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**Developing an Appreciation for Diverse Literary Forms through Summer Reading:
An Outcome-Based Planning and Evaluation Approach**

Introduction

Libraries have a historical and cultural tradition of storing and providing access to a vast array of books and other forms of printed texts — from classic novels to poetry to journals to newspapers and everything in between. Since the late 19th century, libraries also have a tradition of providing services to children. Part of this move to include children was the goal of fostering a love of reading in them at an early age and providing the skills necessary to remain life-long readers and learners (Walter 2). As children’s librarians, we offer a multitude of services that cater to this aspiration. Many of these are deep traditions, dating back to the very first children’s rooms in public libraries. For example, story hours and summer reading programs were among the services provided in early children’s rooms (Walter 32, 35). Tradition should not be the only reason we continue to offer these programs, however. This is especially true in this era of accountability and evaluations. Since public libraries operate on government funds, there is a need to quantify services and give reasons for their continuation. Of course, we also want to ensure that the services we provide to children actually foster some degree of positive development in each child.

The outcome-based planning and evaluation model presented by Dresang, Gross and Holt provides a means by which children's and youth services librarians can develop programs to achieve self-determined outcomes. The goal of the OBPE model is to help librarians determine "the results of library programs and services...to plan for the desired results, and to evaluate how well they are achieved" (Dresang, Gross, Holt ix). One traditional children's program provided in some fashion by nearly all public libraries and which librarians continue to develop, is the summer reading program (Fiore xiii). The typical summer library program usually follows a pattern: there is a theme, incentives for reading certain amounts, related programming, etc. These programs, however, are often done just for the sake of doing them, and are often viewed as marketing tools for the library in question. Summer programs can positively impact children and as librarians we need to outline what we hope to accomplish through the summer reading program and other services we provide. In this paper I will present an outcome-based plan and evaluation to increase knowledge and appreciation for a variety of literary forms via a summer library program. First I will explain the outcome and the need to address it, especially during the summer months. Then I will develop the plan needed to meet the outcome including objectives and methods of evaluation.

Desired Outcome

The desired outcome for the school age children in my library is for them to develop a knowledge and appreciation for a diverse range of literary forms. Writing and stories come in many different packages: novels, non-fiction texts, poetry, drama, oral storytelling and even graphic novels and video games. Young readers need to experience this multiplicity of forms for many reasons.

One of the most important reasons to expose children to the diversity of literary forms is just to let them know that they have many options when it comes to choosing materials for voluntary reading and that no type is superior to another. For many children, the only reading model they have is the one they acquire at school, so reading may be seen as a task to get done and out of the way. They may also have the impression that only the reading of “quality” literature counts as real reading. At the library, we can demonstrate to kids that there are numerous ways to appreciate and experience stories. Walter acknowledges that one necessary skill for young readers is that “they have heard appealing stories read to them, have watched grownups around them read for information and for pleasure, and are eager to read themselves” (63). While this recommendation pertains specifically to preschool children, it is still important for all children to be continually exposed to various forms of literature.

An increased number of options for reading also means a child may read a greater volume of books than previously. Reluctant readers of traditional novels may be eager readers of poetry or graphic novels, for example. The important thing is to get them to read and to read a lot. “Both the number of books read and participating in a group where reading and literacy activities are valued add significantly to improved reading abilities, achievement, and attitudes” (Fiore 6). A wider selection of materials will hopefully foster a boost in the amount of reading a child accomplishes.

Similarly, a child’s writing skills also depend on an exposure to varied literary forms. “A good writing program will expose children to different types of fiction and nonfiction—through both reading and writing assignments—to help children find their individual strengths” (Broach 18). All of these skills help children become better students and citizens.

Restrictions during the school year due to the increased standardized testing requirements may mean children are missing out on some of the less traditional forms of literature and storytelling. Many educators believe that a back to basics approach to literacy is the best strategy for the testing culture in schools today but, “an analysis of the thinking skills required on many state tests shows that students need to be able to read a variety of texts for understanding” (Stripling 3). Indeed, exposure to all kinds of writing seems to be beneficial for students’ cognitive development.

