

Summer 2013

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For the third program in a row, the Summer 2013 Day Camp focused on literacy, particularly on maintaining and/or raising students' literacy levels in reading and math. The Summer 2012 Day Camp and the 2012-2013 After School Program were the pioneering programs in which this change in focus occurred. Summer 2013 underwent a few adjustments to maintain progress made by the previous two programs. The mission of Cities In Schools is to assist the community to help area schools meet the critical needs of students, and provide a safe, nurturing environment in which students receive mentoring and participate in literacy activities. As with the previous two programs, Cities In Schools provides these services through numerous community collaborations and working partnerships. Once again, under the tutelage and guidance of Ardmore City Schools, the Summer 2013 Day Camp was adjusted to optimize results while maintaining a safe and nurturing environment for the children. In order to use standardized testing to provide an accurate picture the RIT scores were used to measure the success of the program. The Northwest Evaluation Association (www.nwea.org/node/4344, 2013) chooses RIT scores as a prime method for evaluation of students as these tests can measure the students individual achievement as each item has its own difficulty level and the scale directly correlates to these levels. RIT stands for Rasch UnIT, a measurement scale developed to simplify the interpretation of test scores (Maranacook Schools, <http://www.maranacook.org/nwea>). In other words the RIT tests are designed to measure the amount and difficulty level of certain tested materials which a child has learned. The exit and entrance exams of each student were compared in order to determine if the student maintained the literacy skills learned the previous year.

As the Summer 2012 Day Camp was so successful, few changes were made to the Summer 2013 Day Camp. The 2012-2013 After School program was very successful and

showed the importance of creating a stable environment through routine and structure. When the students knew what to expect throughout their time in the program, behavior issues greatly decreased. The students rotated every 40 minutes through math activities, reading activities, monitored independent reading, computers, drama, music, art, social media, physical education and recess. This rotation proved very successful as the students were continually changing their environment, thus remaining engaged and focused. It was discovered that it was ideal to have one AmeriCorps member in charge of each class with aides to help as needed, as this created one clear and distinct leader thus ending the confusion of multiple rules and classroom management styles. In addition to this change, the subjects were given a subject leader who was responsible for presenting the daily activities. This allowed the members with the needed skills to lead each subject, creating an environment primed for learning.

While the focus of the programs has shifted to literacy, Cities In Schools continues to focus on mentoring the students enrolled in the programs. Because the same four members remained with the students each day, the bonding between members and the students happened once again. This summer saw the members engaged and active with the students all day, every day. It was not an uncommon sight to see the members playing the learning activities with the students and having as much fun as the students. Recess saw the AmeriCorps members playing as hard as the students. While learning was the focus, the amount of joy and laughter from this summer was immeasurable. This shows that a stable routine and schedule, even one that requires changing rooms every 40 minutes, is very successful and will be maintained.

Cities In Schools is actively waging a war on poverty through the battle to raise and/or maintain the literacy levels of the students enrolled in our programs. The research is clear, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds experience greater disparities in schools,

particularly with their literacy levels, and because of this often do not complete high school or go on to college, greatly reducing their job perspectives, often leaving them in poverty for the remainder of their life, continuing the cycle of poverty (Cooper, H., et al. 1996, The effects of summer vacation on achievement test scores: A narrative and meta-analysis review). It has been shown that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds who attend after school and summer programs do not experience this disparity. Thus, children enrolled in after school and summer programs have a greater chance at successfully completing school and leaving the cycle of poverty behind them. Together with Ardmore City Schools, Cities In Schools is actively working to eliminate poverty by giving students the skills to be successful in school and in their future.

