

# Two Greenville school programs finalists for Dick and Tunky WhatWorksSC Award for Excellence

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Two of the three finalists for the 2017 Dick and Tunky Riley WhatWorksSC Award for Excellence are from Greenville.

Innovate!, a program at A.J. Whittenberg Elementary, starts working with students the summer before third grade and continuing through high school by providing academic instruction, creative teaching, mentoring, and other enrichment opportunities year-round.

Public Education Partners' Make Summer Count program combats summer reading loss by providing students in 29 high-need public elementary schools free books and hosting school-based Family Reading Nights.

Public Education Partners' Make Summer Count program allows students in participating elementary schools to pick out books for summer reading that become part of their home libraries.

Students do not apply or sign up for the Innovate! program, which is funded completely through private donations and grants. Children are chosen for the program and admission is based on "standing out" in at least two categories: academic performance, potential, and character.

"We work to broaden the horizons of children who rarely see beyond their street corner and to equip them with all of the skills they need to achieve their full potential," said Lynn Mann, program director and founder.

Seventy-eight percent of third- through fifth-grade students who participated in the Make Summer Count reading program maintained or increased their reading levels during summer break in 2016.

A study of students in Baltimore by researchers at Johns Hopkins University showed that two-thirds of the achievement gap between lower- and higher-income high school freshmen could be traced to summer learning loss during the elementary school years. Students who don't read proficiently by third grade are four times less likely to graduate from high school. If those struggling readers are poor, they are 13 times likelier to be high school dropouts.

The winner will be announced on Oct. 24.

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