Experiences with different literary forms help children to succeed in school and in everyday life. “Today’s youths must learn to comprehend text in a variety of formats, from novels to scientific essays, from news Web sites to television documentaries, from editorials to consumer reports” (Stripling 4). Children need to have more than just basic reading and writing skills. Indeed, “literacy...also involves the ability to convey and recover meaning from a variety of different symbol systems (e.g., music, pictures, drama, reading, dancing, speaking, writing, painting, drawing, photography, video, hypertext)” (McPherson, “Multiplying Literacies” 60).

By reading and becoming familiar with these varied forms, children develop the skills necessary to draw connections between them. “Each type of literature presented to a young reader serves two important functions: to develop a schema for that literary genre and to encourage the application of thinking skills in a variety of literary engagements” (Smith 440). In other words, a child can relate two different poems to one another and also relate the poems to a novel.

Of course, we cannot just expect kids to find these materials on their own. “We wish that children needed only to be given substantial blocks of time to read and easy access to

appropriate books to foster reading development, but they also need to be taught” (Allington and McGill-Franzen 74). For instance, a child may choose books to read by browsing the fiction shelves. This behavior, though, prevents him or her from discovering the poetry books or the nonfiction books shelved by Dewey Number. Through library programs, we can teach children about all of their reading options. This may be in the form of guest speakers or bibliographies. Specific programming ideas to address this outcome will be discussed further under the specific plan.

We could develop many programs to help meet this outcome. I chose to plan a summer library program because 1) the program structure is already institutionalized, 2) the length allows us to focus on a different form each week, and 3) the school age children have time to commit to free reading. “Children with early and frequent exposure to literature tend to develop sophisticated language structure. Literature-based summer library programs provide this exposure” (Fiore 2).

Using the evaluations developed with the OBPE model, we can measure our success in meeting the desired outcome. Besides the benefits of the selected outcome enumerated above, however, summer reading programs also help children in other ways, especially in the retention of the reading skills they acquire during the school year.

Many studies have concluded that children who are not exposed to reading during the summer months generally return to school with diminished reading skills. “Barbara Heyns (1978) found that children who read six or more books over the summer increased their vocabulary scores and their general reading levels more than children who did not read at all” (Walter 33). It seems that more advantaged children are those that actually read during the summer as summer setback more greatly impacts poor children. “Most of the large gap in

reading achievement at grade 6 could be attributed to summer reading setback” (Allington and McGill-Franzen 69). Thus it is important to market the program to all children in the community, but especially those who may not otherwise have access to reading materials during the summer.

The nature of summer library programs also encourages reading widely and reading often. The use of reading logs and incentives helps to encourage reluctant readers, though it is also important to emphasize reading for the sake of reading. “Many children and teens are motivated to participate in summer reading programs through the use of incentives and contests” (Fiore 7). Needless to say, programs should be noncompetitive and reward all reading.

Gathering Information

(Unless otherwise noted, the logistics of the OBPE model detailed below have been pulled from Dresang, Gross and Holt.)

The first phase of the OBPE consists of gathering information to understand what programs are needed, what outcomes to target and how to conduct evaluations. As I am not working with an actual library, all of the baseline data cited above comes from existing sources. Before implementing the summer program, though, it is important to gather some initial data to see what kind of exposure children already have to the various literary forms we plan to cover in our program. The information from existing sources details the importance of this outcome, but cannot give information specific to the community served by the library. We will also need the baseline data to gauge the success of the program in achieving the outcome.

To gather this data, we will administer a survey at the start of the summer program. This survey can be filled out as part of the registration for the summer program, but for privacy purposes will be a separate form with no personal identifiers and the surveys will not be kept with the registration information. The participating children should complete the survey, since they are who the outcome targets. Depending on the number of children participating in the program, it may not be necessary to sample every child. I have designed a short questionnaire that should be appropriate for the reading level of the children participating in this program (ages 8-12). By analyzing the results of the survey, we will know what percentages of children experience each type of literature often, sometimes, or never. The sample survey is provided in appendix A.

