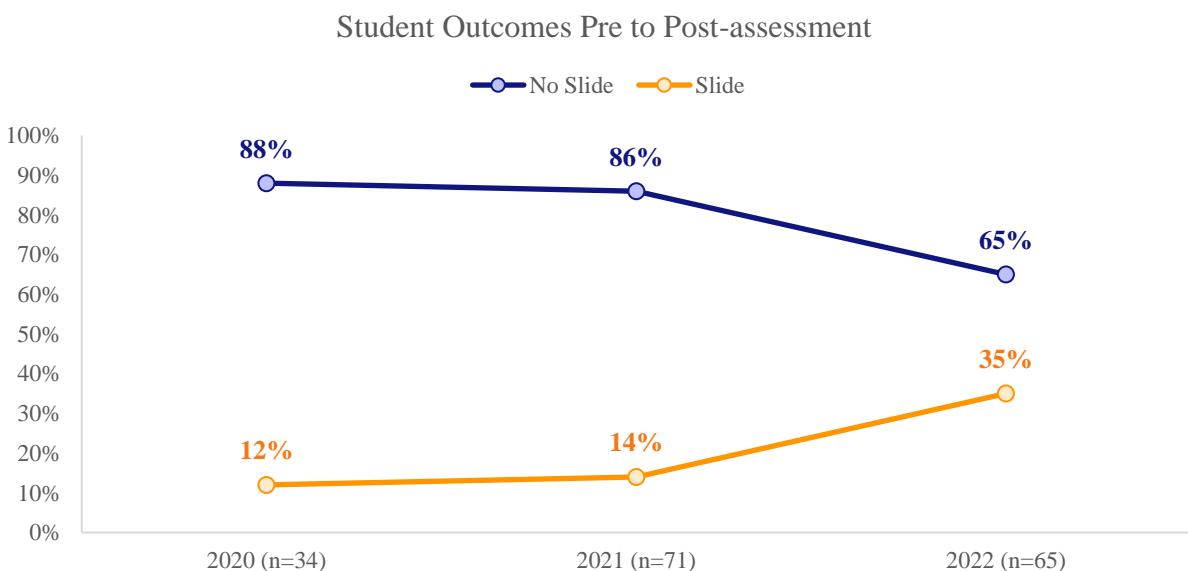


after the year and a half spent in a mix of remote and hybrid learning. All of this to say that when looking at chart 1 below, we are showing a comparison of outcomes pre to post over the past three years, but there are many caveats to consider when comparing these results over time.

In 2022, our literacy coaches decided on three different sections of the DIBELS assessment to use as their pre/post-test. For Kindergarten and first-graders, coaches decided to look at students who were below benchmark in the Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) section which uses Correct Letter Sounds and Words Read Correctly to gauge proficiency. In second and third-grade, coaches used the Oral Reading Fluency and MAZE sections of the DIBELS assessment to identify students in need of further support. During the last week of the program, students who had been attending with regularity were reassessed by our literacy coaches.

The way the DIBELS assessment is scored there are wide numeric ranges that correspond to one of four outcome bands: Above, Benchmark, Below, and Well Below. Since the SSLI started, SC2C has been looking at changes in numeric scores to indicate students who did not demonstrate summer slide by maintaining or gaining in the section used for pre and post-testing. However, we have recognized since the inception the limitations to this approach. One limitation is the DIBELS tool is a screener meaning it is not meant to be used as a diagnostic of where specifically a child is struggling with literacy development. There is potential we are missing students who would benefit from small group interventions but are falling just above our cutoff to be identified. DIBELS also fails to pick up on some of the smaller gains students receive through small and large group literacy time at our partner camps. But with a lack of a clear alternative allowing coaches to administer quick assessments using a tool that all are familiar with, this is the option we have decided upon over the past three years. Chart 1 below represents the percentage of students given both assessments who did and did not show declines in scores from pre to post.

**Chart 1: SSLI Pre to Post-Assessment Outcomes**



## 4. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

This year the SSLI program was able to incorporate some of the lessons learned from 2021, such as adding an additional role of Literacy Coordinator to coordinate with the coaches, camps, and SC2C. We also created a dedicated literacy period during the day and coaches were onsite more reliably for four days instead of the two to three of years past. Lastly, our family engagement work continued to make good gains with our coaches and SC2C staff finding more opportunities to meet and interact with families during the summer in ways we were unable to previously. However, the program continues to yield important lessons based on the feedback of our valued stakeholders.

### 4.1 Lessons Learned: Fully Embedding Coaches into the Camp Program

In the current setup, coaches are hired through the library and SC2C coordinates with the camps and coaches to solidify hours and other logistics. What has come to light through our end of program interviews over the past two years is that there is a need for coaches to be part of the camp staff where they are attending staff meetings and have insight into the weekly schedules and last-minute changes that often come up during the summer. Going forward SC2C needs to work with our partners to rethink how coaches are onboarded at each location and what a weekly schedule would look like building in more flexibility for unplanned activities that occur at the camps.

### 4.2 Lessons Learned: Restructuring the Model

What we have learned over the past three years is that creating a consistent environment and measuring impact is a challenge. Further complicating this work is the loss of many students to summer school after the first week of camp. Working closer with Stamford Public Schools (SPS) to rethink how the program would best benefit children across a range of need and how it will work in collaboration with summer school will be necessary during the 2023 winter months. Creating a more standard way of identifying cutoffs for students who would benefit from small group instruction and how to show growth or no slide in skills during the six weeks of programming is another key consideration during the winter. This new way of evaluating impact should be aligned with how the school district assesses impact during their summer school program for a closer comparison of the two support systems.

One idea has been to coordinate with SPS on embedding a SPS teacher(s) full time at each camp who would run programming that parallels summer school for students who do not chose to attend summer school. Another idea is not conducting small group instruction and instead, with the help of SPS, focusing on building camp staff capacity to have a robust understanding of how children develop literacy skills, what kinds of activities they can and should be doing during the day to support this, and how they can create literacy rich environments within their locations. Interviews with literacy coaches and comments from families also indicate the need to incorporate more instruction and opportunities for children to write during the summer. This was something literacy coaches began to include in 2022 but solidifying what the need is and how writing can be incorporated with or without formal instruction is a consideration for 2023.

## 4.3 Lessons Learned: Family Engagement

COVID-19 hampered our efforts to engage families in the literacy process in 2020 and 2021. 2022 allowed us to start building these engagement opportunities with families during the summer. SC2C would like to continue building on these efforts and offer more formal opportunities for families to learn about how they can support their child's literacy at home and why it is important to do so. Feedback from interviews with camp leaders also identified an interest in helping adults develop their own literacy skills and this could be an area for further discussion in the lead up to 2023. SC2C has begun planning and implementing family literacy workshops in fall/winter 2022-2023, in collaboration with SPS, and will use feedback from these sessions for improvement and planning for the summer.

## 4.4 Lessons Learned: Improved Coordination and Communication

Feedback from interviews indicated a need to continue improving the communication and coordination of all the partners involved in this SSLI. In 2022, there were improvements in this area as we started planning earlier holding more regular meetings between the camps, SC2C, and the library. However, as mentioned earlier having literacy coaches more involved in the camp meetings and having ongoing meetings where all three main stakeholders are present would help improve coordination. Additionally, working earlier with SPS to identify students being invited to summer school and coordinating this announcement to families with the opening of summer camp signup for community partners would help both SPS and community partners better plan for their needs prior to the start of summer.