



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of June 20, 2022 -- 'Keep turning the page this summer'

THOMAS F. O'MARA June 20, 2022

| ISSUE: **SUMMER READING PROGRAM**



The bottom line is that summer reading is a lifeline for children. Our region is incredibly fortunate to have an outstanding network of public libraries providing access to books and other reading activities, materials, and opportunities.

Senator O'Mara offers his weekly perspective on many of the key challenges and issues facing the Legislature, as well as on legislative actions, local initiatives, state programs and policies, and more. Stop back every Monday for Senator O'Mara's latest column...

This week, **"Keep turning the page this summer"**

Numbers help tell every story.

For example, many studies have helped make the case that children who read during the summer months make greater academic gains in the following school year than children who do not.

In fact, statistics on the “summer slide” jump right off the page, including that:

- > students can lose up to 25 percent of their reading level over the summer;
- > children who don't engage in summer reading lose approximately two months of instructional time, or roughly 22% of the school year; and
- > by the end of the sixth grade, children who lose reading skills during the summer are, on average, two years behind their peers.

While numbers alone help tell the larger story, words themselves deliver the most impactful testimony of all.

Scholastic's “Kids & Family Reading Report” has become one of the gold standards of advocacy and research on the importance of summer reading.

The organization's Chief Academic Officer, Michael Hagen, has said, “Parents, grandparents, older siblings, teachers, principals—everyone in a child's life—can be a reading role model. It's up to us all to provide the opportunity for choice, be readers ourselves, ask and answer questions about what a child is reading, read aloud together (regardless of age!), and more. When a child knows that the people surrounding them value reading, we will have a greater culture of literacy in our homes and in our schools.”

The bottom line is that summer reading is a lifeline for children.

Consequently, I am grateful this summer to join with the New York State Library and public libraries statewide, including so many throughout the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, on “Summer Reading at New York Libraries” initiatives.

Scholastic itself also offers a summer reading program that you can find out more about at: www.scholastic.com/summer.

For my part, I'm proud to share the Senate's online summer reading program. To participate, students and parents can visit my Senate website, www.omara.nysenate.gov, and click on the "Summer Reading Program" logo on the home page.

At its most fundamental level, summarizing the range of research on the importance of summer reading for students is straightforward: it is all about getting books into the hands of kids.

According to *Scholastic*, a few of the keys to successful summer reading are letting young readers choose the books they want to read (91% of children say they are more likely to finish a book if they have picked it out themselves), encouraging kids to read four or more books and, most importantly, providing easy access to books.

The underlying importance of access points directly to the critical role our public libraries play to encourage students and their families to read.

Libraries are the gateway for making books and other reading materials and programs available throughout our communities. Our region is incredibly fortunate to have an outstanding network of public libraries providing access to books and other reading activities, materials, and opportunities.

Of course, our local libraries sponsor a variety of summer reading activities and events. Visit the website of the Southern Tier Library System, www.stls.org, for links to member libraries in Allegany, Chemung, Schuyler, Steuben and Yates counties. The members of the Finger Lakes Library System, including Seneca, Tioga and Tompkins counties, are online at www.flis.org.

Over two million young people statewide have participated in its summer reading program annually, according to the New York State Library. More information on "Summer Reading at New York Libraries" is online at www.nysl.nysed.gov.

There are plenty of ways to help children get summer off to a great start and then to keep making the season meaningful and memorable.

A reading list is one of the best ways of all.

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