Developing Programs and Performing Evaluations

We have broad outcome for the children targeted in this plan, but we can also refine the description to include particular skills. By identifying these skills, we have a better idea of what the outcome looks like and how to measure it. For our outcome, here are some more specific skills:

1. Children will be able to identify literary forms from excerpts of materials
2. Children will know where to locate these materials in a library and elsewhere
3. Children can articulate their responses to the various types through discussion, writing, drawing and other forms of expression
4. Children will choose from various types when selecting materials for voluntary reading

An important aspect of OBPE involves knowing when an outcome is achieved. We measure this through different indicators like circulation statistics, surveys, interviews or tests. Of course some of these are easier and less costly than others to execute. In order to determine if our outcome is met, we will use a few different techniques.

One of the core components of a summer library program is the reading log. For our program, we will have children record the time they spend reading each day on a specially designed sheet. “Counting time spent reading or being read to rather than the number of books read or heard really puts the emphasis on the act of reading” (Fiore 72). Each week, there will also be a way to record the completion of a bonus activity related to the literary form presented the previous week. For example, for the poetry week, a child will receive a bonus if they spend 30 minutes reading or writing poetry. A sample reading log is provided in the appendix.

We will track the completion of these bonus activities each week to see what percentages of children are exploring new literary forms. We hope that 70% of children who turn in logs that week also complete the bonus activity. This is one objective of the outcome-based plan.

The issue of incentives is a controversial topic for any type of reading program. For this summer program, all children who turn in reading logs and participate over the course of the summer will receive a book of their choice and a certificate at the end of the summer. On a week-to-week basis, any child who completes a reading log (with any amount of reading) will receive a small token and the completion of the bonus activity will earn an additional token. Since the community and library budget have a large bearing on what these items might be, I will not prescribe them here.

Besides the reading logs, a main focus of the summer program is the instruction of the different literary forms. This will be accomplished through weekly programming. Each week of the program will focus on a different literary form: novels, poetry, drama, oral storytelling, nonfiction materials, graphic novels and games. A programming activity each week will introduce children to the respective form through a variety of means. I will not delve into the specific logistics of the program from week to week, but will explore some of the activities that we can use for each form.

To quantify the success of these programs, we will track attendance each week, unobtrusively observe the program in action and have short questionnaire evaluations immediately following each program. The observation and survey are instant evaluations and can help in planning the other upcoming weekly programs. A sample survey is included in the appendix.

Novels

Novels are probably the most common literary form that children read in school, accounting for 80-90 percent of reading for primary grades (Benson 14). Even though children are very familiar with the form of fictional novels, we should not overlook them in our survey of literary forms. For an activity, librarians can present an assortment of interesting novels in the form of brief book talks. We can also invite an author to come speak about his or her books and the process of creating stories. Since speakers often cost a lot, Fiore also suggests virtual visits from authors (112). There are many other options to explore novels including having children write their own stories or talk about books orally or by writing reviews.

Poetry

Despite the fact that poetry permeates our world in many forms, many children see learning poetry as a sort of chore. Indeed much teaching of poetry involves tedious memorization and analysis of rhyme schemes. In order to foster an appreciation of this literary form, we should let the poetry speak for itself. “We do not have to ‘butcher’ poems...just reading, listening to, performing and responding to poetry offers rich learning experiences in and of itself” (Vardell 12).

There are many ways to expose children to poetry. One of the best ways is just to read poetry out loud. “Poetry is meant to be read aloud. Meaning is more clearly communicated when a poem is both read and heard” (Vardell 113). It is also important to invite children to participate in the reading through choral reading. Vardell also suggests many other means to involve children in poetry including having children find different types of poetry in the library, pairing poems with other forms of text, and allowing children the freedom to write and share their own poems.

Drama and plays

Drama, like the other literary forms noted here, offers a powerful means to develop various skills in children. Keith McPherson describes the many benefits drama can have in learning including “stimulating imagination...enhancing students’ social skills...[and] engaging students who struggle with traditional print-based narrative structures” (“Dramatic” 68).

Drama, of course, is meant to be performed. The best way to present this form is to invite a theater group to put on a program at the library. Most communities have local performing groups who specialize in performances for children. These programs are also good for bringing in entire families or other community members.

