Do you have any summer reading tips or program ideas to share with other libraries?

4-H Youth Development offers a robotics and aerospace/rocketry programs, Scott Jameson magic shows are amazing. Ann Dallair, Millbury Public Library

Anything that encourages children to see the library as a welcoming and happy place. We offer child's choice of a small age-appropriate prize for each visit, and encourage children to tell us about what they've read. Arts and crafts supplies are always left out for free play, and kids are reminded that they're there - which encourages them to spend more time at the library, and borrow more books.

Be flexible, go with the flow, relax, and have fun!

Be flexible! This year we had a better participation because we kept all activities open

Become a Scholastic Literacy Partner. I have an awesome rep Jessica. Get a great deal on books. We had a sponsor give us funds so that I could order all new books (based on a school survey) for summer participants. Every kid got AT LEAST one "shiny new book" to start the summer. Kids are always excited that we promote "Free Choice" and try to understand what they are reading, or like to read. We always encourage all types of formats -picturebooks even when you are "a big kid", graphics, audio, ebook, magazines - even "reading while viewing" - close caption/subtitle reading if they are watching a movie! No judgements! Tap into and utilize your best patrons skill sets! This gives you "unique to your library" programs! I offered a Music and Movement 4 week session, 5 Groovy Grammies story/activity hours, 8 Tuesdays with Teachers hours, 3 Breed All About it Storytimes with our reading dog and owner, one Sights and Sounds of Nature Hike, one Pop UP Art Lab, 9 weeks of "Scrambled Words", 9 weeks of "Find Beethoven", one new local author visit, and one very cool Walk the Solar System program. These were well attended. Available only at Plumb! ALL FREE.

Cultivate your teen group at an early age, entering sixth grade.

Doing a skit at the elementary school in June to promote summer reading is the key to our success.

Don't go over board. Passive programming is very popular and much easier to manage.

Expect the unexpected.

Have a craft ready for the times of day you're going to have a big crowd. We had crafts after our Thursday performer series and it helped with keeping things calm during our busiest times. - Erin Daly, Chicopee Public Library

Have a group of youth librarians meet in the winter to share ideas from their summer reading experiences on what works/doesn't work and share performer contacts.

I appreciate that this is a state wide program. We have METCO kids, out of town children and children from the local Town recreation department who happily take part in the program.

I have ideas that I created when we did the space theme in the past - "Starship Adventure" I was a presenter at the summer reading workshop in Western MA. and came across my booklet of ideas for the space theme. I'd love to share if wanted.
I strongly suggest visit-based tracking, it encourages children to come to the library and I think they enjoy participating in the program more. They also can report how much they read in a slightly less accurate way, but the pressure is off because they don't win incentives based on how much they read but by how often they visit.

If you decide to make slime with children, and not require registration, make sure you have enough materials for over a hundred people and plenty of volunteers to help you. Overall, this is a unique and fun program to offer. -Laura Connell, Dedham Public Library

It's never too early to start planning! Start planning events in January or February. Keep folders from each year and go back to your previous year so you won't forget what you did successfully (or not successfully!) the years before. - Danielle Masterson, Flint Memorial Library

Keep it simple! We do a lot of things "old school." Our registrations were by paper, from the CSLP manual. We found this was great for the kids to learn how to take ownership and fill in an actual paper form! Our incentives for reading are based on the honor system, no keeping track of charts or stickers. Kids need to learn the honor system at an early age and we like being able to help instill that in them.

Last summer I found it tricky to get people to come to programs on summer evenings (I also work in a very small rural town), so this year I did less programs and more "drop-in, come anytime" activities. One activity - "Poetry Rocks" - entailed decoupaging strips of text from old discarded books onto stones to make poems. A lot of people of all ages loved the activity and they received a raffle ticket for doing it.

Make sign up easy.

Our summer escape room is becoming an annual event! It was very fun, and we enjoy having a tie in to the theme--this years participants had to escape an 80s hair band's dressing room! Looking forward to seeing what new universe we'll escape next year! A celebration of Harry Potter's Birthday at the end of July is also something we look forward to each summer.

Outreach to local preschools and day cares has been a great way to promote and encourage our support of the local school requirements and to spread the info of our events and programs.

Partner with your schools! The reason our participation stats are so high is because our public schools require their students to participate in our summer reading program. At the beginning of this year's challenge, the elementary schools made registration for our program a homework assignment, resulting in our highest numbers ever!

Plan early if possible.

