

A Basic Look at SLP

WHAT DOES SLP STAND FOR?

It can stand for “Summer Library Program;” or “Summer Learning Program.” It can also be called Summer Discovery; Summer Adventure; Summer Reading or any other name that a library chooses to give it.

WHAT IS SUMMER LIBRARY PROGRAM (SLP)?

The Summer Library Program is usually a multi-week initiative to encourage children to continue reading/learning throughout the summer months. This reading/discovery/encouragement initiative can last from four to twelve weeks and usually involves libraries providing children with a method to track their reading and/or library use during vacation. Children are encouraged to read and/or do hands-on, experiential activities. Recording of these activities is done independently by the children away from the libraries. Return visits to the library are encouraged throughout the SLP.

IS THIS A SIMPLE READING INCENTIVE PROGRAM?

It can be. It can also encourage children to complete activities like checking out books, attending a program, writing, talking with an adult, drawing, creating or completing simple tasks or “prompts”, experimenting or any other activity that supports, literacy, learning, discovery and library use. There are many paths to literacy and learning beyond reading and summer library programs have the flexibility to include any or all of them.

WE OFFER PRIZES/WE DON'T OFFER PRIZES

Flexibility in design extends to making decisions on offering prizes or not. Many libraries budget to give all participants (or participants who reach a certain goal) a free book rather than many small incentives. Other libraries simply create a giant mural for kids to fill in with stickers as their “prize” or lego pieces to help create a group-built tower. While offering prizes can increase the record-keeping burden on library staff, this can be simplified by offering the same prize during a week to any child returning their log. Prizes are the same for all returning children that week and change the next week. Libraries that have moved away from incentives and prizes report little or no negative response or drop in SLP participation.

ARE RECORDING LOGS UNIVERSAL?

Libraries have a multitude of designs they use for logs – some purchased from vendors and some created in-house. They can range from listings of books or minutes read to game cards (bingo is popular) to circles on a business-card sized log. Whatever form is used, the more DIY and apparent it is to the patron, the easier it is to administer the SLP. Complex instructions and rules will often turn off kids and busy families.

DO SLP RECORDING LOGS AND RECORDKEEPING HAVE TO BE COMPLEX?

Actually, the less structured and complex the design of the SLP, the easier it is for kids and families to participate and the easier it is for staff to administer. It's important to think about why the library offers an SLP. If it's to encourage reading and learning by kids over the summer, then creating a simple-to-do format fulfills that need without undue complexity. Deciding what statistics are really necessary helps streamline record-keeping.

WHAT IS SUMMER LEARNING AND WHY SHOULD WE CONSIDER IT?

Summer learning is an extension of summer reading. It allows kids to continue discovering and exploring during the summer beyond the concept of just reading books. It can highlight a library's non-fiction collection, STEAM and STEM and DIY passive program activities and experiences for kids that engage them in hands-on discovery, problem-solving and learning. Libraries are fully involved in doing summer learning through active programming featuring science, maker crafts and experiments. Summer learning encourages libraries to go beyond programming to incorporate summer learning into the design of their SLP (see “Is This a Simple Reading Incentive Program” above).

DO WE NEED TO OFFER MANY ADDITIONAL ACTIVE PROGRAMS BESIDES SLP?

Each library has unique needs. SLP can be THE program for the summer with the addition of weekly, biweekly or monthly passive, DIY drop-in programs offered during all open hours. Active staff-led or presenter-led programs can also be scheduled but don't necessarily need to be scheduled weekly. Balancing demands for programs against available staff time and energy may mean fewer active programs and more DIY programs. Traditionally summer is an overwhelmingly busy time for youth and circulation staff. Honoring that manic pace by slowing down program scheduling can help create balance for staff and still give value to patrons through DIY activities available during open hours.

