

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Empowering Students and Families  
to Address Summer Reading Loss in  
Stoughton, MA 2017

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Massachusetts



RESEARCH &  
VALIDATION



# Summer Reading Spotlight: Stoughton 2017 Overview

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Summer reading loss can affect any student, given that reading skills can wane when school is not in session. Building on the positive findings from two years of research on a summer reading initiative in Greenville, SC,<sup>1</sup> Scholastic collaborated with Stoughton Public Schools (SPS) to develop, implement, and research the impact of a similar and tailored summer reading initiative in Stoughton, MA.

Make Summer Count (MSC), a summer reading initiative sponsored by Public Education Partners (PEP) and Greenville County Schools, served as the model Scholastic and Stoughton Public Schools (SPS) used to implement Summer Reading Spotlight: Stoughton 2017 (SRS).<sup>2</sup> Like MSC, Summer Reading Spotlight consisted of two targeted research-based opportunities for literacy engagement: the SRS Book Selection, which helped students build home libraries by allowing them to self-select books to take home and read over the summer; and Family Literacy Nights, where families were invited to learn strategies to support their children's reading over the summer, and where children received additional books to take home.

## Research Overview

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Scholastic, the global children's publishing, education, and media company, in collaboration with SPS, designed a study in which three schools received support for summer reading at the end of the academic year in June 2017 (the treatment group); and two schools received the same resources only after the summer and at the end of the study in the fall/winter of 2017 (the control group). By designing a study that provided some students and families with resources over the summer, while others received the same resources at a different point in time, we were better able to determine the potential impact of SRS.

The research focused on the impact of the summer reading initiative on students' and families' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, and included an exploratory review of students' reading levels as measured by standardized test scores provided by the district.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Please visit the blog [edu@scholastic](mailto:edu@scholastic) for findings from Make Summer Count 2016 and 2017: <http://edublog.scholastic.com/>

<sup>2</sup><https://publicedpartnersgc.org/what-we-do/make-summer-count/>

<sup>3</sup>AimswEBPlus Oral Reading Fluency Scores

Scholastic and SPS approached summer reading loss and related research in five elementary schools by:

- providing 10 free, self-selected books per student to more than 1,700 students in grades 1–6<sup>4</sup>
  - 1,000 students in the treatment schools for the summer
  - 709 students in the control schools for the winter<sup>5</sup> ;
- hosting Family Literacy Nights to support family engagement
  - three treatment schools held Family Literacy Nights in June 2017
  - two control schools held Family Literacy Nights in October 2017;
- distributing nearly 1,100 surveys to students in grades 3–6 in the treatment and control schools at the end of the school year in the spring, and at back-to-school time in the fall; and
- distributing over 1,600 digital book log accounts to track summer reading in the treatment and control schools.

This Executive Summary contains findings based on responses from 575 students<sup>6</sup> and nearly 80 family members.

Findings should be interpreted with the knowledge that treatment and control students' reading scores were equally distributed from well below average to well above average reading tiers,<sup>7</sup> so changes over the summer may be attributed to effects of the SRS program. Additionally, no differences were found when we explored the added impact of other summer learning or enrichment opportunities that students and families may have sought and participated in during the summer.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Throughout this research, grade refers to the grade students were in when they returned to school in the fall of 2017.

<sup>5</sup>To encourage reading schoolwide, Kindergarten students and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students were also provided books in the control schools.

<sup>6</sup>These findings comprise responses gathered from students in grades 3–6, but excluding those 6<sup>th</sup>-graders who did not respond to the survey in the fall.

<sup>7</sup>AimsWebPlus Tiers are defined based on national norm percentile scores for each individual measure, grade and test period (Fall, Winter, and Spring). For example, Well Above Average represents the 90th-99th percentile, and Well Below Average represents the 1st-10th percentile.

<sup>8</sup>No difference in findings were observed for students indicating they participated in additional summer learning opportunities; however, sample sizes were small and impacts may exist, but we were unable to detect them.

