

# "Lexile Measures Help Kentucky Fight Summer Reading Slide"

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For most students, the summer months are a time of freedom and fun after a rigorous school year. However, after progressing in their studies during the academic calendar, much of that progress can be undone from lack of instruction and practice during the summer. Studies show that students experience "summer slide" or "summer loss" when they do not engage in educational activities over summer break. Research has further shown that this loss over multiple summers explains the achievement gap in reading abilities between low-income children and their more affluent peers.<sup>1</sup>

In response to the summer reading slide epidemic, the [Council of Chief State School Officers](#), in partnership with MetaMetrics®, coordinated a national state-led summer reading initiative to bolster student reading achievement during summer break. This past May, Kentucky joined the "Chief's Summer Reading Challenge" by developing their "Find a Book, Kentucky" program to raise awareness of the summer loss epidemic, share compelling research on the importance of personalized reading activities, and provide access to a variety of free resources to support targeted reading and the initiative as a whole.

## "Find a Book, Kentucky"

As the Library Media and Textbooks Consultant at Kentucky's Department of Education, I coordinated the rollout of "Find a Book, Kentucky," a joint Department of Education effort alongside the [Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives](#) and [MetaMetrics](#)—an educational measurement and research organization. "Find a Book" is a tool that uses Lexile measures to help students build personal book lists that match their reading ability and interests. "Find a Book, Kentucky" is a version specifically tailored for students in our state. A unique logo and web address helped to personalize the tool to encourage Kentucky schools and families to participate in a "Summer Reading Pledge" campaign, KYReads.

## School Libraries and Public Libraries Working Together

The Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives oversees the free public libraries in our state. That department's commissioner, Wayne Onkst, and the

commissioner for the Kentucky Department of Education, Dr. Terry Holliday, recognized that working together for the common goal of tackling summer reading loss could result in more students reading during the summer and steady reading growth for students year-round. With MetaMetric's "Chief's Summer Reading Challenge" as an added incentive, both agencies worked together to promote "Find a Book, Kentucky" alongside yearly summer reading programs already in place in public libraries and school libraries throughout the state.

Each agency created a web page with information about summer reading loss research, summer reading programs in public libraries around the state, links to information about Lexile reading measures and a link to "Find a Book, Kentucky." As the Kentucky Department of Education's consultant to school librarians, I attended summer reading program trainings for public librarians around the state to discuss ways they could collaborate with school librarians to promote summer reading. I demonstrated the "Find a Book, Kentucky" tool and provided informational flyers to distribute to library patrons.

I knew school librarians would be instrumental in spreading the word about "Find a Book, Kentucky" and the importance of summer reading. In Kentucky, every elementary and secondary school has a certified school media librarian, so they became our main contacts and promoters of "Find a Book, Kentucky" and local summer reading programs. School media librarians already knew about Lexile measures since Kentucky was an early advocate for using Lexile measures to match readers with books.



For more information on Lexile measures and The Challenge, visit [www.Lexile.com/Chiefs-Challenge](http://www.Lexile.com/Chiefs-Challenge)



I presented sessions at both the summer and fall school library conferences about The Lexile® Framework for Reading, as well as sessions at the annual public librarians' conference. School librarians working alongside local public librarians helped spread the word about summer reading importance and the use of "Find a Book, Kentucky" more quickly and to a larger audience.

### State-wide Effort Brings State-wide Success

School librarians and public librarians on the same page about summer reading and "Find a Book, Kentucky" meant that parents, teachers, and students heard the same message all across the state. A media blitz in the spring helped to ensure the success of that message. Kentucky's First Lady, Jane Beshear, recorded a Public Service Announcement encouraging students to read during the summer, to participate in local summer reading programs, and to use "Find a Book, Kentucky" to create book lists to match their reading abilities. Press releases, a letter about summer reading and "Find a Book, Kentucky" from the First Lady, and messages from the Commissioner of Education, Dr. Terry Holliday, to school districts provided a consistent message to students and families. The Kentucky Department of Education's Facebook page and Kentucky Teacher online publication featured information about "Find a Book, Kentucky" and summer reading. Kentucky Educational Television's Bill Goodman featured Commissioner for Kentucky Libraries and Archives, Wayne Onkst, and MetaMetrics President, Malbert Smith, on an episode of One to One with Bill Goodman to talk about summer reading loss and how Kentucky's schools and public libraries were collaborating to tackle the issue. Kentucky was pledging to read, and everyone was invited to jump right in!

### KYReads

Commissioner of Education Dr. Terry Holliday challenged students across the state to submit a "Summer Reading Pledge" to build excitement about reading during the summer months. KYReads was introduced as a new slogan for year-round reading, and I used existing Department of Education communication tools to spread the message to school media librarians across the state, including "Kentucky School Library Media News" (a quarterly online newsletter for school librarians), "Literacy Link" (a monthly online newsletter for literacy teachers), and the Kentucky school librarian listserv and department email contact list for school librarians. I also sent "Find a Book, Kentucky" bookmarks and audience-specific flyers to school librarians to share with students and parents, as well as pre-written

blurbs to use on school and district websites to promote the summer reading challenge.

As a result of the intensive, purposeful, audience-specific messages from the Kentucky Department of Education, the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives, and the First Lady's Office, Kentucky was the state with the highest number of summer reading pledges for 2012. Over 1,000 individuals from Kentucky pledged to read during the summer, reading almost 12,000 books.

### Reflections

KYReads was an overwhelming success, and I know that happened due to the strong collaboration between the Kentucky Department of Education, Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives, Kentucky's Office of the First Lady, and MetaMetrics. Data about summer reading pledge participants (provided by MetaMetrics) indicated the largest number of student pledgers typically came from districts with strong school library media programs and full-time, certified school librarians. These same districts also have strong representation in the Kentucky Association for School Librarians (KASL), Kentucky's professional organization for school librarians. KASL (formerly KY School Media Association) was instrumental in promoting the initiative through its regional affiliates and through its statewide communication tools. By focusing our message through school media librarians, Kentucky ensured every school received information about "Find a Book, Kentucky" and KYReads, and ensured a local building contact for further information.

### For more information, visit the links below:

- "Find a Book, Kentucky": [www.Lexile.com/fab/KY](http://www.Lexile.com/fab/KY)
- "Summer Reading Kentucky":  
<http://education.ky.gov/curriculum/books/Pages/Summer-Reading-Kentucky.aspx>
- "Kentucky School Library Media News":  
<http://education.ky.gov/curriculum/books/Pages/KY-School-Library-Media-News.aspx>
- KET's One to One with Bill Goodman:  
<http://www.ket.org/onetoone/program.fwx?programid=ONON0717>
- "Kentucky First to Adopt Common Core State Standards Initiative":  
<http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA6721329.html>

1 Alexander, K. L., Entwisle D. R., & Olson L. S. (2007). Lasting consequences of the summer learning gap. *American Sociological Review*, 72, 167-180.

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The Lexile Framework for Reading ([www.Lexile.com](http://www.Lexile.com)) provides a common, developmental scale and measure to match readers with resources and activities that are targeted to their ability level. Lexile measures help educators, librarians and families select books, articles and other materials that provide the right level of challenge for the reader's skills and goals, and to monitor growth in reading ability. Tens of thousands of books and hundreds of millions of articles have Lexile measures, and the number of resources with Lexile measures continues to grow. Recognized as the most widely adopted reading metric, Lexile measures are used at the school level in all 50 states. More than 30 million Lexile measures are reported annually from reading assessments and programs, representing over half of U.S. students.