OUTCOMES AND STATISTICS – HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

Creating goals and outcomes for a successful program will point you in the direction of how and what statistics are truly needed. Over-emphasis on stats and record-keeping takes valuable time away from frontline one-on-one work with kids and families. Annual re-evaluation of gathered statistics and brainstorming creative ways of obtaining needed statistics can help relieve pressure during the summer. Moving away from statistics and rigid recordkeeping also opens up the possibility of creating larger outcome statements that reflect not just the library's mission but that of nearby school districts

OUR CIRCULATION AND SLP STATISTICS ARE FLATTENING/DECREASING

This is part of a national trend. Throwing more programs, more prizes and more work at it isn't going to change that trend. This is truly a case of time to "work smarter, not harder". Changing outcomes from statistics-based to more values-based ("the library as summer community center;" "the library as more than a building with books"; "the library as a place of summer literacy and learning") creates opportunities to expand beyond rigid concepts of number of children served or minutes read. Asking children and families to tell their story of why they come to the library or the importance of the library to them is a valid way to assess the work done and points out ways to create fun experience rather than a numbers-driven one..

WHAT SUPPORT CAN YOUR DIRECTOR/BOARD PROVIDE IN THIS BUSY TIME?

Help them understand that this is an intensive 6-12 week period that was preceded by tremendous planning and time in the run-up to the kick-off. Ask for appreciation of the efforts you make and look for ways to create breaks by stepping in to help at the desk. Encourage cross-training of all staff to learn how to register for and administer the SLP during the summer to back up youth staff. Reading, learning and literacy support is not a one-and-done summer activity. It happens year-round. Working with your director/board to brainstorm more effective strategies to make summers less intense and school year literacy support more robust can bring needed balance.

SUMMER IS COMING – LINKY-LINKS!

A couple of great posts to keep your summer library program motivation high.

[10 Merchandising Tips to Get Ready for Summer Reading](#) - ALSC blog

From WI DPI, [Top Ten Tips](#) for why we offer library reading programs, whatever the time of year

[May is Summer Library Program Launch Month](#) - DPI's WI Libraries for Everyone blog

Good info from Tessa on how SLP works in the state and amazing resources to tap!

[ALSC Summer Reading Lists](#) - free and downloadable

[Summer Reading Reboot - How to Decide if and When to Make Changes](#) - American Libraries

Children's Librarian Abby Johnson has great tips

TIPS ON SLP SCHOOL VISITS

In-person visits to schools promote your fabulous plans for SLP. These "let-the-kids-see-you-know-you" trips can be some of your most powerful PR of the year. Kids LOVE to see their librarians! As such, you can really capitalize on how you approach these visits.

- **THE WHOLE SCHOOL OR CLASSROOM-BY-CLASSROOM PARADIGM**

When visiting, there are no hard and fast rules on size. Some people have the time to go to each classroom and present. Others will see the whole student body. Still others will ask that the elementary kids be divided into Gr. K-2 groups and Gr. 3-5 groups. Some visit only Gr. 6 in middle school and some see all grades. There are no rules here. Do what works best for your time.

- **INFO ABOUT SLP**

Of course you want to tell them a bit about what you are doing and how you are doing it. But rather than overwhelming the kids with details, it's strategic to put those facts into a handout for the kids to take home, a Facebook post or a note on your website that parents and community adults can read. Another strategy is to send a short note two weeks before your visits to each teacher briefly sharing your enthusiasm and program details. [Note for the future: I would usually let teachers know the scoop about our SLP right before third quarter conferences. I can't tell you how many recommended the public library SLP to the parents and caregivers at March conferences!]

- **LET ME ENTERTAIN YOU**

If you aren't providing a ton of details, it gives you the opportunity to make a splash. It may be how you dress (toolbelt and hardhat and tell kids to come and help you build a great summer); what you bring (a tub of legos and a few figures to work into your SLP pitch); what you say (start with a joke; some trivia; a short funny poem - hellllooooo Shel Silverstein; a kid recruited short-skirt or whole fingerplay - do "Head Shoulders Knees and Toes" as "Noggin, Shruggers, benders, Tootsies). You can adjust your approach to the age of the kids: K-2 will stand anything; Gr. 3-5 demand a calmer less goofy approach and tweens and teens just want the facts and your sincere welcome. The important thing is to be enthusiastic, warm and excited about what is happening at the library. These attributes go far!