Children can also read plays, which they will no doubt be expected to do at some point in their schooling. There are many books that present Shakespeare for children, so this is a good way to introduce this form to children. One way to approach this would be to have children willing to read aloud participate in a reader's theater of an excerpt of a play.

Oral Storytelling

Oral storytelling is one of the oldest traditions in children's services, but nowadays is often overlooked as a service for school age children. Walter writes, "it has been my experience, however, that when exposed to traditional oral storytelling, even the most media-blitzed ten-year-old responds enthusiastically" (36). There is clearly some value in allowing children to listen to stories and imagine the characters and setting in their own minds.

Storytelling also lends itself well to performing in a library. Listening to stories engages different parts of the brain than reading. "Without the use of visual clues that are found when reading...having stories told provides motivation for developing good listening skills, enhances language skills, and contributes to social skills" (Fiore 119). Oral storytelling is also good for adding multicultural aspects to the summer program because it is an important tradition in many cultures.

Librarians trained in the art of storytelling can tell stories for the activity, but this is also a good opportunity to invite professional storytellers to visit.

Non-fiction and Informational Texts

While literacy instruction tends to focus on fictional works, as students progress through school they are also required to read and understand non-fiction texts. Vicki Benson proclaims the importance of ensuring that children are not just literate, but literate with information as provided in informational works (13). She also emphasizes that children understand the difference between the purpose, structure and language of non-fiction and fiction (14-15). These days, more and more informational books are being published, many of them of high quality and appeal to children.

For programming, librarians can introduce children to some of the richer information texts available as well as explain how to use library resources to locate books on a subject of the child's choosing. A scavenger hunt for different types of information on a particular subject will allow children to explore the variety of non-fiction texts available in the library.

Graphic Novels

The literary forms outlined above generally constitute what many educators would consider quality literature. For the most part, though, graphic novels and comics do not usually fall into this category. They are traditionally viewed as junk reading that detracts from higher forms of literacy. Nevertheless, kids tend to read comic books and graphic novels. We can use graphic novels as starting points for reluctant readers to eventually guide them to other forms of literature. "Before we can make kids read what we want them to, we must first make them want to read. If hooking kids on books requires us to do it their way, via comics and graphic novels, so be it. The end justifies the means" (McTaggart 46). But graphic novels

are increasingly becoming true works of art in their own right and promote the development of varied literacy skills:

Educators need not worry that graphic novels discourage text reading. Lavin (1998) even suggested that reading graphic novels may require more complex cognitive skills than the reading of text alone. Some English teachers use graphic novels to teach literary terms and techniques such as dialogue, and they use works like the Victorian murder novel *The Mystery of Mary Rogers* (Geary, 2001) as a bridge to other classics of that period. (Schwarz 262-263)

Plus, the success of graphic novels by winning major literary awards and in book sales encourages the production of more quality works.

To introduce children to graphic novels, we can display the books and highlight their artwork. Book talking some notable examples that represent different genres and target various audiences can show children that graphic novels aren't just about superheroes. To encourage active participation, we can provide generic pages for which children can provide dialogue for the characters and then display the finished product in the children's room.

Games: Video games, board games and role-playing games

Many people may balk at the idea of including gaming in a summer library program. After all, games are not books and they may be what parents are trying to draw their children away from. There is significant research, however, that indicates that gaming provides many cognitive benefits. James Paul Gee reports that "good" gaming encourages active participation, the continual mastery of increasingly difficult tasks and collaboration with other players (2-3). Young users even make connections beyond the game itself:

In field studies we are conducting at the University of Wisconsin, we have watched seven-year-olds play Age of Mythology, read about mythology inside and outside the game on web sites, borrow books on mythology from the library, and draw pictures and write stories connected to the game and other mythological themes. They think about the connections between Age of Mythology and Age of Empires, between mythological figures and popular culture superheroes, and the connections of all of them to history and society. (Gee 1-2)

If we ignore the attraction of games to many of our young users, especially boys, we also miss the benefits that these games can provide to them. In addition to the advantages just described, games also provide some straightforward literacy skills. Role-playing games, for example, essentially tell a story in which the player is an important character. The basic stories presented in this medium parallel stories told in other forms. If we respect gaming in the library and present it as a valid form of learning and storytelling, we allow children the freedom to choose it as a valid option and to make the connections between games and other literary forms.

