



The Summer Reading Challenge

"Children who take part in the Summer Reading Challenge return to school enthused about reading, motivated and ready to learn."
Literacy coordinator

"My son really enjoyed the Summer Reading Challenge. He's always been a reluctant reader, but this made a great difference. He's now enjoying reading every day."
Parent

"The Summer Reading Challenges are great fun. Before I found reading a bit difficult but I love reading now."
Alex, aged 8

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department for
children, schools and families

2008
NATIONAL Year
OF Reading

The Summer Reading Challenge

Public libraries are doing a crucial job in helping the next generation to love reading, and they use the Summer Reading Challenge to reach more children each year.

The Summer Reading Challenge™ is a massive national promotion of reading for 4-11 year olds organised by The Reading Agency. Run by public libraries, it involves 650,000 children, encouraging them to read more books during the long summer break from school.

Every year the Challenge has a new theme. Last year the Summer Reading Challenge was called The Big Wild Read. This year we celebrate our 10th challenge with a sporting theme – Team Read.

“The Big Wild Read helped me to start loving reading, I hope it will be on next year as well.”

Dominika, aged 11, from Newcastle

The Challenge helps overcome the ‘summer learning dip’ and sends children back into school feeling really positive about reading.

“The SRC is an excellent way of sustaining reading levels whilst not in school.”

Literacy coordinator



The Challenge in 2007:

- 650,000 children took part in the Challenge in the UK
- 338,000 children read at least 6 books during the Challenge
- 97% of UK public libraries took part through 4,000 libraries and mobile libraries
- 39,000 children became new library members to do the Challenge
- 290,000 children got involved in 11,000 events
- 10,000 children from 28 different countries took part through the British Council

A changing library service

The Summer Reading Challenge is a great example of how libraries are supporting reading in new ways – it combines free access to books with social activities and a creative online element.

It's a simple challenge – children sign up at their local library, and are rewarded for reading six books during the summer holidays. But the role of libraries is much more than just handing out incentives; staff and volunteers help children find new books, encourage them to talk about the books they've read and give them new reading ideas.

And there are thousands of inspirational events held in libraries over the summer, linked to the Challenge and injecting creativity into families' reading experiences.

Children who complete the Challenge are rewarded with a medal and a certificate, often presented at a special ceremony in their local library or their school. This gives them a real sense of achievement.

"I really enjoyed The Big Wild Read and I have got my medal and I just wanted to finish it because I never have finished a competition that I have signed up for ever – I am just soooo proud of myself!"

Lishka, aged 9

"I am really enjoying The Big Wild Read, – me and my mates are going up to the library everyday, I have nearly finished The Big Wild Read and I think it's a great idea to get kids reading."

Max, aged 11, from West Yorkshire



The Challenge website

The Summer Reading Challenge website offers children an exciting fusion of reading and IT, with games, blogs from their favourite authors and messages from thousands of children taking part in the Challenge. Through a link with Stories from the Web they can also send in reviews and see what other children are reading.

"I like to read books and I like going on the computer in the library and I like having a library card."

Mohamed, aged 11, from Bradford

www.teamread.co.uk

www.storiesfromtheweb.org

Reading enjoyment

Research shows that reading for pleasure is central for children's life chances¹, and yet recent international comparisons show that children in England enjoy reading less than their international peers and less than they did five years ago². Boys are less likely than girls to say that they enjoy reading, and their achievement is lower.

The Summer Reading Challenge has a key role to play in stimulating reading enjoyment and supporting reader development – including a large number of boys.

270,000 boys took part in The Big Wild Read last year (41% of participants) and 50% of them completed the Challenge. Messages sent in by boys clearly showed how much they enjoyed taking part, and parents commented on how the Challenge encouraged their sons, who wouldn't ordinarily read, to pick up a book.

"My son really enjoyed The Big Wild Read. He's always been a reluctant reader, but this made a great difference. He's now enjoying reading every day."

