

Getting Started With Nevada Reading Week Celebrations

How to begin:

Many schools require that a school's dates for their Nevada Reading Week be chosen in May, to be included on the school's yearly calendar. Be sure to look for potential conflicts at both the school and District level. The first week of March, coinciding with the birthday of Dr. Seuss, has been designated Nevada Reading Week.

1. Create a committee. Begin early: October is not too soon!
 - a. A committee needs a chairperson, whether it's the school librarian or a teacher. The chairperson often needs to be a cheerleader, too, encouraging others to participate and convincing them that reading for pleasure as well as information is important.
 - b. A committee needs members. Bring teachers together! Include the music teacher, the P.E. teacher, the art teacher. If teachers have a voice in planning, they're far more likely to participate, and may help to avoid conflicts.
 - c. A committee needs support. Involve your school administrators from the start.
 - d. A committee should reflect all aspects of your school. Insofar as possible, include teachers from primary and intermediate grades, or (at a middle school) from several departments or content areas.
2. Brainstorm.
 - a. Keep the demands of the curriculum in mind. A few well-planned activities in which everyone can participate are better than a string of activities that are hard to accomplish with today's busy classroom schedules.
3. Goals:
 - a. Create a brief outline of the goals of your Nevada Reading Week, and use it to guide your choices of activities.
 - b. Anticipate and formulate some expected outcomes. Will you conduct a contest that recognizes individual readers, or emphasize group achievement?
 - c. How does the statewide Nevada Reading Week theme influence your goals or your choice of activities? How can you integrate the theme into your activities?
4. Scheduling:
 - a. Test schedules and other mandated activities will impact Reading Week activities. Consider all such schedules, at all grade levels.
 - b. Check for major conflicts... the science fair, a music program, mandated tests.
 - c. Try to use scheduled times (such as a regularly scheduled library time) for activities to minimize interruption of classroom routines.
5. Who?
 - a. Will you involve community members? Businesses? People with special expertise who are willing to share it with students? Readers? Special theme-related presentations?
 - b. If possible, include parents and volunteers and involve them in planning.
6. Activities: use the Nevada Reading Week theme to guide your plans.
 - a. Keep activities short. Except for a reading competition, each activity should be easy to complete in a day or less.
 - b. Plan activities that teachers can incorporate into all aspects of their curricula. Tie into math, P.E., social studies, art, music, and science lessons. Reading Week can be fun and interesting for the whole school without impacting instructional time. ti

- c. **Think through** each activity and plan it carefully and well in advance. Look for potential pitfalls. If you need to supply teachers with materials, a packet of suggestions, a schedule of all- school activities, or other information, prepare all of these well in advance.
 - d. Don't overdo it. A few well-planned activities are better than a lot of random suggestions, for both your teachers and your committee members.
 - e. Be flexible. Encourage teachers to adapt the committee's ideas to their class needs. Give good instructions and helpful hints, but don't insist that every teacher do things the same way.
7. **If you plan a book fair in conjunction with your Nevada Reading Week (or Nevada Reading Month), try to plan the book fair for a week other than the week when reading activities and programs are planned. A book fair usually takes over the library, requires volunteer help, and needs all your energy to make it successful. If you're running a Book Fair, you won't have time to participate in other Reading Week activities, read-alouds, visits by authors or community leaders, or all the special events that make Reading Week fun for everyone.**

Time Line for Planning a School-Wide Program

Some schools celebrate Nevada Reading Week with a week of special events and activities; others celebrate for an entire month. For some, Reading Week is a community-wide celebration, involving businesses and community organizations. For most, it's a school-wide celebration based on theme-related activities. Reading Week activities often include some type of reading competition, perhaps between classes or grade levels, with recognition for every book a child reads or classroom recognition; visits from members of the community; a school-wide D.E.A.R.; read-alouds by parents, friends, or community leaders; lunch-time read-alouds; and a culminating event, such as a visit from an author or storyteller. Whatever your choices, a Reading Week celebration should be fun for both students and staff, should provide a correlation to the curriculum (not resulting in a grade) and should encourage children to read and to love what they're doing.

