

## **School visits in a common core world**

If you think your school won't grant you the time to physically visit and promote your summer reading program, and after much thought your library believes it is an important part of your mission and worth your pursuing, THEN during your "ask", mention that "as well they know," any child who fails to read over the summer will lose proficiency, you would like to promote your library's summer reading program to encourage children to read over the summer and avoid the dreaded "summer slide." Try to engage them as partners!

If you CAN get into the school for a day, Celebrate! Understand up front that it can be very hard to get into a school today. THEN, design your presentation to respond to both your public library mission AND your local school's mission. I bet they are the same!

If your school allows the opportunity, and you like to ham it up, speaking at an assembly gives "great bang for the buck" in that you can reach hundreds of students in a short amount of time. Make sure you practice, practice, practice before your "performance." And if you can't push yourself to do this, consider partnering or hiring someone who can, and get your feet wet that way. Then, follow it up with a pdf attachment of your summer calendar for inclusion in the school's electronic newsletter to be complementary, efficient, frugal and green!

If you are scared at the thought of an assembly program because you are not a ham? Well, then, suggest that you'd like to visit each classroom for 5 minutes or so instead, saying that you totally understand that to bring kids to an assembly can take a couple hours out of their school day, and disrupt the school schedules. You don't want that! You just want a few minutes to introduce yourself, explain the basics of your program with excitement, and leave a bookmark or schedule for kids to take home to parents. Take your cue from the school personnel, and quickly shift from one scenario to another to make your school visit work!

If you have. say, 10 minutes to speak to a class, give a quick, upbeat spiel on the summer reading program, then have the kids tell you which of the new exciting books you've brought and displayed they want to hear about and booktalk those. Which means you will have to

practice, practice, practice some, but on a more comfortable level.

Remember, If you are visiting 7th and 8th graders at a Parochial School, really consider NOT booktalking Don Calume's **Swim the Fly**.

If no one at the school seems to remember you and the public library, start by offering school or class visits throughout the school year! Offer to be a mystery lunch reader, present new books that the library owns at a teacher's meeting and a PTA meeting, offer a free storytelling event, attending before school and after school and evening literacy nights. The more you offer, the more times you will be taken up on your offer, and the easier it will to get more buy-in come summer reading program time. Try for at least two visits a year to begin.

If they still suffer from amnesia when you get there, on your next scheduled visit, send posters or mini posters ahead of time to generate excitement! Announce that the library is coming to promote the summer reading program (or whatever). Then, on the back of the posters add your library's pertinent information about the summer reading program (again, whatever), add tips to help the adults (teachers!) prepare for your visit.

If the school won't allow you the time to visit the children through class visit, assemblies or morning announcements, look to provide summer reading program outreach for the parents. They are usually the ones that bring the kids to the library after all! Get invited to PTA meetings, and send follow up PDF attachment of the summer calendar, or seasonal calendars!

If you still can get no access, ask for a meeting, possibly including your primed and prepared library director, to discuss ways to collaborate with the school to provide opportunities for Summer Reading. Tell them about your library programs and opportunities to stop summer slide. Offer your support at the library level to include their reading lists, ideas, links, etc. on your library site. Perhaps a thoughtful discussion regarding your mutual support will gain you an opportunity to promote the public library and summer reading

program at the school, whether with the students face to face, or through morning announcements, news shows, electronic resources.

If you can get your foot in the door, figure out a way to work with your school district to both your advantages – maybe you could run district wide sign ups, provide students with the materials before they leave school for the summer, and have some follow up opportunities at the end of the summer. Turn your focus to reaching the widest population possible. Some of these children you reach are truly the disadvantaged children you are targeting with school visits. These are the children that may not come to the library over the summer, and the ones that need us the most.

If we can get these children to visit us during the summer, we can give them access to a wealth of books that they are allowed to self choose, the books that they **can** and **want** to read. And give them the support they need to attain summer reading growth.

**If** you give a child a book they want to read, you open the door to a great future.