Read for Beads has been far more successful motivator/incentive than any giveaways from previous years. They also enjoy reading/voting for a charity. Katie Smith, Richard Sugden Library, Spencer.
School outreach is invaluable to running a successful summer program. In previous years the former Children's Librarian had not done school outreach, so we decided to bring that back this summer. Registration and participation increased by 20% as a result.

Some huge hits this summer were Gemstone slime, kindness rocks, MamaSteph and our other musical performers!

Some years we give out prizes on every visit and a prize when they reach a milestone. We had less participation this year perhaps because of not offering these incentives.

Take advantage of the resources that are out there. They can be very useful and full of good ideas for your library's summer reading program.

Thank God for google docs & sheets that I can do from anywhere.

The bead program did not work in Haverhill in 2017, so we made the program quite easy this year - read 5 books, ANY 5 books, receive the Friendly's Free Kid's Meal, the free book, and the Topsfield Fair Prize. It was well received by all. Everyone appreciated the ease of it, the ease of 'tracking', the ease of collecting prizes. For anyone that read over 10 books, they were entered into a raffle to win a bigger prize - a themed gift bag, full of goodies, based on a book character or genre.

The beading program has been a huge hit for the past two years in Tewksbury. After 17 summers at the library, I have never received more positive feedback about a summer reading program in my career. Definitely highly recommended to try.

The biggest attendance at programs showed up for the kickoff in late June on a Wednesday night, for the magician, and our Mary Poppins party in late September to celebrate our summer readers. We had fewer people at other activities during the main part of summer as we think of it, because so many people are so busy in the summer, we think. Smaller but more skill focused things, like a Makerspace workshop and book clubs for The Magic Tree House and Raina Telgemeier, got a consistent and invested audience. We didn't have trinkets at the desk, but gave a small craft activity, sometimes with all the pieces, to kids who visited the library at least once a week through the summer. They could do the project in the kids' room or take it with them.

The biggest tip is to take care of yourself! I always find that I over-plan our summer reading program, because I'm planning in the fall and winter, and that when summer arrives I ask myself, "Why did I plan so many labor-intensive programs??" So this year I made a conscious effort to plan a manageable summer program, and it ended up being the best summer ever for me. I wasn't too exhausted, so that I was able to better do my job and stay happy and enthusiastic all summer.

The easier the program is for parents, the more likely they are to participate! We also stopped doing online tracking for kids and our numbers went up by an extra 100 participants over the previous summer!
This was our second summer doing the read for a bead. We have tweaked it to fit our needs and numbers. The kids and parents love it! I highly recommend trying it. By doing the read for a bead program we use middle school volunteers to sit at the "bead table". This has also been a great success......the tweens and their parents love it and it's a huge help for us! I would be happy to share our reading log if anyone would like to take a look at it. Marianne Stanton Melrose Public Library

This year was the first year we included adults in the Summer Reading Program. We used a BINGO board for the adult and teen program, each square filled with a different genre, or theme of book (ex. book with a blue cover, book by a female author, first in a series, etc). For every book read, the patron received a raffle ticket, books over 400 pp received 2, and a BINGO received 2. This was very well received with our adult and teen patrons.

This year we entered the fray of 'Read to Bead' and were impressed with the response from kids (of all ages) and parents. While it did require more hands on management, it was well worth the effort. Patrons are already asking that we continue to offer it next year!

Tie Challenges into your book collection. Photos are fun for challenges, and can lead to artistic compositions...(for example, set up a photo of your favorite stuffed animal reading a book). Participating in a program to fulfill a challenge can also boost your program participation. And anything that requires the kids to talk to the librarian or show something to the staff is good for both the program and for communication with kids.

To include as many children as possible in the program, we give out prizes to our most youthful participants for listening to stories just as we do for kids who read them on their own. We also have a weekly activity where teens listen to younger kids tell about the books they read which sets up a great older/younger kid dynamic - Mark A. Malcolm - Maynard Public Library

Try Read to Bead if you don't have an elementary program that you are really excited about.

Try Reading and Beading!

Try to enjoy the incredibly fast-paced summer ;)

Use the manual, slogans etc. Why reinvent the wheel!

Visiting the schools is a must, we also like having a grand prize of sorts to encourage completion of the program. Since we have done that, kids completing the program have gone up. I also send a survey out to have kids choose the raffle prizes.

We had good luck, and fun with a Bingo day, and with our annual kids' breakfast. This year I made pancakes, which the kids decorated with syrup, fruit, etc., then read Eric Carle's "Pancakes, Pancakes."

