A Year for the Books

The 2021-22 school year was a momentous one for SMART, as we celebrated our 30th anniversary, finalized a merger with The Children’s Book Bank, underwent a leadership transition, and continued to navigate the ever-changing pandemic landscape. Through all of these changes, we’ve remained focused on our mission to spark joy and opportunity through the magic of a shared book. We also prioritized being a flexible partner to our schools, offering a menu of virtual and in-person program models, and continuing to ensure all SMART Reading students received new books and reading resources to keep and share with their families.

In the Northwest Area, we implemented Classroom SMART (which you’ll read more about) at four sites, receiving great feedback from teachers and volunteers. We also had one site participate in our Pen Pal program, and many others receive new books that young readers were thrilled to keep and add to their personal libraries!

As we look ahead to the 2022-23 school year, we’re anticipating a significant return to in-person service, while continuing to offer pandemic-era services that have proven to be valuable additions to our suite of programs. We’ll also be exploring how to bring the Book Bank’s model of collecting, cleaning and distributing donated books to communities across the state. While we can’t know for certain what the year will hold, we know that kids need the books and shared reading time that SMART provides more than ever, and we’ll be there for them no matter what!

“Students are so excited to pick their new books! We love the SMART Reading program because children get to have books in their homes that otherwise they would not.” - Teacher
Spotlight on Classroom SMART

After piloting the Classroom SMART model last year at 11 sites around the state, it quickly became our most popular student engagement option this year. Based on research underscoring the importance of reading aloud to kids, this model engages a volunteer to read aloud to an entire classroom either virtually or in-person on a consistent basis. Teachers reported that it was easy to implement and a valuable complement to classroom instruction. Volunteers around the state led 1,400 Classroom SMART sessions during the 2021-22 school year.

97% of educators reported that Classroom SMART contributed to improvements in enjoyment of reading.

93% of educators reported that Classroom SMART contributed to improvements in reading motivation.

During 97% of Classroom SMART sessions, the class was engaged.

“"My students looked forward to every Wednesday when our volunteers would join us on a Google Meet. They were beyond excited when book boxes arrived. My bilingual students were so excited to receive books in Spanish! They loved, loved, loved the nonfiction books too. Thank you so much for your patience working with young kids online. Thank you so much for the thoughtful stories you read to my kindergarten class.”
- Northwest Area Teacher

SMART Storytime Expands Access to Read-alouds

All students in SMART have access to SMART Storytime, a library of more than 230 video read-alouds created by SMART volunteers. This continues to be a popular resource for kids participating in any of the program delivery models. This year, kids and families watched over 2,258 read-alouds!

80% of SMART Reading kids and families rated SMART Storytime videos good or great.

Pictured: Sample of a read-aloud video on the SMART Storytime website.

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