

Roundtable Presentation Script

What is summer reading?

Summer reading refers to programs and activities designed to encourage students to read during the summer months when school is not in session. The main goal of these programs is to keep kids engaged with books and reading materials, helping them maintain or even improve their literacy skills over the break. These programs are often offered by libraries, both public and school-based, and can include reading challenges, themed events, and book recommendations. By keeping kids reading during this time, summer reading programs provide a fun and engaging way to continue learning outside of the classroom.

Why is it beneficial?

Summer reading offers several key benefits. First and foremost, it helps combat the 'summer slide,' which is when students lose academic progress over the summer break. By keeping kids engaged with reading, summer reading programs help maintain their literacy skills. Additionally, these programs encourage a love of reading, allowing students to explore books that interest them, which can lead to lifelong reading habits. Summer reading also provides a chance to engage with diverse, enriching content that broadens kids' perspectives and promotes critical thinking. Plus, summer reading fosters positive relationships with libraries, giving kids access to resources that can support their learning throughout the year. Overall, summer reading ensures that students stay on track academically and develop a deeper connection to learning.

How does it work?

Summer reading programs typically start with a theme to engage students—this could be anything from nature to space, or even video games! Once the theme is set, libraries create reading lists based on age and interests. These lists may come from trusted sources like the American Library Association or local librarians, and they include books students can read over the summer. Participants often set reading goals, such as reading for 20 minutes each day or finishing a certain number of books. To keep kids motivated, many programs offer rewards for completing these goals—such as bookmarks, certificates, or small prizes. Summer reading may also include fun events like storytimes or book discussions, providing a social and interactive element. The goal is to make reading enjoyable while helping students stay engaged in learning over the break.

St Paul Public Library's Summer Reading

St Paul's Summer reading program, Summer Spark, is a really great example of how a public library worked to combine the city's curriculum and education goals, with summer reading. For example, the education goals of St Paul's city, which is St Paul, Minnesota, is to prepare their children to become successful adults on all fronts. Meaning, not just how to do math, but also how to budget, cook, or generally be a good global citizen. The way in which St Paul Public

Library leans into this goal is through their additional “tasks” in their summer reading. It moves beyond just reading, and works to include tasks such as trying a new vegetable, learning how to cook a meal for dinner, measuring rainfall, visiting a new park, or even making a new friend. Moreover, this program is a great example of a rewards-based summer reading, with prizes that are up-to-date and valuable to their students. For example, the ultimate teen prize was a giant squishmellow! Finally, another thing to note is their reading log. Although I could not find a picture for you, I do know that it was a physical reading log which is important. Currently, a lot of libraries are moving away from physical logs and into online tracking systems. However, children benefit from a physical reminder of how much they have accomplished, and the act of writing their successes down, makes it more real for them. Overall, this is a great example of summer reading.

Conclusion

In conclusion, summer reading is a valuable tool for maintaining literacy skills, fostering a love of reading, and preventing the 'summer slide.' By participating in summer reading programs, students stay engaged with books, enjoy diverse content, and develop strong relationships with libraries. These programs not only support academic growth but also promote lifelong reading habits. So, whether it's through a fun theme, reading challenges, or just the joy of exploring new stories, summer reading helps keep learning alive even when school is out.

Discussion Questions:

Have you ever participated in a summer reading program? What was that like?

What theme would you make for your summer reading program?

Would you include tasks outside of just reading?

If your library does summer reading, and you have participated, what would you have changed about it?

Why do you think summer reading is important for young readers?

How do you think can we make summer reading programs more accessible for students from all backgrounds?

- Take a look at your community and determine whether they would benefit from reading lists and logs in different languages.

What role do parents and caregivers play in supporting summer reading, and how can libraries encourage their involvement?

- My library does an adult summer reading as well, so that parents and their children can sort of do it together.

What types of rewards or incentives do you think are most effective in motivating kids to participate in summer reading programs?

- Relevant prizes, so not so much notebooks, but squishmallows, tiny lego sets, etc.