We have been able to amass a giveaway shelf made up of new/like-new paperbacks that each child who signs up for the SRP program (K-6) can take as a reward. It means that each child is getting at least one book to read during the summer. Children can come in and choose another book after reading five titles (or another goal that works for them)
We have discovered that it is a good idea to offer different aspects of the program: Logging reading minutes; doing challenge sheets; programming; finding a hidden stuffed animal around town weekly raffle. We have patrons who like to do all and some who pick and choose so we attract different families depending on their interest. Clare Dombrowski, Amesbury Public Library

We held family movie nights with FREE popcorn provided by our local 99 restaurant

We keep a bin of self-directed, passive program activities for rainy days. Our library is a vacation destination, and it's always a good idea to have a stash for those days when the parents need something to do with bored kids. Our rainy day box includes crafty kits we bought from vendors, like "decorate a pair of wacky sunglasses" as well as things we pulled together and printed out ourselves, like "decorate a bookmark," or "make a paper bag puppet." We're lucky enough to have financial support from our trustees for our SRP, to fund cheap craft kits from outside vendors, but you can find all kinds of things on the internet for just the cost of printing them out. Laura Ford, Falmouth Public Library.

We partner with the town's Summer Recreation Program, which takes place at the elementary school. They walk from the school to the library once a week for a visit that includes SR check-in and prizes. We share our craft project plans ahead of time so that they can have the supplies on hand to do the crafts with their kids, and whenever we host a kick-off we present it at the school, which enables us to include all of the Rec kids along with anyone else who would like to attend (much bigger space than our Children's Room). It's very nice to bridge these two summer programs and broaden our net.

We partnered with a local boating program to reward families who participated in our summer reading programs with a Boat ride. Many of our families do not have transportation partnering with a local organization made it possible for them to participate.

We set up a friendly competition each year between the local elementary schools. The children really enjoy this and read try to make their school win. We also have a special activity that relates to the theme. Last year children added a brick for every 4 hours of reading to a LEGO building that represented their school. This year children could create a song online using Google music Lab and we linked their song to our web page.

We solicited donations from local businesses to host a epic raffle. This was a new program for us and the businesses we approached were very generous. The exciting prizes definitely encouraged participation. We also kept the requirements for participation very low so as to be as inclusive as possible. People could enter the raffle once a day for each visit to the library. To encourage reading, we offered an online book review option (using a simple Google form). Participants could submit as many book reviews as they liked. We hope to grow this option next year.
We thought that since the Bruins offer a list of their favorite books, why don't we ask our children to do the same. We presented those to the Bruins during their visit and continue to have a year-round suggestion basket in the children's room for young patrons to fill out. They think it is very exciting that these will be sent to Boston and actual Bruins players will read them! Rosemarie Borsody, Public Services Librarian, Lee Library Association, Lee, MA.

We try to do really quality crafts and people love that.

We used google sheets for all registrations this year. It was great in the fact that it is very easy to set up, we could set the forms up asking for exactly what we needed, and patrons found it very user friendly. We were then able to take the emails by age group and create email lists based on ages targeting ages groups by programs. We set a computer up right when patrons walked in that was on the google form for registration so we feel like everyone who walked in we asked and had it set for them to easily signup.

We used the Read & Bead program for kids, which I learned about at a SAILS program showcase. It was presented by Melissa McCleary from the Pembroke library. It was a HUGE hit here with kids, parents, and staff alike!

We were lucky to have our Cape summer league baseball team volunteer to do a storytime here for the third year in a row - it was so fun! -- I would encourage librarians to try to reach out to local athletic teams (or any local heroes) to be involved in a similar event.

We've used a challenge-based format for the past 7 years. It started as a Bingo board, and then morphed into a system of scouting-style badges. Every year, parents emphatically thank us for using the challenges instead of counting time or books or pages or minutes. We usually include one of those other metrics as an alternative, but only a small percentage of our readers ever take that option. I'm planning on using a Read & Bead format next year, and I'm working on ways to track challenges instead of minutes--our patrons prefer it! Some of this year's challenges included visiting the library 3 times, telling a librarian about a book they loved, reading a book that was published the year they were born, packing a picnic and reading outside, making a musical instrument and singing to our library's pet turtle, and trying a recipe from a cookbook. By far, my favorite was asking kids to invent their own book award and notify the author/illustrator of their choice. (Bethany Klem, Bedford Free Public Library)