



Library Board Report

To: Chair and Members of the Bruce County Public Library Board

From: Jeremy Clark, Digital Initiatives Coordinator, and Nancy Kuhl, Program Coordinator

Date: November 20, 2024

Re: Summer Reading Report

Staff Recommendation:

The Summer Reading Report is for information.

Background:

Bruce County Public Library is one of more than 2,000 libraries participating in the TD Summer Reading Club (TD SRC) each summer. The program reaches 830,000 participants across Canada, including children at every branch in Bruce County. TD SRC inspires kids to explore the fun of reading in their own way - the key to building a lifelong love of reading.

Beanstack and Summer Reading

Research indicates children lose up to 1-2 months of learning in reading skills over the summer months. By incorporating daily reading, parents and caregivers can avoid the “summer slide”. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to slide more as they lack access to reading materials. The library helps fill socioeconomic and learning gaps with free programs and lending that encourage reading as a routine activity.

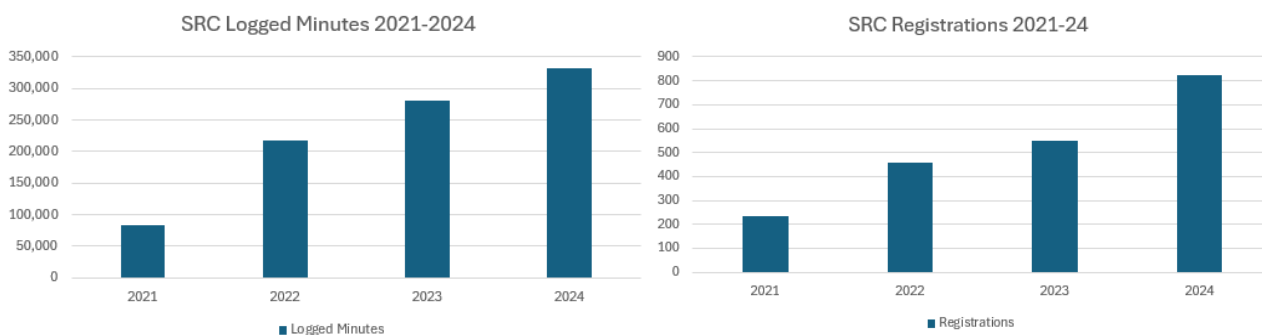
Beanstack is an online reading challenge platform and 2024 is BCPL’s seventh year using it as a core component of TD SRC. The Beanstack TD SRC program follows a similar structure each year, including the addition of activities throughout the summer. A parent of one of this year’s participants, when asked what they like about Beanstack, responded, “It’s easy to use! ... Love that it has all the titles and timer. Makes my son excited to log time reading!” Each year, the TD SRC Beanstack reading challenge is refined using information from the previous year’s data along with feedback from staff and participants.

Across the board, TD SRC participation and engagement in Beanstack grew from last year’s totals. A total of 826 participants logged 330,069 minutes of reading, increases of 50% and 18% respectively over last year. The number of readers that reached milestones also grew with 145 reading at least 10 hours, an increase of 32% compared to 2023, and 48 participants

logged at least 40 hours of reading, an increase of 9%. The large growth in 10-hour readers coupled with the 50% increase in registrations reflects the expanded reach TD SRC achieved this year, particularly with children whose reading is on the rise. Activity completion and the number of participants taking part in activities grew at approximately 51%.

Beanstack’s built-in reading time tracking, title entry, and review-writing along with the platform’s in-depth reporting options give us a greater picture of how readers throughout the county are engaging with literacy. Reviews submitted by participants this year rose to 166, an increase of 160% over last year’s total. This displays increased engagement with both reading and literacy in general as children reflect on what they read, what they thought of it, and took the time to write it out.

One parent wrote to praise the library’s TD SRC programming, and Beanstack in particular, saying their child “... has worked so hard on his reading this summer! And has truly loved the Beanstack program, recording his minutes and titles! He is a struggling reader so this program has really boosted his confidence this summer.” Another reader who filled out an TD SRC survey reported “I liked how it would show your stats and compare week to week. It encouraged me to read more!”