Planning a gaming program will take a lot of planning and probably investment if the library does not already stock gaming consoles and equipment. A successful program can include an introduction to various kinds of games, a talk by a game designer if feasible and plenty of time to interact with multiplayer games. Options can include tournament style gaming with video games and tables for simple dice-based role playing games.

For all of the literary forms, in addition to the weekly programming we need to create materials lists and displays for children to discover more items on their own. We also have to

ensure that we have enough materials of each type to circulate. This may involve buying more poetry books, say, if the existing collection is sparse.

The evaluation methods described above are known as formative evaluations. That is, they are conducted throughout the project. These are definitely helpful in assessing progress toward the outcome, but we also must conduct a summative evaluation at the end of the program. Since the desired outcome type is knowledge, it makes sense to test this knowledge with some sort of quiz. We will conduct a web-based quiz in game form to test some of the skills we hope children acquire. Children who complete the quiz will be eligible for a bonus incentive. Our objective for this evaluation is that children who complete the summer library program achieve at least a 70 percent on the quiz at the end of the summer. The quiz will also include some questions about how the children liked the program. Some sample questions are provided in the appendix.

Since the primary objective of this summer library program is the achievement of the outcome, I will not focus on the development of a theme for the program. The theme does play an important role in getting kids excited about the program and presenting a unified look. The elements of this outcome-based plan can be used in conjunction with a pre-packaged theme provided by a state or national association. For the 2006 program “Paws, Claws, Scales and Tales,” all of the materials presented at the weekly programs could relate to animals and the bonus activities could be recorded on a separate sheet from the provided reading log.

When conducting the initial survey and the ongoing and end evaluations, we must be careful to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of users according to the library’s policy. “Any user who participates in an evaluation of the library...should know what is being evaluated, why their opinions are being sought, and how their information will be used”

(Dresang, Gross, Holt 58). Since our program will evaluate children, we must decide whether the evaluation is part of the ordinary functioning of the library. For simple surveys, we can let the individual child decide if he or she would like to participate. Focus groups, however, will require parental permission (Dresang, Gross, Holt 59).

At the completion of the summer library program, children's library staff will meet to discuss the summative and formative evaluations. We will determine if the children met the objectives established and if we believe the outcome was achieved. This judgment will be based on the baseline data collected, participation numbers overall and at the weekly activities, the surveys conducted each week, the completion of the bonus activities on the reading logs, the quiz game and observations by library staff during the entire program. Depending on the results, the program could be implemented in future years or reworked to achieve the outcome in a different way. The program could also be extended to other groups like preschool children in story times or read-to-me programs or to teens in a similar summer reading program.

Appendix.**Table 1. Summary of OBPE Model**

How outcome was developed (source of information)	Various literature consulted expressed need to expose children to diverse forms of information and writing in their development of literacy and cognitive skills
Desired outcome type	Knowledge
Desired outcome	School age children participating in the summer library program will develop a knowledge and appreciation of diverse literary forms
Program description	During the 8-week summer library program, each week's activities will focus on a particular literary form (novels, poetry, drama, oral storytelling, nonfiction materials, graphic novels and games). Librarians will prepare materials lists and displays and invite guests and community members to contribute to programming.
Effect on program planning	Decide how to effectively present each form equally and how to encourage children to explore the forms independently.
Methods of evaluation	Children will record what kinds of literary forms they experience on their reading logs. Web-based quiz/game will test knowledge. Short questionnaires will determine success of weekly programs.
Indicators	Children read other literary forms as indicated on reading logs, answer questions accurately about various forms and respond positively to programs.
Objectives	70% of children who turn in a reading log also complete the bonus activity and score at least 70% on the end-of-program quiz; half of program participants fill out a survey each week
Application of (potential) evaluation results	Program could be repeated in the future for school age children or for younger or older children. Depending on results, changes can be made to certain aspects to make it more effective or appealing.

Baseline data collection survey:

Library Survey

Please circle the answer that best describes you.