- **MORE IDEAS**

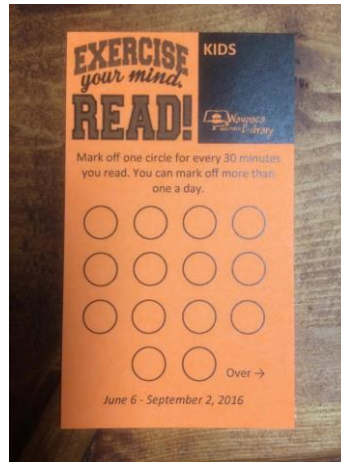
Our annual CSLP manual always has some nice ideas on and tips on school visits Be sure to check them out.

SAMPLE SLP FORMATS YOU CAN MAKE

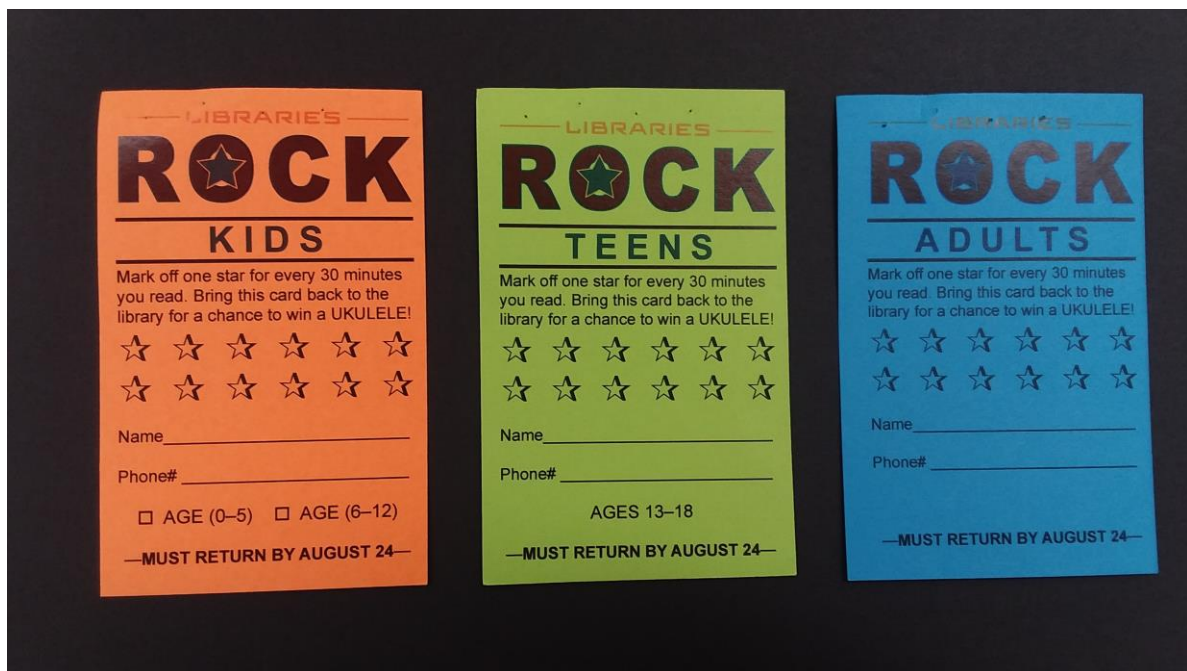
While you can buy pre-made reading/activity logs from vendors like Demco that match the CSLP national theme, you also have the option of developing your own using Word; Canva; Publisher or other design programs. These DIY designed materials can be smaller and allow you to copy them off a printer or copier to save money.