TD Summer Reading Club

Children’s Weekly Summer Reading Meetings

All branches offered weekly, themed programs throughout the eight weeks of TD SRC. The 2024 theme, 'To the Stars', supported activities of high interest, and the opportunity to see or try new things. Some of the programs staff created included getting a closer look at what happens behind the scenes at the library, a collaborative art project, and a summer memories booklet. Staff focused on creating literacy-focused activities, shared reading, and games. Staff also encouraged children to discuss their reading and log their reading time in Beanstack. The 136 weekly meetings saw a total summer attendance of 823 children. The library also offered 118 other in-person programs, including story times, special presentations, and performers, which drew an additional 1,415 attendees.

Weekly programs are an important avenue for introducing children to the library and the wide array of other items, activities, and experiences available in the branch. One child, when asked what they liked most, responded, “I like how the instructor had books to read,

but they also had small games for the students to play as well.” Another said, “There were other activities to interest the kids not just reading!”

Outreach Programs

Beyond the traditional in-branch programs, BCPL staff offered 49 outreach events which saw 968 participants. The library’s YouTube channel was home to 6 online video programs which were viewed 633 times.

Staff from the branches Walkerton, Teeswater, and Ripley connected with day camps in their areas. A total of 671 campers across 29 visits took part in TD SRC. Campers at the Tara day camp participated as well by sending in their minutes twice each month, totaling almost 80 participants logging time. The day camp visits are an integral part of our overall successful TD SRC participation as library staff work with day camp leaders to incorporate a weekly literacy time.

Incentives

TD SRC offers participants incentives for reading progress. As in 2023, this year’s challenge encouraged participants to visit a branch to pick up rewards for reaching reading milestones. The popularity of rewards continued from last year, with 1,566 rewards earned. When asked what they liked most about the program/service, one participant said, “Earning ribbons. The 40-hour book prize was also good incentive.” Book prizes were sent out to all 48 of this year’s 40-hour readers.

Beanstack Bingo returned for another year after its successful introduction in 2023. Seventeen participants completed the entire card - a significant accomplishment as it requires reaching 40 hours of reading, 2 book reviews, and completing all 8 activity badges. At least 144 participants completed one line on the bingo card.

Teen Summer Reading: To the Stars

To the Stars, this year’s teen summer reading challenge, saw 12 participants log 12,105 minutes, earning 96 badges along the way.

Teens who registered for the Teen Book Box were encouraged to register for the Summer Reading program as well. Twenty boxes went out to teens from across the County. The teen boxes are a terrific way to promote library resources and literacy as well. Included are recommendations for PressReader and Kanopy, additional reads according to the theme of the box, a library book to read and a book to keep. Participants are encouraged to write book reviews in Beanstack based on the books in the boxes or other reading done during the summer.



As with younger children, teens face a hurdle in maintaining literacy gains through the summer months. Teen reading challenges help bridge this gap and offer a chance for kids to continue their connection with the library as they age out of TD SRC. Beanstack and the Teen Book Box program work together to keep teens reading over the summer.

Evergreen Award Challenge (Adult)

Launched on April 1st, the Evergreen reading challenge is available for those 18 and older. The challenge continues until the end of September and serves as the adult summer reading program. Evergreen is an initiative promoting works by Canadian authors and encourages participants to read shortlisted titles and vote for their favourite.

A total of 49 readers in this challenge logged 291 completed books, increases of 4% and 23% respectively from 2023's numbers. Participants can vote for their favourite Evergreen title through Beanstack or by filling out a ballot bookmark. Beanstack participants filled out 24 ballots, with another 8 paper ballots submitted in branches. Votes are tallied and submitted to Forest of Reading and combined with those from readers across Ontario to determine a winner.

Financial/Staffing/Legal/IT Considerations:

There are no financial, staffing, legal or IT considerations associated with this report.

Interdepartmental Consultation:

There was no inter-departmental consultation.

Link to Strategic Plan:

Trusted Community Connector: Continuing to ensure the Library is welcoming to all through diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion strategies.

Community Sharing Place: Providing spaces - both virtually and physically - for meetings, programs, and collaborative group gatherings.