First steps:

- Form the committee!
- Announce the theme and dates to faculty and staff.
- If you choose to invite an author, storyteller, or other professional presenter, **make your arrangements early** and confirm funding for the author's fee. Some authors require booking as much as a year in advance, and even local authors and storytellers need several months' advance notice. (See *Scheduling an Author Visit, Speaker, or Performer* at the end of this document.)
- If you have an active parent group or PTA and/or Partner-in-Education, involve them.
- If you plan to have guest speakers or guest readers, create a list as one of your first priorities, and ask them well in advance.

Nevada Reading Week Activities and projects --- things to do ahead

- Bookmark contest:
 1. Plan the contest far enough in advance so that the winning bookmark(s) can be chosen and reproduced in time for your Nevada Reading Week celebration... at least a month to six weeks ahead.
 2. Make teachers and students aware of any rules or deadlines well ahead of time.
 3. Decide whether you'll have one winner per grade level, one for the entire school, or several honorable mentions.
 4. Cut tagboard bookmark blanks (8 ½ x 2 inch.) Provide every class with enough blanks for every child. Using the Nevada Reading Week theme, children design bookmarks of their own.
 5. Teachers will choose three (approx.) entries to submit to the state-wide art contest. Winners should be judged, if possible, by several teachers or community members. To recognize as many children as possible, use bulletin board or wall space to display their efforts.
 6. Reproduce the winning state bookmark(s) for distribution in the library for all students, either by sending them to the district Print Shop or using the copy machine.
- Plan a decorate-the door contest, poster contest, or similar classroom art activity. A decorate-the-classroom-door contest can be theme-related or book-related, but reading should be the focus. Door decorations or posters can be judged and prizes awarded, but it may be enough just to display them. Plan a brief activity that will allow students to see the doors in different wings of the school.
- Plan bulletin boards in the Multipurpose room.
 1. Enlist students and teachers, or use the bulletin boards to track progress of student reading activities with individual cutouts that are theme-related. (An Ellison machine comes in handy!)
 2. Use bulletin boards to show progress toward a grade-level competition or to track progress toward a school-wide goal. If your school sets a goal of a total number of pages read, include a "reward" – something a principal might do, or a special treat for each class. Generally, a class-level or schoolwide competition works best because every reader can participate in the fun and take part in winning; no student need feel left out because he/she is not a strong reader.
- Examples of theme-related displays: If the theme is "Reading Rocks!" your displays could be related to many forms of music; geology and mining; "rocks" of all kinds. Choose books with either music or rocks as a focus. Adapt your choices to the current statewide theme.
- Send items to the Print Shop as necessary (bookmarks, certificates, etc.) Be sure to allow enough time so that they'll be back before your Reading Week celebration begins.
- Prepare bookmarks, reading certificates, or "book coupons" in advance. "Book coupons" record titles each student has read, usually a themed cutout on which students record reading progress. Have a supply ready for each classroom before the week begins.
- Use your library automation system to print bibliographies of appropriate materials in your library, keeping in mind both the year's theme and activities that will support the curriculum. Include both fiction and nonfiction.

- Confirm speakers or special events, whether speakers or readers in individual classrooms or larger groups. Scheduling an author visit requires planning months ahead; see *Scheduling an Author Visit, Speaker, or Performer* at the end of this document.
- If you're planning an author visit or a performer for whom payment is required, consider applying for grants to help with the cost. Nevada Humanities, WalMart, Kohl's, Target, even NVEnergy have given school-related grants in the past. But don't wait; these grants often require weeks and sometimes months to process. Do some homework before you apply, research application deadlines, know how much you will need, and be able to justify the expenditure in terms of how the performance will contribute to learning at your school.
- Plan at least one family-oriented event if possible. If your school holds occasional family nights, plan one around the Nevada Reading Week theme.
Possible events for a family night:
 1. Student performances - Readers' Theater, a music program, poetry readings
Students can create themed poetry and read their own, or perform shared readings of poems for two voices. Mary Ann Hoberman's books, including *Fathers, Mothers, Sisters, Brothers: A Collection of Family Poems* and her *You Read to Me, I'll Read to You* series are examples.
 2. Bring a local author to a family night. Provide copies of his/her books for sale and autographing. Books can be ordered through the publisher or through a local bookstore.
 3. Book Fair: Plan your book fair to coincide with a Family Night.
 4. Include a Book Walk / Cake Walk with a musical theme and numbered markers in a circle. When the music stops, draw a number from a box; the winner receives a small prize (perhaps a cupcake?) and moves out of the circle, as another child takes his/her place.
 5. Include food in the planning! Families turn out if food is involved. Even just dessert will make the evening complete.
- **Prepare a cover letter to parents**, including the agenda or schedule of activities.

