

RESEARCH & VALIDATION

# LitCamp

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## An Evaluation of Scholastic Presents LitCamp in Schenectady City School District, NY

August 2019



Prepared by  
RMC Research Corporation  
111 SW Columbia Street, Suite 1030  
Portland, OR 97201



#### **ABOUT RMC RESEARCH**

RMC Research helps state, local, and federal agencies, philanthropic foundations, and creative and social service organizations improve outcomes for their constituents.

#### **CONTACT**

For more information about this report, please contact Scholastic Research & Validation at [ScholasticRV@scholastic.com](mailto:ScholasticRV@scholastic.com) or visit [www.scholastic.com/research](http://www.scholastic.com/research).

#### **SUGGESTED CITATION**

Beam, M. (2019). *Executive summary: An evaluation of Scholastic presents LitCamp in Schenectady City School District, NY*. Portland, OR: RMC Research Corporation.

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# Executive Summary

LitCamp is a summer literacy and enrichment program for students in Grades kindergarten through 8.<sup>1</sup> LitCamp aims to build students' social-emotional skills around what the program refers to as "the 7 strengths"—belonging, curiosity, friendship, kindness, confidence, courage, and hope—by incorporating these concepts into reading and writing texts and lessons and combining them with an engaging summer camp approach.

Scholastic Research & Validation partnered with RMC Research to conduct a third-party evaluation of *Scholastic Presents LitCamp* as it was implemented<sup>2</sup> in summer 2018 by Schenectady City School District in New York. The district provided two hours of LitCamp instruction daily to students in kindergarten through Grade 6 as the literacy component of its districtwide Summer Enrichment Program.

## Evaluation Overview

The evaluation aimed to answer the following questions:

1. How did students' reading knowledge change as a result of their exposure to LitCamp?
2. How did students' reading behaviors and attitudes toward reading change as a result of their exposure to LitCamp?
3. How did teachers perceive LitCamp?
4. What did LitCamp implementation look like in practice?

Additionally, the evaluation examined the effects LitCamp had on a subsample of students and their families.<sup>3</sup>

RMC Research collected and analyzed quantitative data through student (Grades 3–5) and teacher surveys and qualitative data through teacher focus groups, classroom observations, and family interviews. RMC Research also explored reading achievement data shared by the district for students (Grades K–5) who participated in the Summer Enrichment Program who received two hours of LitCamp instruction daily ("LitCamp students";  $n = 266$ ) and a statistically similar comparison group of students ("Comparison students";  $n = 266$ ) who were not enrolled in the Summer Enrichment Program. Findings presented in this report reflect the analysis of data from students, teachers, and families.

<sup>1</sup> Grade corresponds to grade level completed in the spring.

<sup>2</sup> LitCamp was designed for flexible implementation—providing 50 hours (20 lessons) of literacy instruction within a 4- to 8-week time frame.

<sup>3</sup> See the Case Study titled, "How LitCamp Positively Impacted Students' Literacy & Social-emotional Learning."

## Evaluation Data Sources



**Reading achievement data** for students in kindergarten through Grade 5



**Student survey** respondents in Grades 3–5



**Teacher survey** respondents who taught kindergarten through Grade 6



**Teacher focus group** participants who taught kindergarten through Grade 5



**Classroom observations** in kindergarten through Grade 5



**Family interviews** with families of students in kindergarten and Grades 1, 4, and 5

## Student Outcome Findings

### Student Reading Knowledge

Analyses of the AIMSweb®<sup>4</sup> *Oral Reading Fluency* subtest revealed promising trends<sup>5</sup> for LitCamp students warranting further exploration with a larger sample and students spanning the full range of achievement. Subgroup analyses revealed a positive trend for English Learner (EL) students such that EL LitCamp students experienced slightly greater gains on the AIMSweb *Oral Reading Fluency* subtest from spring to fall than EL students in the comparison group across Grades 1–5.

Analyses suggest that LitCamp may be providing students with skills that support their academic performance on standardized tests, but most importantly, additional data gathered show the significant impact LitCamp is having on students' attitudes and beliefs about themselves as readers. Data discussed below highlight how LitCamp supports students' social-emotional learning through texts in an engaging and encouraging environment.

### Student Behaviors and Attitudes

Information about students' reading behaviors, attitudes toward reading, and social-emotional learning was collected from student and teacher surveys, teacher focus groups, and family interviews. Students across all grades reported positively about their participation in LitCamp. Findings revealed **statistically significant** changes between baseline and follow-up for students in Grades 3 and 5:

- **Reading behaviors.** 94% of Grade 5 students reported “reading different kinds of books” after participating in LitCamp (compared to 81% at the beginning of LitCamp).

