COLORADO
Department of Education



Annual Book Fairs
A Summer Reading Program Shown to Boost Achievement in Low-income Elementary Schools

November 23, 2026

Dr. Rhonda Haniford and Jennifer Zinn

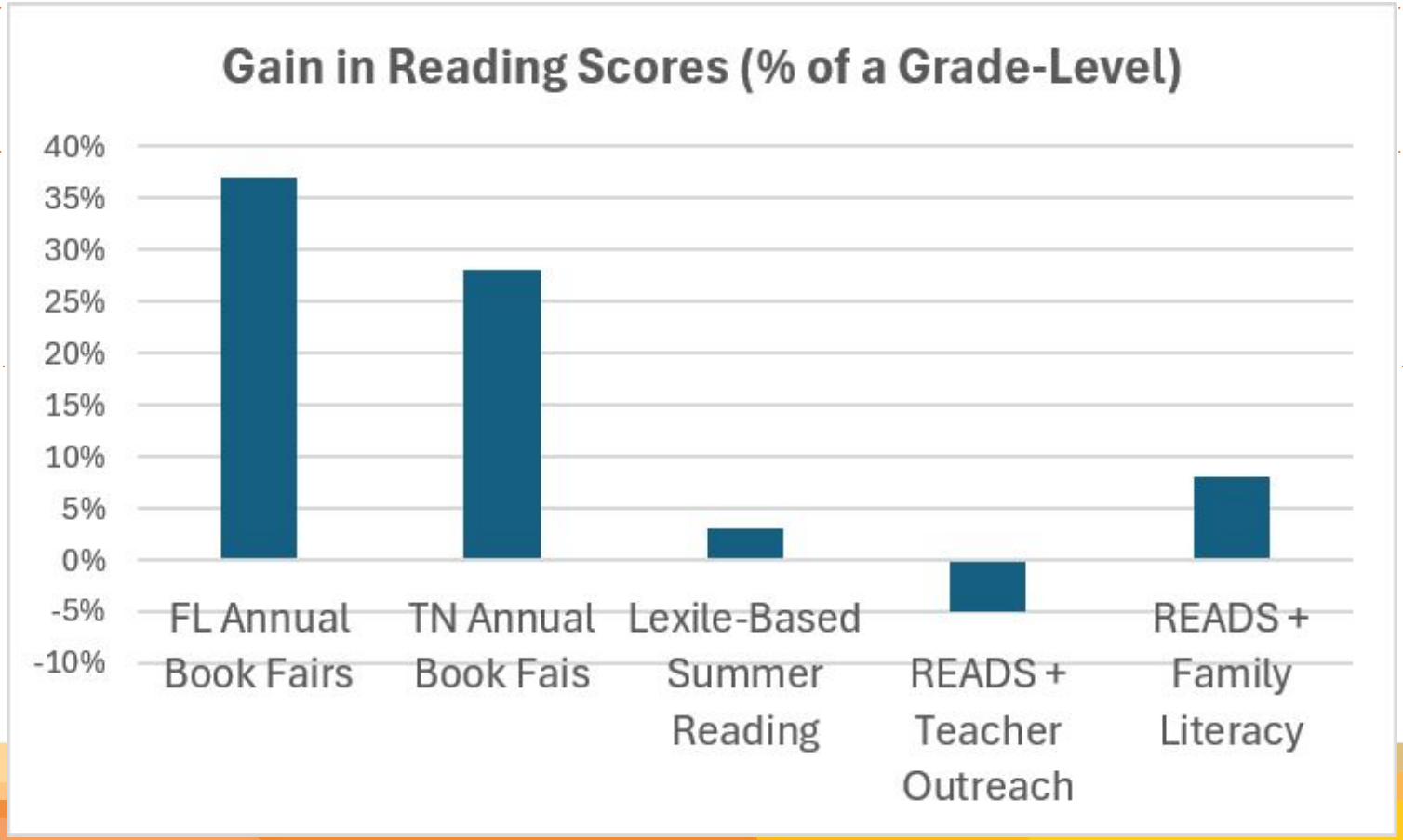
The Annual Book Fairs Model

Simple: Beginning in 1st and 2nd grade, students select 10-14 **new, high quality, high interest books** from a selection of at least 400 titles to keep as their own and read over the summer. Fairs are conducted near the end of the school year, and students participate for three consecutive school years.

High Impact: Found in randomized controlled trials to increase state/district reading **test scores by 30-35% of a grade-level** by 4th-5th grade.

Free to Students and Schools: Unlike many standard book fairs, students will browse, select and receive books to keep as their own at **no cost to them or their families**.

Impact of Annual Book Fairs Model vs. Other Summer Book Programs



Colorado Annual Book Fairs Initiative

- Book Fairs are delivered to a **single cohort of 1st and 2nd graders** in spring 2027, then to the same students when they are in 2nd and 3rd grade in spring 2028, and when they are in 3rd and 4th grade in spring 2029.
- The goal is to have **195 low-income, high-need elementary schools across the state** provide Annual Book Fairs.
- Schools will work with **the program team at Scholastic** to implement the Annual Book Fairs.