# Key Findings

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The study examined how student and family attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors about reading were impacted by the SRS summer reading activities, and also included an exploratory review of students' reading levels. In the scientific literature on summer reading loss, summer reading is usually measured in terms of lack of skill loss, rather than objective growth.<sup>9</sup> Findings from this research highlighted three important takeaways:

- Summer reading loss can impact students at *any* reading level. Likewise, our findings indicate that **SRS had a positive impact on students classified as below average in their reading level, but also students who were considerably above average.**
- **Students across all grades reported positive impacts from SRS; however, it was the rising 3rd graders who showed the most positive impact from the initiative.** The current state and federal focus on reading proficiency by third grade further highlights the importance of this work.<sup>10</sup>
- **Families found considerable value in the Family Literacy Nights held at their schools.**

Findings from 2017 to support these claims include:

- **Students in the treatment schools in below average and above average tiers experienced less summer reading loss than students in the control schools.<sup>11</sup>**
  - For students in the below average tier, 30% experienced summer reading loss in the control schools, compared to 21% in the treatment schools.
  - For students in the well above/above average tiers, 43% experienced summer reading loss in the control schools, compared to 34% in the treatment schools.

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<sup>9</sup>Entwisle, D. R., Alexander, K. L., & Olson, L. S. (2000). Summer learning and home environment. In R. D. Kahlenberg (Ed.), *A notion at risk: Preserving public education as an engine for social mobility* (pp. 9-30). New York: The Century Foundation Press.

<sup>10</sup><http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/third-grade-reading-legislation.aspx>

<sup>11</sup>Grade 2–5 students' AimswebPlus score changes from spring 2017 to fall 2017. Similar advantages were not found for students in the average reading tier in the treatment schools, which may warrant future analysis to delve deeper into what might account for this. Students in the well below average tier could not display a decrease.

- **Students in 3<sup>rd</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grades in treatment schools reported reading more over the summer than students in the control schools.**
  - Specifically, 14% of students in the control schools reported that they did not read over the summer, as compared to only 6% of students in the treatment schools.
- **Third-grade students in treatment schools expressed more positive beliefs than those in the control schools regarding the importance of summer reading.**
  - Ninety percent of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students in treatment schools agreed reading over the summer was important, compared to 83% of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students in the control schools.
- **Likewise, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students in treatment schools expressed more positive beliefs about the impact of summer reading than those from control schools.**
  - Eighty-seven percent of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students in treatment schools agreed they were better readers now because of the reading they did over the summer, compared to 77% of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students in the control schools.

**Exploring families' attitudes towards summer reading and SRS, the findings were overwhelmingly positive.**

When asked about the SRS initiative in general<sup>12</sup> :

- eighty-five percent of families agreed that the books their children received contributed to them reading more over the summer; and
- eighty-seven percent of families agreed their children are better readers now because of the reading they did over the summer.

When asked about the Family Literacy Nights specifically, for those families that attended:

- eighty-five percent said Family Literacy Nights helped them support their children's reading; and
- ninety-four percent agreed that Family Literacy Nights were a great way to connect families and schools.

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<sup>12</sup>Although all families were offered the opportunity to complete the digital parent survey, over 90% of the responses came from families in the treatment schools. Thus, findings reflect only those families whose child was in a treatment school.

# Looking Forward

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The results from the Summer Reading Spotlight: Stoughton 2017 (SRS) research indicate the importance of providing resources to *all* students to engage in reading over the summer and empowering families to help prevent summer reading loss.

Additionally, taken in conjunction with findings from the two years of Make Summer Count research in Greenville, SC, after which the SRS summer reading initiative was modeled, there is considerable evidence pointing to the positive and important impact of this sustainable summer reading model on students from various demographics, reading levels and grade levels. Scholastic looks forward to continued collaborations with districts, and private and public partners, to prevent summer reading loss.

## Contact

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