Parent

Children taking part in the Challenge read more books, read more widely, enjoy reading and recognise authors more than children who did not take part. In a 2006 survey, 80% of children said they were better at reading by the end of the summer³.

"I like reading because it's so much fun. More and more I get better at reading. The Big Wild Read is so much fun."

Femi, aged 6, from Harrow



Encouraging reading

Parents are also noticing the positive difference that the Challenge has made to their children's attitude to reading and their reading progress:

"Aleshia loved reading all the different books. She has come on with her reading in leaps and bounds. Can't wait until next year."

Parent of girl aged 5

"Connor is normally very reluctant with books. He has recently been assessed with dyslexia, so this Challenge has made him feel a sense of achievement."

Parent of boy aged 9

¹ Reading For Change, OECD, 2002

² Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS): <http://timss.bc.edu>

³ Summer Reading Challenge 2006: Impact Research Report Product Perceptions Ltd, 2007

Partnerships between schools and libraries

“Children’s enjoyment of reading is critical to their life chances, but schools alone can’t crack this.”

Jim Knight, Schools minister, Department for Children, Schools and Families

The Summer Reading Challenge is a highly effective tool for public libraries, schools, and school library service to work together to support children’s reading. Schools encourage children to join the Challenge before the summer, and celebrate their achievement through special award ceremonies in the autumn term. In one authority, targeted work with one school led to a 56% increase in numbers at the nearest library.

“We are delighted with the number of children from all the year groups in our school who participated in the Summer Reading Challenge. ... By encouraging more children to read during the summer holidays, this reading initiative has not only succeeded in promoting reading for pleasure but it has raised the profile of our school library and contributed to the children’s reading development.”

Walton Priory Middle School, Stone

Literacy coordinators in schools said that children taking part in the Challenge⁴:

- have a more enthusiastic attitude
- maintain their reading age/level for the autumn term
- return to school more settled and ready to learn
- have enhanced confidence and self esteem through doing the Challenge and receiving the medals.

“Nice encouragement for the children ... it’s a super idea to get them motivated and also when the schools are actively encouraging the children, it ties in nicely – school-home-library.”

Parent



Every child matters

Libraries and schools working together can be a powerful force for change. The government’s Every Child Matters strategy creates a crucial new partnership framework, and when public library and school staff work together, children’s reading enjoyment and skills can improve dramatically. The Enjoying Reading website shows how the partnership can work in practice: www.enjoyingreading.org.uk

As part of the Enjoying Reading initiative the Department for Children, Schools and Families has funded new materials to help link the Challenge to literacy work in primary schools plus a transition resource for children moving up to secondary school.

The Challenge and policy priorities

Reading widely and for pleasure

Research shows how important reading for pleasure is for children's life chances, and OFSTEDs report "*Reading for purpose and pleasure*"⁵ identifies the value of children reading widely and the importance of parental support, including visits to the local library. The revised Primary Framework for Literacy emphasises the importance of reading widely in order to understand and engage with texts. The Challenge helps children become confident and enthusiastic readers and so helps to raise standards of reading achievements.

SRC Research⁶ shows:

- 93% of children say they enjoyed taking part in the SRC
- 73% of participants read six or more books compared with 30% of non-participants
- 96% want to take part in the next reading challenge.

Personalised learning

The DCSF 5 year strategy for children and learners highlights the importance of personalised learning. During the Summer Reading Challenge in libraries, children make their own reading choices and learn how to use library resources. 86% of children taking part choose their own books throughout the summer⁶.

"I did not like to read big books, but when I entered the Challenge, I now like to read big books."

David, aged 11, from Birmingham

Making a positive contribution

Through the Summer Reading Challenge, libraries run mentoring and volunteering schemes involving young people, to help children complete the Challenge.

⁵ *Reading for purpose and pleasure* Ofsted, December 2004

⁶ *Summer Reading Challenge 2006: Impact Research Report* Product Perceptions Ltd, 2007



The Summer Reading Challenge™ is run by The Reading Agency and the public library network and is supported by leading children's publishers.

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