I read FICTION BOOKS...	a lot	sometimes	never
I read NON-FICTION BOOKS...	a lot	sometimes	never
I read GRAPHIC NOVELS...	a lot	sometimes	never
I read POETRY...	a lot	sometimes	never
I read/watch PLAYS...	a lot	sometimes	never
I listen to STORIES...	a lot	sometimes	never
I play VIDEO GAMES...	a lot	sometimes	never

My favorite is _____.

Weekly program evaluation:

Program Survey

Session (circle one)

Week 1: Novels

Week 2: Poetry

Week 3: Drama/plays

Week 4: Oral storytelling

Week 5: Non-fiction

Week 6: Graphic Novels

Week 7: Games

How old are you? _____

How would you rate this program? (circle one)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

bad

okay

good

Will you be coming next week? (circle one) Yes No Maybe

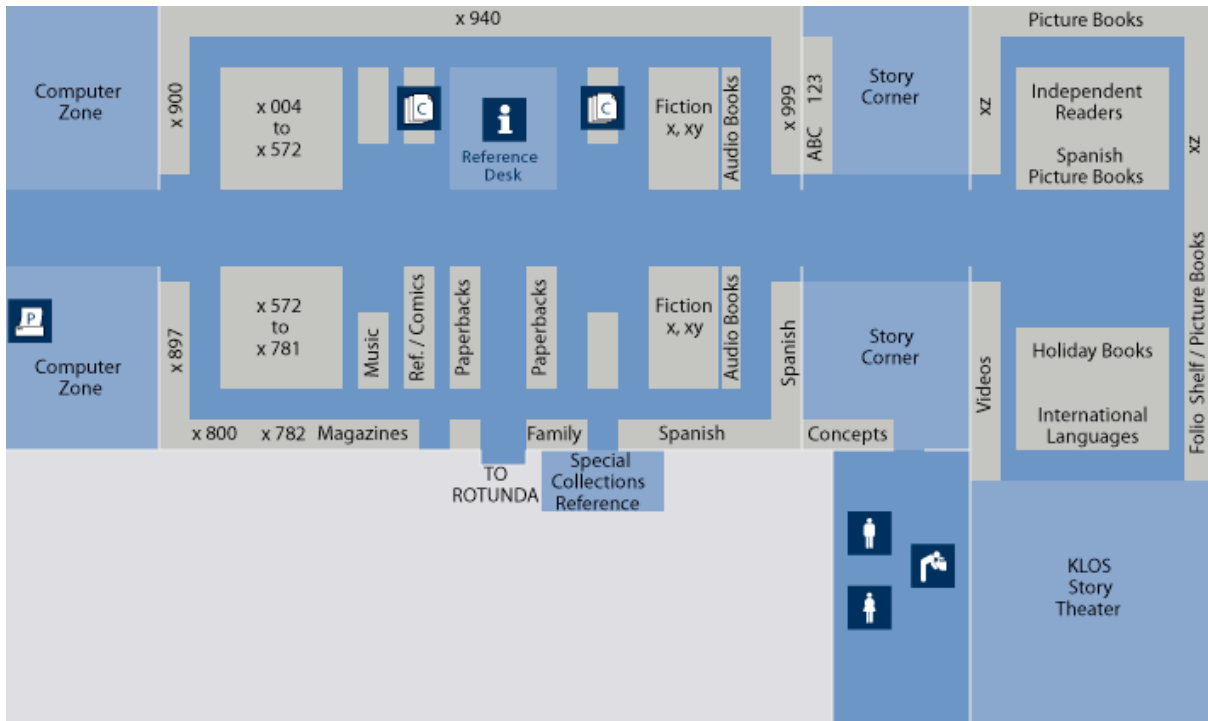
Some sample questions for web-based quiz:

1. The following passage is (choose one):

- a) fictional novel b) drama c) poetry d) non-fiction

Old King Cole
 Was a merry old soul,
 And a merry old soul was he;
 He called for his pipe,
 And he called for his bowl,
 And he called for his fiddlers three.
 Each fiddler, he had a fiddle,
 And a very fine fiddle had he;
 Twee-tweedle-dee, tweedle-dee, went the fiddlers,
 Oh, there's none so rare,
 As can compare
 With old King Cole and his fiddlers three!

2. Please click the area on the map where you can find poetry books:



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