So..... the committee has met, a date and time has been chosen, plans are made, --- now what?

- Librarians or committee chairs... don't try to do everything yourself. If you have planned several activities, give committee members responsibility for one activity.
- Present an agenda for Nevada Reading Week at a faculty meeting. Do it well enough in advance so that you can make changes if necessary.
- Make sure everyone is aware of every aspect of the schedule. The principal, all teachers, and the custodian all need a schedule of activities. Post it in the faculty room and use email reminders as necessary.
- Create a tentative schedule for read-alouds, special events and guests. Brainstorm possible guest readers. Community members, parents, elected officials, members of the local basketball team, or local personalities are often willing to be guest readers. Consider local TV celebrities, the mayor, a city councilman, a county commissioner, a school board member. From within the school, guest readers could include the clinical aide, the computer assistant, the school secretary, the custodian, and, of course, the principal. Whoever you choose, schedule their appearance in the library or

classroom. Some people like to bring their own books; others will prefer that you choose a book for them. Always have two or three age-appropriate books to choose from on hand, even if the reader has said that they'll bring their own.

- Activities can include costume days, read-a-T-shirt days, poem-in-my-pocket days, anything that makes the week a celebration.
- If you are planning to award prizes, decide whether you will give small individual prizes for reading achievement, award classroom prizes, or give prizes to top readers in each class. Keep funding in mind as well as the size of your school population. Small prizes like stickers or pencils are usually affordable. If your teachers use book clubs in their classrooms, consider asking them to use some of their "points" to buy books to use as classroom prizes during Reading Week. If you have a book fair earlier in the year, you may be able to accumulate some free books to use as prizes. But prizes don't have to be tangible; a special time in the library, a special lunch with the principal or the librarian, or any special privilege can be every bit as effective.
- Culminating activity: a "picnic" on the school grounds, a pizza or ice cream party for the winner of a classroom competition, a special lunch with the principal for top readers in each class, or a similar group activity is so much better and so much more practical than purchasing many small plastic toys or prizes. This is the time to get parents involved. Decide whether you have funds to provide food for a small group or for a class or ask for donations from your parents' group. Some businesses may be willing to donate food or supplies.
- Send your cover letter to parents, by email, paper copy, or both. (Schedules do get stuck in the bottom of backpacks.)
- Recruit volunteers well in advance to help with any special activity that requires extra help. Parents can help with putting up bulletin boards or keeping them current, displaying student work or posters, or participating at any group function. Extra help is often needed when food is involved, or when art projects require individual attention.
- Do avoid "stunts" that are essentially demeaning, no matter how funny they may seem in the planning. A whipped-cream pie in the face is slapstick fun to imagine, but not such a good idea in practice.
- Have fun!

Scheduling an Author Visit, Speaker, or Performer:

There are several kinds of speakers you might consider for Nevada Reading Week. What you choose to do will depend on the time your teachers have available and a number of other factors---including available funds.

Consider:

- Is your goal a speaker who will perform for the entire school, for several grade levels, or for individual classrooms?
- Potential speakers can be local individuals who can present topics of interest, musical groups or individuals, performers of almost any kind, children's or young adult authors, local sports figures, TV celebrities, or even parents in interesting careers.
- If possible, choose speakers whose presentations are related to the theme and to reading or children's books.

