2021 Summer Reading Report

beanstack

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to programming

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We started Beanstack with our own family in mind, and our experiences as parents guide our ideals as a company. Encouraging a lifelong love of reading is our aim at home and our core mission at work—as is the goal of making reading more relevant and accessible to families of color and communities with fewer resources.

Like everyone else, we had our lives turned upside down in 2020. We saw in our own family how easy it is for kids to backslide with schools, libraries, and extracurriculars closed. And in the office, we experienced a huge rush of new Beanstack partner libraries, many of them jumping to online programming for the first time while struggling through closures and furloughs. Given our company value of inclusion, we also worried about the unequal opportunities facing families left behind by the twin blows of the digital divide and the equity gap.

Two years on, we all know that the pandemic worsened pre-existing disparities. During school closures, students of color were more likely to attend remote-only schools.[1] Technological barriers disproportionately held back BIPOC families, limiting parents' job opportunities and children's virtual classroom access. ESOL students' already challenging road to full educational participation suffered from abrupt shutdowns and a lack of digital resources.[2] Providing online access and quality virtual content is now more critical than ever.

Librarians are the unsung heroes of literacy, access, and opportunity, and we cheer your tireless work. Shoutout to Wicomico, San Diego, and many other public libraries who raced to launch hot-spot lending programs. To Winnsboro, Westford, and all those who extended library WiFi networks into neighborhood parking lots to reach isolated residents. To Fremont and Tulsa, who doubled down on the Beanstack mobile app to reach patrons with no PCs. Many of you told us that Beanstack was the only way you were able to do summer reading at all, and that Beanstack is now crucial to continuing your programming during the pandemic. We never anticipated that our software

and our company would be called upon in these circumstances, but we're fiercely proud to be here with the support you need in the fight.

As you'll read in this report, summer readership is bouncing back from the COVID slump of 2020 and, in many cases, exceeding the pre-pandemic numbers of 2019. We know that virtual reading challenges can be a powerful equalizer, helping overcome the equity gap and bolstering the joy in reading. We believe, deeply, that our efforts and yours align with our company values of love, inclusion, hard work, and awesomeness. Thank you for being a part of the Beanstack family and, as always, keep reading.

**With love,
Jordan and Felix**

*Felix &
Jordan*

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[1] Smith, Ember & Reeves, Richard V. (2020, Sep. 23) "Students of color most likely to be learning online: Districts must work even harder on race equity." The Brookings Institution. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/how-we-rise/2020/09/23/students-of-color-most-likely-to-be-learning-online-districts-must-work-even-harder-on-race-equity/

[2] Goldberg, Suzanne B. (2021, June 9) "Education in a Pandemic: The Disparate Impacts of COVID-19 on America's Students." U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights.

Overview:

Why a reading report?

Our widespread network of clients and users, coupled with our historical data from past summers, gives us the unique opportunity to pinpoint key trends for summer reading success.


We share our findings for three reasons:

Transparency

We have a long-standing commitment to opening our reading data analysis to the library community. That includes libraries who are not Beanstack partners—their mission is our mission, too.

Awesomeness

Beanstack will never be a "completed" product. It can only continue to be awesome if we evolve—which we do largely based on libraries' reading data and advice. The information in this annual summary is a key part of that process, and has led to recent improvements to our reports, admin dashboard, and logging flow.
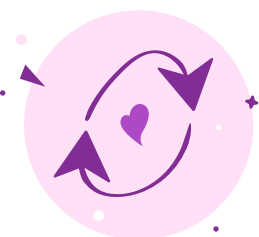
A Virtuous Circle

Our long-term value proposition to libraries lies not only in boosting patron engagement, but also in helping libraries demonstrate their reach and impact—which is especially critical in a time of escalating attacks on public programs and funding. The recommendations in our report zero in on strategies for growing key metrics via effective reading challenges.

Challenge = A virtual reading program, e.g., "Summer Reading" or "1,000 Books Before Kindergarten"