<sup>4</sup> The AIMSweb is a benchmark assessment that informs instruction to improve achievement. Benchmarks are established three times per year for all students using grade-level assessment probes. Reports identify students at risk, help focus areas of individualized instruction, evaluate student progress, and serve as an accountability and communication tool for system improvement. For more information on the assessment, please visit <https://www.AIMSweb.com/>.

<sup>5</sup> Trends are promising in the positive direction but are not statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval.

- **Attitudes toward reading.** 48% of Grade 5 students reported *liking or loving* to “read during summer vacation” after participating in LitCamp (compared to 31% at the beginning of LitCamp).
- **Social-emotional learning.** 86% of Grade 3 students had the courage “[to read] books that might be hard to read” after participating in LitCamp (compared to 67% at the beginning of LitCamp).

Teacher surveys, focus groups, and classroom observations offered more nuanced information on the positive impact LitCamp had on students’ reading behaviors, attitudes toward reading, and social-emotional learning.

- **Reading behaviors.** More than three quarters of teacher survey respondents rated LitCamp as *effective* at cultivating students’ abilities to read independently (84%), choose books (82%), read different kinds of books (82%), and read aloud (80%). These quantitative data were corroborated by teacher focus group participants who reported that students were reading for longer periods of time and choosing more challenging books after participating in LitCamp.
- **Attitudes toward reading.** During focus groups, teachers discussed shifts in students’ attitudes that they attributed to LitCamp, such as students seeming more excited about reading, students being more willing to read, and some students feeling more comfortable reading aloud.
- **Social-emotional learning.** Approximately three quarters of the teacher survey respondents rated LitCamp as *effective* at developing students’ curiosity (86%), friendship skills (82%), belonging (80%), kindness (80%), confidence (78%), courage (74%), and hope (74%). Teachers also appreciated the social-emotional aspects of LitCamp and the incorporation of the 7 strengths into the book selections. Some teachers mentioned observing a greater sense of community among students, as demonstrated by displays of kindness and empathy.

Family interviews provided additional information on the influences of LitCamp, including learning new vocabulary, reading different kinds of books, being more interested in reading, having more patience, and acting more politely.

## Implementation Findings

### Teacher Perception of LitCamp and Classroom Observations

Teacher surveys offered information about teachers’ perception of LitCamp. Information gathered during teacher focus groups and classroom observations provided further context for the teacher survey findings and highlighted teachers’ and students’ positive experiences with LitCamp.

**Resources.** Teacher survey respondents rated the following LitCamp resources very favorably for their utility: *Leader’s Guide* (92%), book selections (86%), and lessons (86%). In focus groups, teachers made positive comments about the structure and ease of use of the *Leader’s Guide*, the selection of books, and the variety of activities and writing assignments.

**Activities.** Overall, teachers rated the Read Aloud, Bring the Text to Life, and Bunk Time LitCamp activities as “the most appealing” and believed that their students would agree. This was corroborated by classroom observations that described students as seeming especially engaged during Read Aloud activities and when working independently, as well as appearing excited and responsive when they had opportunities to share their thinking throughout LitCamp.

**Professional Learning.** Overall, teachers felt that the LitCamp professional learning prepared them to implement the program.

**Implementation.** Teachers modified LitCamp activities or altered the schedule of lessons as needed to fit the diverse needs of their students and adapt to the overall Summer Enrichment Program schedule.

## Discussion

A primary goal of Schenectady City School District’s integration of LitCamp into its Summer Enrichment Program was to sustain students’ literacy skills over the summer. The district’s decision to provide two hours of LitCamp instruction daily to students was associated with promising trends for students’ *Oral Reading Fluency* subtest scores (AIMSweb), in particular for EL LitCamp students (Grades 1–5), who displayed slightly greater gains than the EL students in the comparison group.

Most importantly, LitCamp favorably influenced students’ reading behaviors, their attitudes toward reading, and their social-emotional learning as evidenced by both student self-reports and teacher reports, with the majority of teachers reporting that LitCamp was effective at cultivating students’ reading abilities and social-emotional skills. Additionally, teachers indicated confidence in LitCamp through their positive reviews of the LitCamp approach, program materials, and supports.

This evaluation aimed to assess how exposure to LitCamp influenced students’ reading behaviors, attitudes toward reading, social-emotional skills, and reading achievement. Examining data from multiple sources, this report highlights and provides context for how LitCamp positively influenced each of these outcomes.

Please see the full research report at [scholastic.com/research](http://scholastic.com/research) for complete findings.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: LITCAMP EVALUATION IN SCHENECTADY, NY