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For Immediate Release
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Summer Reading: How to Get Your Kids to Hit the Books—for Fun—This Summer

Local Libraries Offer Parents Great Resources to Get Kids into Summer Reading

Summer means play time for kids. The last school bells have rung, and for most kids, that means having no homework for months. But the benefits—and pleasures—of reading need not stop.

Now is the best time to get your kids reading—for the pure fun of it.

How can you get your kids to read over the summer when they associate books with schoolwork? How do you pry your children away from MySpace, Facebook, video games, and television and make reading an active sport?

Easy, says the New York State Library. Join in.

Parents can take an active role in gently moving kids away from computers and media, and into the pure joys of reading. And the local library is a great place—for parents and kids—to start.

“Local libraries offer a wealth of summer activities and reading materials,” says Carole Huxley, interim New York State Education Commissioner. “Librarians know their communities well and understand how to get kids excited about reading and turned on to the habit of a lifetime.”

But if kids should read more for pleasure during the summer months, what’s stopping them? How do you get your kids intrigued, engaged and excited about reading?

“Encouraging children to make their own choices for summer reading is great, but they need help in making choices,” says Karen Balsen, coordinator of the New York State Library’s Statewide Summer Reading Program. “Your local library has lots of tools, techniques, and tips for parents to help their children find options. Your librarian can help you match your child to reading material that excites and engages him or her.”

This summer, many public libraries in New York State are participating in the Statewide Summer program known as “Be Creative @ Your Library”, with many original ideas to inspire free voluntary reading by your kids.

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Getting Kids to Hit the Books—for Fun—This Summer

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The Summer Reading program offers games, activities, and creative challenges for kids at all age levels. And libraries have annotated summer reading lists, accessible at the library or online.

Lots of parents find other creative ways to get their kids into books.

- Librarians and teachers suggest reading aloud with your kids. You can ask them to read a book to the family; alternatively, you can read aloud to them. And don't just read indoors, says a national reading commission, but move outside to the porch, to a park, or head to the beach with a bag of books.
- If your teens and young adults are permanently plugged in to the iPod®, download a good audio book for them, preferably one where the author is also the reader, since this can help to create even more engagement with the story.
- Books on tape and CD are great for long family car trips and at home, and are easily accessible in public libraries across the state.
- Try children's magazines for even more playful reading. *Sports Illustrated for Kids*, *Highlights for Children*, or *National Geographic World* are great places to start and most are available at your public library. Putting a subscription in your child's name encourages them to take initiative and "buy in" to the family campaign for summer literacy. Additionally, many community newspapers now have special children's or teen sections once a week. These are excellent ways for your kids to mine interesting information and stories from the news.
- Parents can also help reluctant readers by allowing them to read comic books and romance novels, which may not be challenging fare, but do contribute to the increase of language abilities. Of course, reading choices should never be inappropriate for kids, but don't hesitate to allow kids to make their own choices. This is, after all, meant to be fun and pleasurable. It's the process of reading that counts most.
- The "Be Creative" Summer Reading Program at your public library suggests some parent-smart ideas: get your child a library card; it's free; set a good example by reading on your own and talking to your kids about what you are reading; post a summer list of all books read by the family on the refrigerator; and in general, create an atmosphere of book pleasure by stashing them all over the house.

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Get Your Kids to Hit the Books—for Fun—This Summer

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While reading (and listening) to books for *recreation* is your top priority, it doesn't hurt that your kids can benefit in tangible ways from this summer activity.

Research has shown that reading over the summer improves fall school performance for students of all ages. "The road to academic success begins early, which is why early childhood learning and reading are so important," said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said. "When we read to our kids, it helps them become better readers and develop a love of reading on their own."

Analyzing one study, educator Stephen Krashen (*The Power of Reading*) concluded that the longer free voluntary reading is practiced, the more consistent and positive the results. People who read more, write better and reading as a leisure activity is the best predictor of comprehension, vocabulary and reading speed.

Another study suggests that children in every income group who read six or more books over the summer gained more in reading achievement than children who did not (Barbara Heyns, *Summer Learning and the Effects of Schooling*).

In addition to the extensive age-appropriate summer reading lists, there are many resources and activities available for librarians, parents, educators, children and teens at the program's web site, www.summerreadingnys.org.

Last year more than 1.5 million young people participated in the New York Statewide Summer Reading Program, a program of the New York State Library in the Office of Cultural Education in the New York State Education Department funded through the Federal Library Services and Technology Act, with funds awarded to the New York State Library by the Federal Institute of Museum and Library Services.

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Complete NYS Summer Reading Lists and more at:
<http://www.summerreadingnys.org/media>