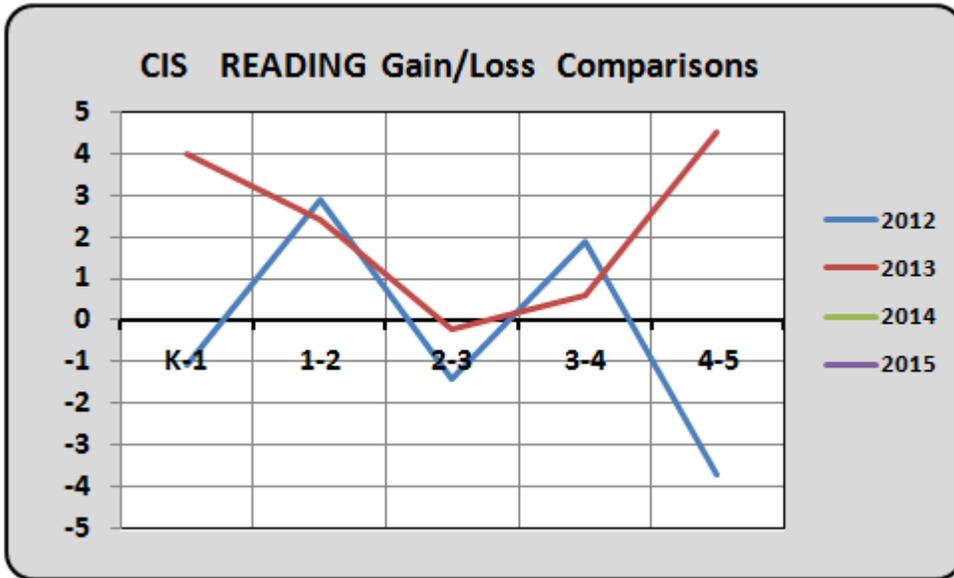
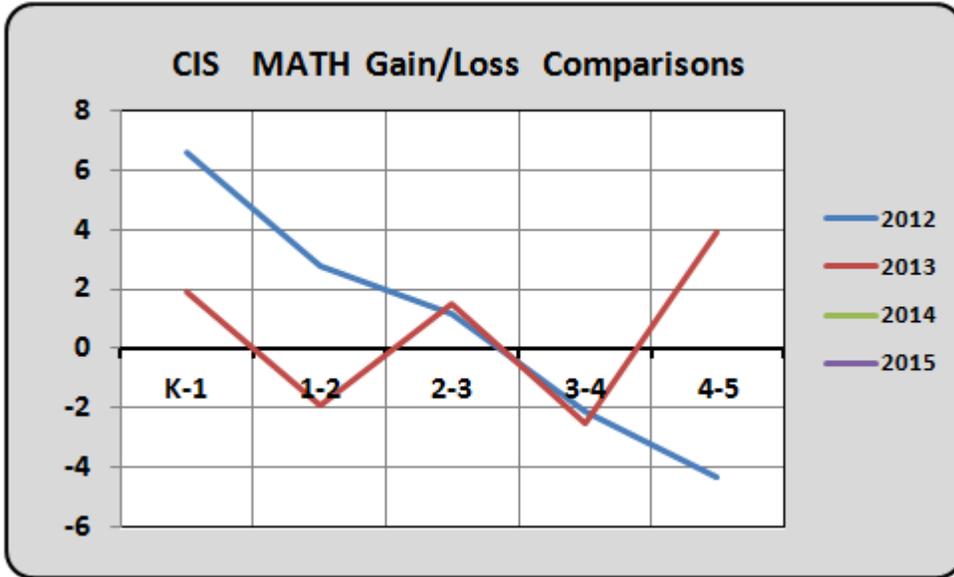
The data has been collected and analyzed. The research is clear, after school and summer programs focused on literacy are needed. The RIT scores for the Summer 2013 Day Camp show that the students enrolled did indeed raise or maintain their literacy levels. The students who attended the program raised their math scores on average 0.5 points and reading scores on average 1.82 points. This marks the third program in a row that has achieved the objective of maintaining and/or raising RIT scores in math and reading. This is important to note as research shows that students can lose up to a third of their knowledge over the summer break. By being able to help the students maintain literacy levels, Cities In Schools provided the students with an advantage upon returning to school. These students will not be struggling to regain the lost knowledge, but will be able to continue to move forward in the literacy skills. Those students who were not quite as strong in math and reading at the end of the 2012-2013 school year, entered the 2013-2014 school year, with stronger literacy skills, enabling them to continue to improve their overall literacy levels and break the cycle of poverty. While the first three

programs, with measurable goals and objectives as well as a change in focus to literacy, have all been successful, the staff at Cities In Schools is continually looking for ways to better the programs.

Cities In Schools does more than simply focus on improving the literacy scores of the students enrolled in our program. Numerous things can affect a child's literacy skills; these can include their self-esteem, self-worth or even more simply if they feel smart. Perhaps the best manner to show how we focus on the entire child not simply their literacy levels is by sharing a story. The first is about a young man in the first grade. This student had managed to not learn how to read his sight words. Because an Ardmore City School teacher took the time to communicate this with us, we were able to work one on one with him. After a particularly lengthy and challenging, but very successful session, a staff member asked this young man if he knew how smart he is. He looked at the staff member dumbfounded, it was evident by his expression that no one had ever told him he was smart and that he clearly didn't think he was smart. He slowly replied to the staff member no. She quickly looked at him and said you are very smart. He continued to look at her, absorbing this information. Finally a slow smile spread across his face, his eyes lit up and he stood up a bit taller. His reading improved quickly after this moment. Cities In Schools recognizes that literacy skills are very important, but we cannot simply provide literacy skills to the students in our care, we must give them the tools to use these literacy skills, which means teaching them that they are smart, they are worthy and they are special.

Work on the Summer 2014 Day Camp is already underway. The partnership with Ardmore City Schools, as well as other community partnerships and working collaborations will continue. The staff at Cities In Schools is continually assessing the needs of the community and

students to ensure that all education needs are being met. The 2013-2014 After School Program will be measured using the RIT scores, as will the Summer 2014 Day Camp. By using the same measuring instruments, the previous programs can be compared to indicate areas in need of improvement. The staff of Cities In Schools will continue to research successful after school and summer programs to learn from their successes in order to remain in the forefront of literacy programs.



	MATH			
	2012	2013	2014	2015
K-1	6.6	1.9		
1-2	2.8	-1.9		
2-3	1.2	1.5		
3-4	-2.1	-2.5		
4-5	-4.3	3.9		
	READING			
	2012	2013	2014	2015
K-1	-1.1	4		
1-2	2.9	2.4		
2-3	-1.4	-0.2		
3-4	1.9	0.6		
4-5	-3.7	4.5		