Unique Features of the Annual Book Fair Model

- **Access:** 10-14 new, high quality, popular books of varying genres, complexity, reading levels, and topics (display set of a minimum of 400 book titles)
- **True student choice:** students can pursue their own intellectual goals, develop expertise and deep knowledge of a topic, which inspires them to keep reading on their own
- **Time:** long-term intervention (3 consecutive summers)

*It is not just the number of books; it is the **kinds of books** students get to select!*





School Eligibility

Eligible schools will be determined using the following criteria:

- An in person public elementary school that serves grades 1–5;
- Reading need based on Significant Reading Deficiency rate, percentage of students on READ plans, and/or percentage of students below proficiency level in grade 3 CMAS English Language Arts test; and
- A large proportion of students identified for the free or reduced-price lunch program.

Randomized Research Model

- A rigorous evaluation of the initiative will be conducted by MDRC, an independent research firm.
- **Half of each district's eligible schools will be randomly assigned via a lottery to participate in Annual Book Fairs**, while half will serve as a business as usual group in order to determine the project's impact on student test scores.
- The current proposal is for schools to be randomized this fall.

LEA Commitment

Once identified as participating, LEAs would agree to:

- Supporting a staff-member to be the **Book Fair Host**,
- Acknowledging that **Personal Identifying Information**, which CDE already has access to through data collection, will be released to the research firm, and
- Continue engaging in this program for **three summers** to see the impact on CMAS data the following years (Spring ‘30)

School-based Book Fair Host

To meet the needs of the research study, the Book Fair Host will:

- Complete a training on the data management system,
- Ensure accurate class rosters,
- With Scholastic plan the place, date, and time of the Fair,
- Work with volunteers to set up the fair,
- Review book lists in advance with Scholastic, and
- Track any students who do not take home books in the data management system.

Some FAQs from LEAs…

Will half of my eligible schools will be sending home **free, high-interest books to 100% of students** in two grade levels for three summers in a row? *Yes.*

Will CDE and Scholastic prepare **a rich list of books,** and allow my local point-of–contact to remove any titles that don't match our community? *Yes.*

Will CDE create a low-impact data interface and offer side-by-side training and support so **data reporting is smooth and easy**? *Yes.*

Will our on-site Book Fair Host have **step-by-step assistance** to set up the Book Fair at the school at a time that is best for our school community? *Yes, in the last 2 months*

If a book a student wants isn't available, **will Scholastic follow up and get the book(s)**? *Yes.*

Will students get to choose 10-14 books they want, every summer for three summers, to keep forever? Yes.

Will the **data collection process has been minimized** so that we only need to confirm rosters and then note when a student, for whatever reason, doesn't get their 10-14 books? Yes.

For Your Consideration

- ★ Librarians, Library Paraprofessionals, or an enthusiastic staff member would be well suited for the role of Book Fair Host.They know the students and can speak about books without influencing the students' choices.
- ★ Every community will be able to personalize their communication with teachers, students, and families in support of this program. CDE is here to help, but of course you know your communities best.
- ★ The online Family Survey will be in English and Spanish. Schools will email the Family Survey to their participating families in June. Results will be sent to CDE and aggregated.

A Light Lift, With Clear Ownership

WHAT DISTRICTS, SCHOOLS, AND FAMILIES WILL DO

LEA	SCHOOL	FAMILY
Interest Form	One Book Fair Host	Family Form
Assurances	Scholastic Contact + Student Data Entries	Share Children's Reading Experience

Research Timeline

Fall 2026	Fall/Winter 2026	April 2027, 2028 & 2029	May/June 2027, 2028 & 2029
Random Assignment ● MDRC randomly assigns schools to program or business-as-usual. ● CDE shares random assignments to districts; districts inform schools ● District confirms schools' participation to CDE.	**Prepare for Implementation** ● Schools meet with CDE and Scholastic to confirm Book Fair Host and review program requirements.	**Brief Program Interviews** ● 8 districts participate in a 1 hour interview with MDRC to describe other literacy programming occurring in schools.	**Annual Book Fair Implementation** ● Schools work with CDE and Scholastic to update rosters and run book fairs each year.

Maximizing Participation

- Our goal is that every LEA will have interest in the program and we will maximize the impact by including the full list of eligible schools. Let's give away thousands of books!
- We hope to address your questions and explain the program to earn your participation.





Questions and Discussion

Primary Research Question

What is the impact of the Annual Book Fairs program on students' reading achievement as measured by:

- EOY benchmark assessments in second and third grade (READ Act Significant Reading Deficiency and READ Plan), and
- State end-of-grade reading assessments in fourth and fifth grades?



Additional Research Questions

- Does the program's impact vary by student group (e.g., baseline reading level, race/ethnicity, ELL status)?
- Is there a relationship between the number of years of book fair participation and reading achievement outcomes?
- Is there a relationship between implementation fidelity to the Annual Book Fairs model and reading achievement outcomes?

PII data details

- MASKED ID (derived from SASID)
- Student Participation in Book Fair
- Student Entry Date
- READ Act Data (Significant Reading Deficiency status, READ Plan status)
- Student CMAS Data
- Demographic Details:
  - Grade Level
  - Age (using Date of Birth)
  - Gender and Race/Ethnicity
  - Multilingual Learner Status
  - Language Proficiency
  - Special Education Status

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

- CDE partnered with the CU Boulder IRB Office to provide a review of the proposed study.
- The CU Boulder IRB determined that the study is a program evaluation, and considered Not Human Subjects Research. Thus, the study does not require IRB review according to federal human subjects regulations (45 CFR 46).
- This is consistent with the North Carolina partners' (East Tennessee State University IRB) determinations that the study does not constitute human subjects research under federal regulations.