

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Empowering Students and Families
to Address Summer Reading Loss in
Greenville, SC 2017

Results Published March 22, 2018

South Carolina



RESEARCH &
VALIDATION

Make Summer Count Overview

Make Summer Count (MSC) is a summer reading initiative that since its 2014 launch has been led, managed, and sponsored by Public Education Partners (PEP) in Greenville County Schools (GCS) in Greenville, SC. PEP, in collaboration with Scholastic, the global children's publishing, education and media company, provides students and families with resources and opportunities to encourage reading throughout the summer. The goal of MSC is to help eliminate summer reading loss for Greenville's elementary students.

MSC consists of two targeted research-based opportunities for literacy engagement. The first is the MSC Book Celebrations, which help students build home libraries by allowing them to self-select books to take home and read over the summer. The second opportunity is Family Reading Nights, where families are invited to learn strategies to support their children's reading over the summer, and where children receive additional books to take home. The initiative aims to provide children and families in higher-needs elementary schools—defined in this research as schools with a student population of 50% or greater qualifying for Free and Reduced Meals (FARMs)—the resources they need to be able to read all summer long.

In 2017, MSC was awarded the Dick and Tunky Riley WhatWorksSC Award for Excellence for demonstrating successful strategies to help prevent summer reading loss. In early 2018, PEP received the South Carolina International Reading Association's 2017–2018 Literacy Award for its advancement of literacy in local communities or at the state level.

Research Overview

For the second consecutive year, Scholastic collaborated with PEP to determine the impact of MSC on students' and families' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors about summer reading. Findings from our 2016 study of MSC can be found in the executive summary and white paper titled "Addressing Summer Reading Loss: A Public Education Partners and Greenville County Schools Initiative." ¹

¹Please visit the blog edu@scholastic for the Make Summer Count 2016 findings <http://bit.ly/MakeSummerCount16>.

During the summer of 2017, PEP, GCS, and Scholastic approached summer reading loss and related research by:

- providing 10 free, self-selected books to more than 18,000 students in grades 1–6 across 29 higher-needs elementary schools via the MSC Book Celebrations;²
- hosting 27 Family Reading Night events to support family engagement;
- distributing more than 9,000 paper or digital surveys to students in grades 3–5 at the end of the school year in the spring, and at back-to-school time in the fall;
- distributing more than 18,000 paper book logs or digital book log accounts to track summer reading to students in grades 1–6; and
- distributing more than 1,000 surveys to families of students in MSC schools.

This Executive Summary contains findings based on responses from more than 5,000 students and nearly 150 family members. The findings should be interpreted with the understanding that there was not a comparison group of students; rather, this is an analysis of the unique results of all students participating in MSC. Additionally, this research does not account for additional summer learning or enrichment opportunities that students and families may have sought and participated in during the initiative.

Key Findings

Our study examined how student and family attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors about reading were impacted by MSC activities. The biggest takeaway from the two years of data is the consistency in the findings, which highlight positive trends in family engagement as well as positive student attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors regarding summer reading.

Data from 2016 and 2017 lead us to conclude:

- **MSC is meeting its goals of building students' home libraries, engaging families, and providing resources to help prevent summer reading loss.**

²Throughout this research, grade refers to the grade students were in when they returned to school in the fall of 2017.

- **MSC is a sustainable model for engaging students and families in summer reading activities.**
- **Supporting annual summer reading initiatives such as MSC will continue to impact students and families in positive ways.**

Findings from 2016 and 2017 to support these conclusions include:

- **Over two consecutive summers, MSC students reported reading more than 14 books, compared to the national average of 12 books.³** Students reported reading 14.7 books in 2016, and 14.2 books in 2017.
- MSC continues to build students' home libraries. **Students across both years, who began the summer with fewer than 10 children's books in their homes, reported increases.** In 2016, of the 15% of students who reported having 10 or fewer books at the beginning of the summer, 9% reported having 10 or fewer children's books in the fall. In 2017, of the 11% of students who began the summer with 10 or fewer books in their homes, only 4% reported only having 10 or fewer children's books in the fall.
- **For the second year, more than 75% of students agreed they were better readers in the fall because of the reading they did over the summer:** 83% in 2016; 79% in 2017.
- **Across 2016 and 2017, more than 96% of families agreed that the books their children received from MSC contributed to them reading more over the summer.**
- **In 2016, 98% of families agreed that reading books over the summer would help their children during the school year; in 2017 we saw an increase to a full 100% of families agreeing to a similar statement.**

Exploration of families' attitudes towards the Family Reading Nights was also positive—a consistent finding from 2016. **In 2017 we found that families were overwhelmingly positive in their assessments of the summer reading activities** and associated effects on their children:

- Ninety-five percent of families agreed that Family Reading Nights were valuable in learning how to support their children's reading.

³National average based on Scholastic's nationally representative *Kids & Family Reading Report™*, with kids ages 6–11. [*Kids & Family Reading Report™*: 6th Edition, 2017]

- Families highlighted several ways that Family Reading Nights helped them: 60% of families agreed they learned ways to talk to their children about books; 51% of families learned the importance of encouraging their children to read during the summer; and 46% of families were able to connect with other families at their children’s school.
- In addition, families also reported various ways that they engaged in literacy activities with their children, beyond reading books. Literacy-related activities included doing crafts or hobbies that required reading instructions, watching educational shows with their children, reading recipes and cooking together, and using ebooks or audiobooks.

When asked about the MSC initiative, families provided positive insights which included:

- “The free books help to expand her library and helps her younger siblings to interact with her while she reads.” (Parent, Grade 3);
- “The Make Summer Count activities are wonderful and I hope they continue. [My child] gets encouraged when she sees other children her age reading as much as she does.”(Parent, Grade 4); and
- “I think they should have more and longer family reading nights. My boys loved it.” (Parent, Grade 5).

Students also provided insight about how reading impacted them over the summer:

- Forty-two percent indicated they learned new things; 39% reported that they believe reading kept their brains active during the summer, and 38% reported that through reading they were able to use their imagination.

Looking Ahead

The results from the MSC 2016 and 2017 research studies indicate the importance of providing students with resources to help them engage in reading over the summer and empowering families to support their children’s reading. The consistency in the attitudinal, belief, and behavior changes, taken in conjunction with the positive student achievement findings from 2016⁴ —with 78% of students in MSC schools maintaining

⁴Due to a shift in the assessments administered in Greenville County Schools from the spring of 2017 to the fall of 2017, we were unable to explore student achievement outcomes for the 2017 MSC research.

or increasing their reading level from spring to fall—lead us to conclude that MSC is not only meeting its goals of building home libraries and engaging families in summer reading, but also offers a sustainable model for others to prevent summer reading loss year after year.

Additionally, we have expanded our research and activities in support of summer reading to Stoughton, MA, where findings from a study with five elementary schools indicate positive impacts on student achievement, as well as on student and family attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.⁵ This additional study provides even more evidence that strategic efforts led by education stakeholders and involving the community can positively impact students and families during the summer, consistently over time and across different sites. Scholastic looks forward to continued collaborations with districts, and private and public partners, to prevent summer reading loss.

Contact

For more information about this study, please contact Dr. Andrea A. Rizzo, Director, Research & Validation at arizzo@scholastic.com or 212.389.3464.

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⁵Please visit the blog [edu@scholastic](http://edublog.scholastic.com/) for findings: <http://edublog.scholastic.com/>.





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