Classroom speakers can be almost anyone who can bring something interesting or relevant or related to the theme to the classroom. The University of Nevada Cooperative Extension service has programs for children, for example, or Nevada Humanities has a speakers' bureau and sponsors children's Chautauqua. Members of local sports teams, or of the University of Nevada sports teams, might be willing to visit, whether they make a formal presentation or not. A local weatherman might be willing to work with a class on a weather-related project, or you might know parents or grandparents who would be willing to do a special art project with a class. Perhaps you know someone who could speak about music, rock collecting, recycling, animal care, or any of a multitude of topics with ties to children's books.

If you choose to hire a speaker, a storyteller, or plan an author visit ---

- First, consider your budget. Most well-known children's authors now charge from \$1200 to \$4000 for a full day's visit, which typically includes three assemblies or presentations. Some authors will also include an informal after-school event for students and parents.
- Budget for plane fare, lodging, and meals for a visiting author, storyteller, or performing group from out of town. Most visiting authors are willing to divide his/her time between two schools, making it possible for schools to share the cost.
- Be sure your plans are clearly outlined for your teachers and staff, and don't forget to get your principal's approval before planning anything!
- Set a date and make arrangements well ahead of time. Be as flexible as possible about the date; well-known authors book tours as much as a year ahead of time. Even local groups must be booked months in advance.
- Will you have a single large all-school assembly? Will you divide students into two or more groups by age? If you bring a speaker for a full day, most presenters will do at least three presentations, often by age group.
- Location: will presentations take place in the library, the multipurpose room, or classrooms?
- Traveling groups such as Poetry Alive do wonderful large-group presentations. Some will do half-day presentations as well. If you are willing to coordinate your school visit with other schools or even to organize a group of school visits, such groups or individuals are more willing to make the trip and the shared cost is often less.
- Consider a local author. Remember, though, that school visits are often necessary supplements to an author's income. Don't expect an author to come for free unless he/she volunteers to do so.
- Consider other kinds of programs or presenters, some with minimal or no cost, such as a magician or a musical presentation. Contact your local County Library, too, for programming ideas and information.
- Always have a clear, written agreement about cost. Including the honorarium, if any, and any other costs that your school will be expected to pay. Create a contract if necessary.
- **Never schedule a group or author that you know nothing about!** Self-publishing is common, and unless you have seen the author's work or have recommendations from other schools or librarians, you may not know what to expect of a presentation.

The program is booked, the date is set. Next....

- Arrange for payment for a visiting author or presenter. If you've booked a well-known author or presenter for whom school visits are a part of their regular income, you will need to follow your school's regulations to process a check. For example, Washoe County School District's Business Office requires an Independent Contractor form, a W-9, and an invoice to process a check. Check with your school secretary for information about your school or district policies.
- If funds are coming from a source other than a school budget, such as grant funds or funding from a parents' group, the parents' group may be willing to pay the author directly.
- Involve your teachers and students in planning for the author visit. **Important:** be sure students are familiar with the author and his/her books.
 1. Provide teachers with bibliographies of books by or relating to the author. Include websites, biographical information, even pictures.
 2. Create an author study display in the library.
 3. Read aloud in the library from the author's books.
 4. Encourage students to read the author's books, or teachers to read aloud in the classroom
- Talk with students about appropriate questions for the author. (Authors must hear "where do you get your ideas?" over and over and over; the most frequently asked question, and one to avoid, is "how much money do you make?")
- Make the author's books easily available. You may want to buy extra library copies in preparation for the occasion.

After the Nevada Reading Week celebration is over:

- Send thank-you notes or letters to committee members, parent volunteers, business participants, guest speakers, and prize donors.
- A general thank-you-for-participating to the faculty is appreciated ~ a big bowl of popcorn at a faculty meeting or a miniature candy bar in each mailbox, for example.
- Hold an evaluation meeting of the Reading Week committee or an evaluation session at a faculty meeting to record ideas for future reading weeks/months. Make sure to include the things that went **right** as well as those that need improvement.