

Exploring Great Genres Summer Reading Program

LI831 Program Plan

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Abstract

Most public libraries, if not all, offer summer reading programs for community members of all ages. These programs motivate many individuals to read and provide opportunities for individuals to receive rewards for reading. However, these programs are not necessarily designed for those who would normally read, even without the program or incentives. The Exploring Great Genres Summer Reading Program is designed to challenge motivated readers to expand the type and variety of books that they read.

Keywords: summer reading, genres, incentive programs

Introduction

Summer Reading Programs at public libraries have long been based around the same simple cause and effect relationship: read a given number of books, receive a given number and type of prizes. Many children and even adults sign up to read and earn prizes for the amount of reading they complete. While these incentive programs are admirable and important in that they encourage children to read throughout the summer months, they do not necessarily stretch the reading habits of those who would be reading regardless of the program or incentives offered. This Exploring Great Genres Summer (EGGS) Reading Program is designed to challenge avid readers to explore new possibilities in their reading, not only with number of books or amount of reading but also with variety.

Library

The Augusta Public Library, in Augusta, Kansas, serves a community of about 8,000 people. The citizens of Augusta are primarily working class, and their lives center on their children's activities and education. This makes the library an important part of the community; events are well attended, especially story times offered for young children. APL's collection includes an extensive collection for children from beginning readers to advanced beginners.

Each summer, the library provides a summer reading program for children and adults. This involves reading a certain number of books throughout the summer and providing incentives and prizes for meeting certain reading goals. Participation in the summer reading program is good for a town of this size, due primarily to the value placed on education by parents.

Plan Overview

The Exploring Great Genres Summer Reading Program, or EGGs, will be offered in addition to the library's regular summer reading program. It is designed for readers in grades 3-5. The purpose of this reading program is to expose children to genres different than what they would normally choose to read, especially to challenge those readers who would normally read over the summer without any kind of incentive program.

There are many students who will spend their summer reading, regardless of any incentive program. They are highly motivated readers who love books and spend time reading regardless of any external motivation. These are individuals who need some kind of additional challenge for their summer reading, something beyond a program that is designed, basically, to simply keep them reading. The EGGs program will do just that. By challenging students to read a variety of genres, this program will stretch their reading habits and expose them to a diverse selection of books. In turn, they will develop more interest in reading a variety of books, which can lead to a lifelong love of reading.

Each week, a new podcast will be uploaded to the library's blog, created by the children's librarian for the Exploring Great Genres Summer Reading Program. Each podcast will define a genre, book talk several options for reading, and invite students to the library to check these books out. Blog posts should also include lists of books the library has of each genre. The genres will include: biography and informational, realistic fiction, fantasy and folklore, historical fiction, poetry, and graphic novels. A number of books in each genre will be displayed on a designated shelf each week for easy selection, so that participants do not have to search for books of different genres. This will make it easy for them to discover new books and browse for books that fit the week's guidelines.

Once students have checked out and read the book of their choice, they will be asked to write a book review. These reviews will be uploaded to the EGGS blog (with parent permission) for other program participants and library patrons to read.

If children read a book of each genre, they will receive a gift certificate to Miller's Five Drive-in. If they also write reviews of half the books, they will have the first gift certificate and a Go Joes gift certificate. And, those who read all the genres and write reviews of each will receive a gift card to Barnes & Noble, in addition to the other two gift certificates.

Resources

Many of the resources needed to complete this plan are already in the library's possession, or are easy and inexpensive to create. The first, and most important, resource is a wide variety of books from different genres. Librarians should set aside a selection of books from different genres in advance of the program's start, so that there are books available when needed for children to check out. If a survey of the shelves finds that there are some genres that lack a high quality selection, the library should consider purchasing more titles that fit the criteria for each genre. Purchasing can be done with the library's regular budget for children's books.

The librarian will need to set up a blog and create a link to it from the library website. This will be used to communicate the features of each genre to participants through a podcast or post; it is also where book reviews written by program participants will be posted. There are a number of free blogging platforms, like Blogger and Wordpress, which are easy to use. He or she should also create a handout that explains how to write a book review that can be passed out when participants sign up and can be posted on the blog site.

Incentives need to be gathered from area businesses. Since the EGGS program is in addition to the regular summer reading program, the incentives need to be additions to the list of regular prizes. These incentives will be donated and sponsored by local businesses.

Publicity

Publicity will be simple. Flyers will go out to local schools to send home with students in grades 3-5. There will be an advertisement in the Augusta Gazette, the local newspaper, alongside information about the regular summer reading program. There would also be posters in the library and in businesses around town advertising all the summer reading programs. The library's website, as usual, will contain an in-depth explanation of all summer reading programs and information about how to participate.

Evaluation

Because this is a new and fairly different program, evaluating whether or not to continue it will be important. The librarian's first step in evaluating the process will be to look at the number of participants, especially in comparison to the numbers participating in the original summer reading program. If only a few individuals participate, the program should be put on hold to determine whether or not it should be revamped and continued or discontinued for the time being. If there are quite a few children participating, it is worth further exploration. Regardless of the popularity of the program, the library should survey participants who were active in the program. Questions to ask include:

- What did you enjoy about the EGGS program?
- Why did you participate in the EGGS program?
- What would you change about the program?
- What would you like to see for a summer reading program?

- Would you participate in this program again? Why or why not?

After determining whether the program has enough interest to continue, the librarian needs to look at the checkout statistics of the different genres of books, if possible. If there were some genres checked out more than others, the library should consider purchasing more of that particular type of book. Having more of each genre will strengthen the library's collection and the EGGS reading program.

Conclusion

The Augusta Public Library currently offers a great summer reading program to its patrons. The Exploring Great Genres Summer reading program, rather than replacing the current summer reading program, will add a new dimension to their offerings, providing a fun way to stretch the reading habits of children in grades 3-5. Encouraging students to read a variety of genres will create diversity in their reading habits, increase library circulation, and promote a lifetime of reading.

Appendix

Book Review Tips

This set of book review tips will be posted on the EGGs blog and handed out to all participants who decide to sign up for this summer reading program.

1. Jot down all your thoughts on the book. Ask yourself: what points do I want to make?
2. Start with a short summary of the book, but be sure not to give away the ending. Think about when and where the story takes place, who the major characters are, and what happens.
3. Write one paragraph for each point you want to make. Be sure to write the title and author in the first paragraph!
4. The review should explain how you felt about the book and why. Was it funny? Sad? Did you like it? Or not?
5. Think about including a few quotes from the book. It will give your reader a sense of the author's style and what the book is about.

Genres to Explore

This chart is for the librarian's reference when creating blog posts and podcasts.

Genre	Definition/Notes	Examples
Informational & biography	nonfiction writing, facts biography – person's life story	Lucy Long Ago, Face to Face with Gorillas, Claudette Colvin: Twice Toward Justice
Realistic fiction	tells as a story that takes place in our world	Bluefish, Return to Sender

Fantasy and folklore	tells a story that has pieces not from the real world	Where the Mountain Meets the Moon, The Secret History of Mermaids & Creatures of the Deep, Breadcrumbs
Historical fiction	tells a story based on actual events or people from the past	Inside Out & Back Again, R My Name is Rachel
Poetry	stories not written in paragraphs	Every Thing On It, Oops!, The Firefly Letters, Out of the Dust
Graphic novels	comic-book-like pictures tell the story with some speech/thought bubbles and captions	The Amelia series, Storm in the Barn

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