

Summer Reading Store for Incentive Distribution

In 2012 the Canajoharie Library tried a new technique for awarding Summer Reading Prizes to school age children. We set-up the Summer Reading Store as a way of reducing the amount of prizes we hand out while increasing the quality of incentives. Previously children would be able to choose from a prize box. This was a major occupier of staff time and our top readers were walking away with 15-20 prizes at a time! Something just didn't feel right.

The Summer Reading store concept is a simple one. Children put one sticker on their reading chart for every 15 minutes they read. We set-up a display with the items that readers can buy with their stickers. Higher quality items have a higher sticker price. This year we will also have the small prize grab box of trinkets that costs 10 stickers per grab. What we found was that kids were saving up their stickers to purchase the prize they really wanted. This was a fantastic exercise in teaching children about saving and spending wisely. Once a child spent their minutes staff would initial next to the stickers to show they were used up.

The reviews from kids and parents were mixed. Some loved not having all those plastic bits around the house. Some parents claim their child missed the instant gratification of the weekly grab bag prizes. It was successful enough that we will be doing it again this year. Some issues we ran into in this experiment include: not having enough of the t-shirts and tote bag prizes so we ran out by the end of summer, not limiting the quantity of each item per child (our big readers were cleaning us out!)

I will also be adding something extra for our big readers, you know the ones I am talking about! To ease the pain of allowing them to only buy one of each prize we will have a special raffle drawing for the top readers. These top readers will be part of the "Reading Wonders Club for kids who read over 2,000 minutes. Only those students who have read over 2,000 minutes will be eligible for a super neat grand prize.

If you have questions or want to know more about this program feel free to shoot me an email,

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