Following are a few examples of “home-made” reading /activity logs used by libraries large and small.

Waupaca Library – developed these business card logs. While these only recorded reading, it would be easy to include suggestions for activities like checking out books, attending a program; doing a kind act; writing a note or poem; building something with legos or etc.



Lancaster Library – developed a similar small size, easy to administer reading log; printed 8 to a sheet and their trim size is 2 3/4" x 4 1/4". Each card has 6 hours of reading; people can do as many cards as they can.



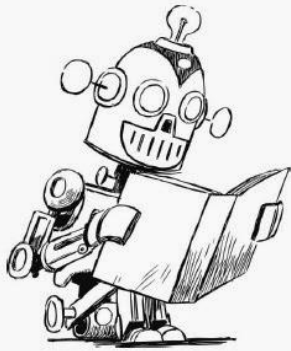
Menasha Public Library – developed in collaboration with the schools, these weekly bookmarks (printed three to a sheet) presented many ways to finish a week. Each week the suggestions would vary slightly (draw a picture; talk with a grown-up about their favorite toy; etc). Kids could come whenever convenient to pick up a new weekly bookmark. Four return visits earned a book!

Buggy Checklist	
Day 1 - Read/Be Read to 10-20 minutes	_____
Day 2 -Read/Be Read to 10-20 minutes	_____
Day 3 -Read/Be Read to 10-20 minutes	_____
Day 4 -Read/Be Read to 10-20 minutes	_____
Day 5-Read/Be Read to 10-20 minutes	_____
Check out books at your Menasha Public Library	_____
Attend a free program at your Menasha Public Library	_____
Play a buggy game at the library	_____
Get outside – walk, bike, swim, hike, climb, run- be part of Passport to Nature – ask us!	_____
Write - a poem, a joke, facts about a favorite subject or a letter	_____
Play a word game at home	_____

La Crosse Public Library - morphed the above bookmark into a weekly game sheet with boxes that moved week to week and had varying suggestions weekly (*see next page for a game sheet sample*). They changed the game card with new challenges for each weekly sheet they handed out.

Rather than offer prizes on each weekly sheet returned, kids put stickers on paper blocks that were used to build a robot seen below (trez popular).




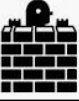








Summer Reading Game

We're building a robot at the library!

Complete ANY 5 out of the 9 squares: **1 sticker** for the robot!
Complete EVERY square: **2 stickers** for the robot!

<p>READ 20+ minutes Try: Listen to an audio book while helping with chores!</p> 	<p>WRITE/DRAW A new ending to a book you know!</p> 	<p>FIND IT OUT How are water and ice different? How are they the same?</p> 
<p>PLAY/DO BUILD SOMETHING! Try: Build a house out of LEGO, cardboard, or other stuff</p> 	<p>CHECK OUT books at the library!</p> 	<p>READ 20+ minutes Try: Read a book you've NEVER read before!</p> 
<p>ASK a grownup to tell you a story about when they were your age.</p> 	<p>READ 20+ minutes Try: Read your FAVORITE book again!</p> 	<p>PLAY A GAME at the library! Ask at the desk for details</p> 

Bring this back to the library when you're done!

We have a new one for you!

Help raise money for the EcoPark, Humane Society and Children's Museum too.
The more game cards you do, the more money we raise.

LA CROSSE PUBLIC LIBRARY

June 1-8

[Teen Summer Reading Scratch-offs](#)- Five Minute Librarian blog
Krikey, this library increased teen participation 2000% when they started this!!!



Brickl Memorial Library – gives out a 4" x 5.5" booklet to participants that has a weekly suggestion for amount of reading minutes by age group. Once finished, the kids can bring their playbook back to the library for a stamp and then redeem the stamp at a sponsoring business for a treat. Each week also feature a creative prompt that kids can write or draw about. Pictures of the booklet are on the next few pages.

