

Let's Keep that Summer Fun Going All Year Long!

It's September, school is back and we have to turn our minds away from summer and back to math, English, social studies and all that studious stuff. In the summer we read stuff that's fun! If you're a grown up, you grab that light hearted beach read all the while telling your friends "I never read this kind of stuff." Yeah, like we usually spend all our time reading the great philosophers. If you're a kid, maybe you've spent all summer reading comics, or books like "Doctor Proctor's Fart Powder" or that modern classic "Don't Lick the Dog".

Fall is a bittersweet time in the Children's Department at the library because there are so many kids that I see all summer long that I never see again after school is back in session. Now that makes for a much quieter library, but it's also rather sad. I imagine all of those kids chained to their desks with their school assigned reading, never getting the opportunity to pick from our huge selection of children's books - forced to spend their free time doing things like watching television, playing video games and who knows what else. They could be at the library picking up a copy of "Inkheart", looking for the very latest Star Wars book or even just searching for that perfect book that's not on any AR list.

Now don't get me wrong, we are blessed in our school system to have great school libraries, and a whole corporation full of magnificent teachers that strive to teach our children to read and to read well. Fortunately, we are also blessed with a well stocked public library that can partner with our school libraries and teachers to not only help your children with the mechanics of reading but also help foster the joy of reading in every child. Even the most steadfast non - reader can become a reader if just given the opportunity and the encouragement to do one thing: Read. That's Read with a capital R because I am talking about reading for fun.

Yes, you can have a constant reader at your house too if you can continue a summer philosophy of fun all year long. Let your child choose what he or she wants to read, secure in the knowledge that they are not going to be tested over content, will not have to complete worksheets over each chapter, or parse sentences. Help your child carve out time to read for fun just like you help them find time for homework. Expect them to read a lot! If you expect it, they will rise to meet your expectations. Will it be easy? Heck no! We want to help. Make coming to the library a regular family event; help your child find things that interest them within their age appropriate areas - without making restrictions on their choices. Remember that reading for fun is an entirely different animal than schoolwork. If you present it with enthusiasm, you will be surprised at what may happen.

So, if you're wondering why you should encourage your son to read "Doctor Proctor" when he has homework to do, and sports to attend to, here's the best part of all: kids who are given the complete freedom to choose books that interest them are more inclined to read all the time; kids who read all the time become better readers; and finally kids who are better readers are better students. The ultimate reward is that you are creating a person who is more likely to become a reader for life. Here at the library, those are our favorite kind of people!

If you would like more information about encouraging your elementary or middle school student to become a lifetime reader, come in and check out a fantastic book called "The Book Whisperer: Awakening the Inner Reader in Every Child" by Donalyn Miller. Let's keep that summer fun going all year long!

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