P A T E R S O N

**Summer Grants 2026**
**Request for Proposals**

If the Paterson Education Fund (PEF) rallies ***diverse community stakeholders*** to increase the ***use of literacy best practices*** during the summer, more children will engage in ***language-rich***, joyful, and ***culturally-relevant*** reading experiences. This collective action will wrap around Paterson's children during the summer months, ***elevate reading skills and interest***, reduce learning loss, and improve school readiness.

**The Opportunity:** Paterson nonprofits with summer learning, child-care, or regular child- or family-centered activities are invited to apply for a one-time grant of up to $15,000 for summer 2026. Funds are to be used to integrate interactive read-aloud into regular programming at sites that serve young children and their families. Between 5 and 9 grants of $5,000 to $15,000 are available. In year five of the initiative, we are adding 30-60 minutes of technical support.

**The Problem:** Summer Learning Slide happens when children spend the long weeks of summer not thinking about and practicing the skills that they learned during the school year or learning new skills that keep their brains engaged. Vocabulary and comprehension are often affected by the extended instructional break. Kids without the benefit of mentally stimulating and fun summer activities show up at school in the fall *behind* the level of ability they attained before leaving in June. We know that incorporating high-quality literacy methods during the summer can be challenging, and we aim to improve in this area.

**Paterson Reads Summer Literacy Goals**
The PEF Summer Literacy Initiative aims to combine joyful summer experiences with vocabulary and listening comprehension activities. Accordingly, this Initiative promotes interactive read-aloud instruction, a literacy method that enhances vocabulary and comprehension. Research shows that fifteen minutes of daily reading supports young readers. The initiative aims to increase:

- Minutes books are read-aloud to children each day
- Minutes that children listen to books
- Rich discussion about books
- Award-winning books read more than once over the summer
- Community stakeholders supporting summer reading and literacy opportunities across Paterson
- Community knowledge about early literacy

**Summer Learning:** The wonderful news is that an endless array of experiences contributes to learning and academic growth. You don't have to be a teacher, and kids don't have to sit at desks doing schoolwork to learn all summer long for this to work! Summer is a unique opportunity to learn in ways that are meaningful to children.
We seek community-based partners that will help children:

- Explore passions that motivate learning (hello sports camp!)
- Connect in small groups with caring individuals (we see you in home-based childcare)
- Build home language skills (and pride) with stories, histories, and traditions unique to the child's culture (yes to cultural centers and houses of worship)
- Develop language and social skills through imaginative, creative games kids create themselves (we love you, free play on playgrounds).

Check out THIS VIDEO for guidance from Paterson Reads Educator Xiania Foster, ideas from NEA, and How to Make Summer Reading Effective from the National Summer Learning Association. Paterson Free Public Library will provide resources for the 2026 Summer Reading Theme "Unearth a Story" to all grantees and other interested reading programs this summer. Successful programs will:

- Incorporate daily interactive read-alouds* of award-winning, high-quality, and culturally responsive books.
- Dedicate at least 15 minutes to rich discussion every day, with a goal of 30 minutes of read-aloud time total.
- Revisit favorite books multiple times to deepen comprehension and engagement.
- Include talking, singing, dancing, collaborating, making, cooking, and playing.
- Include activities rich in literacy experiences and connected to books that have been read aloud. Such as a one-week literacy-themed camp, regular parent-child date night, or a weekend family getaway.
- Focus on creative, fun, whole-child approaches. You are not expected to invest in workbooks, drill phonics, or ask camp counselors to teach. Let's keep brains (and bodies) busy this summer and let the teachers do their thing in the fall. Research supports the connection between movement and learning.
- Honor and support students' home languages.
- Prioritize kids who need it most.

**To Apply For The Grant:** Download and complete the simple application and submit by April 15th. Those funded will receive notice by May 6th and will be required to participate in a mandatory orientation on May 27. Questions are encouraged, especially if you want to discuss your potential ideas or find collaborators.

**Grant Selection:** Grants will be selected by the Paterson Reads Grant Committee, a group of Paterson community members engaged in literacy with broad, cross-sector representatives.

**Evaluation**: We seek to measure the impact of each program and the program overall. Our tools include: surveys, interviews, site visits, student work portfolios, a final presentation and a narrative report.

**To Be Eligible:**

- You (or your supporting organization) must already operate an established summer program that serves Paterson children.
- At least 50% of the children served must reside in Paterson.
- At least 60% of the children you serve must be rising 3rd graders or younger
- You can serve kids in summer day camps, family programs, child care, at places that serve families, or at community programs.
- You agree to track program outcomes and share insights to help Paterson Reads better understand what works for Paterson kids in the summer.

As part of our collective impact approach, PEF and the Paterson Reads Steering Committee are seeking implementation of high-quality early literacy practices. A critical element of the initiative is increasing the use of best practices through technical assistance. Accordingly, we will provide technical assistance to each grantee and highly recommend that applicants use the following resources when planning their programs and crafting their application:

- PEF Early Literacy Resources Padlet
- Award-winning and Curated High-Quality List of Text Sources
- Best Practices Training with a focus on Repeated, Interactive Read Aloud
- Student Pre/Post-surveys & Parent Pre/Post-surveys
- Assessment guidance

***Repeated interactive read-aloud**
Repeated interactive read-aloud is a teaching strategy in which a teacher reads the same story multiple times to students, pausing frequently to ask questions, discuss key points, and engage students in conversation about the text, thereby allowing for deeper comprehension and vocabulary development through repeated exposure to the story. We highly recommend that you and your staff watch the Best Practices Training specifically for this strategy.