



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Crack A Book This Summer

JAMES L. SEWARD June 18, 2009

The school year is winding down and children across the state are on the cusp of summer vacation. While this is certainly a time to enjoy the outdoors, family vacations and a few lazy days, I hope that families will take some time to stop by the local library and take part in the New York Statewide Summer Reading Program.

Over 1.5 million children and teens took part in the state library sponsored program last summer, a new record for participation. The growing program helps raise student learning levels and prevents learning loss during the summer months. In 2007, New York joined the Collaborative Summer Reading Program (CSLP), a national consortium of 47 states that pools resources. Many of the materials used at New York's libraries during the summer program come through the collaboration. Local organizations and schools are also joining in the partnership to help promote and create the program.

This year some 1,100 libraries across New York will take part in the program. "Be Creative At Your Library" is the theme for young readers, and "Express Yourself At Your Library" is the theme for teens. Librarians play a major role in promoting these themes, helping children select reading materials and providing literacy enhancing programs such as storytelling, music, creative arts and performances.

Local libraries have a wealth of special programming throughout the summer aimed at helping children of all ages and abilities to improve their reading skills. There are “read to me” programs for preschoolers which introduce reading concepts to young children. Special programs for slightly older independent readers have also been created that allow children to report what they’ve read to the librarian and receive rewards or certificates at the end of the program. An even more expansive plan has been designed for teenagers that gives them the opportunity to take charge of their own library program. Families are also encouraged to read together and visit the library as a family activity.

Many local libraries received special funding through the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant program to help enhance the summer reading program. Special events, online programs, contests and more are all being offered thanks to the funding.

Numerous studies indicate that summer reading is directly linked to improved academic achievement. Among the published findings:

- *The number of books read during the summer is consistently related to academic gains;
- *Children who read six or more books over the summer gain more in reading achievement than children who do not;
- *The use of the public library is more predictive of vocabulary gains than attending summer school;
- *The longer free voluntary reading is practiced, the more consistent and positive the results;
- *People who read more write better;
- *Reading as a leisure activity is the best predictor of comprehension, vocabulary and reading speed.

Many of these studies also indicate that the best way to maximize reading improvements is by taking part in a structured program at a library. Librarians make reading activities fun

and appealing to young people, ensuring that children will stay with the program and reap all of the educational benefits.

A pair of particularly significant moments in history are also being celebrated this summer and a great place to learn more about them is at your local library. The 400th anniversary of the voyages of Henry Hudson and Samuel de Champlain, as well as the 200th anniversary of Robert Fulton's development of the steamboat are being recognized across the state. The New York State Library has incorporated New York state history related activities and reading material on these historic events into the summer reading program.

Along with all of the fine resources available at your local library, more information is available on-line <http://www.summerreadingnys.org/>. The website includes games and activities, a summer reading quiz and information on your local library. I invite everyone to take advantage of this great program and spend some time at your local library this summer. Happy reading!