

What is the community challenge?

Many research studies have underscored the importance of third-grade reading proficiency as it marks a pivotal point in a child's education when children make the transition from learning to read to reading to learn. Research demonstrates that students lose, on average, about a month's worth of academic progress in reading over the summer months. However, when these data are disaggregated by student income level, it is estimated that low-income students lose about two months of progress over the summer, while their middle-income peers actually increase slightly in their reading skills.

Program At-a-Glance

CNCS Program: Social Innovation Fund

Intervention: Jeffco Summer of Early Literacy (JSEL)

Subgrantee: Jeffco Schools Foundation

Intermediary: Mile High United Way (MHUW)

Focus Area: Education

Focus Population: At-risk elementary school students (grades K-6)

Community Served: Jefferson County, Colorado

What is the promising solution?

The Jeffco Summer of Early Literacy (JSEL) program is a six-week summer school program for elementary school students (K-6) in Jefferson County, Colorado. In the summer of 2014, JSEL was implemented at six schools and served 660 students, mainly K-3rd graders. JSEL targets literacy instruction through smaller group (no more than 15 to a classroom) and individual lessons, and uses Jeffco-produced Comprehensive Approach to Literacy Instruction (CALI) and Curriculum Alignment Project documents as guidelines. Teachers conduct assessments on a regular basis to tailor instruction. In addition, "Friday Folders" are sent home to keep families informed, provide academic tools, and gather feedback.

What was the purpose of evaluation?

The impact evaluation of the Jeffco Schools Foundation's JSEL was conducted by Augenblick, Palaich and Associates (APA) and completed in 2015. APA examined three years of data, 2012-2014, comparing K-3 students who participated in JSEL to similar students from the Jefferson County School District who did not participate. The study examined whether JSEL participants made greater progress in their reading proficiency than similar non-participants, and if there was a difference depending on the number of years students participated. APA compared scores on the DIBELS Next reading assessment that were collected both in the spring and fall prior to and following JSEL participation, and third-grade scores on the reading components of the Transitional Colorado Assessment Program (TCAP) standardized assessment.



An implementation evaluation was also conducted in the summer of 2014 by Jeffco Public Schools to assess the fidelity of the program and identify areas for improvement.

What did the evaluation find?

As a subgrantee of the Social Innovation Fund, the Jefferson Foundation engaged an independent evaluator to evaluate the impact of JSEL.

- Looking at data pooled from three years, JSEL participants in K-3 make greater progress in their reading proficiency than non-participants after one year of participation, with a difference equivalent to moving from the 50th to 54th percentile on the DIBELS Next assessment (effect size 0.10, $p < 0.05$).
- The sample was not large enough to detect a significant difference between JSEL participants and non-participants who scored “proficient” on TCAP results (administered to 3rd graders only; schools also switched to PARCC instead of TCAP in the last year of the study).
- There was also a statistically significant effect for participation in multiple years of JSEL, indicating increased participation was associated with higher test scores. For students who participated in three years of JSEL, this was the equivalent of moving from the 50th to the 61st percentile.

Based on focus groups, interviews, and survey responses, the implementation analysis found that:

- Most teachers, principals, and parents valued JSEL for student academic opportunities and teacher professional learning.
- All six sites used CALI structures and practices on a regular basis, although there were some differences in teachers’ practices related to writing instructions and interventions.

Notes on the evaluation

The originally envisioned five-year evaluation plan was truncated to three years. This resulted in a reduction in the number of JSEL students and comparison students included in the analysis, which reduced the statistical power and decreased the likelihood that it would detect a statistically significant effect of the JSEL program.

How is Jeffco using the evaluation findings to improve?

The Jeffco Foundation has grown JSEL during the summer of 2015 to 30 schools using support from Jeffco Public Schools. The evidence of program effectiveness was part of the information used by Jeffco Public Schools to support JSEL’s growth and expansion. Several changes were made to the 2015 programing in response to the implementation evaluation and changes in the amount of resources that program planners had at their disposal, including:

- Utilizing a universal intervention (Leveled Literacy Intervention) and resource (Reading A to Z);
- Adding the TRC/Reading 3D to assessments administered to participating students;
- Adding a transportation system between schools and host site; and
- Replacing field trips with on-site enrichment.

Evaluation At-a-Glance

Evaluation Design(s): Quasi-experimental using propensity score matching

Study Population: K-6 Grade students

Evaluator: Augenblick, Palaich and Associates (APA)

This Evaluation’s Level of Evidence*: Moderate

*SIF and AmeriCorps currently use different definitions of levels of evidence.

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Jefferson County, Colorado



The Social Innovation Fund (SIF), a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), combines public and private resources to grow the impact of innovative, community-based solutions that have compelling evidence of improving the lives of people in low-income communities throughout the U.S. The SIF invests in three priority areas: economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development.