

Even During School Year, Fun Reading Important for Kids

Most young kids love reading, but when the busy school year starts, it can be challenging to find the time to encourage them to read for fun.

It's important to remember, however, that the more kids read on their own time, the higher they tend to score on tests.

In fact, about 76 percent of students who report reading for fun on their own time once a week or more perform at the high end of basic level testing, while 14 percent of students who never or hardly ever read for fun perform below the basic level, according to the American Library Association.

So how can we get kids reading during their free time when they're already so busy in and out of school?

"Kids should be exposed to a variety of books and genres so that they can figure out what they enjoy," says Stephanie Fryling, Vice President of Merchandising, Children's Books, at Barnes & Noble. "If kids love the books and topics they're reading about, like a graphic novel, they're much more likely to reach for a book as often as a video game."

It can be a challenge, however, to know what reading to get for your kids, let alone put down money for them.

That's part of the reason bookseller Barnes & Noble started a national Kids' Book Hangout. This free, seasonal event offers kids, parents, and caregivers a chance to gather together to learn about a range of books for grades 1-6, as well as play fun games and activities related to the stories and characters.

"We wanted to create a fun, friendly environment for kids to learn about new books and genres so they can find what interests them," Fryling says.

The first Kids' Book Hangout, held this summer, was a big success, drawing over 10,000 kids to Barnes & Noble bookstores around the country. Fryling expects the next Hangout to be even bigger.

The second Hangout will take place Saturday, October 20, at 2 PM, and features a range of books and graphic novels about friendship, adventure, and mystery. Barnes & Noble partner with Penguin Young Readers and Random House Children's Books on the following titles:

- * "The Cardboard Kingdom," by Chad Sell
- * "5 Worlds: The Sand Warrior," by Mark Siegel and Alexis Siegel
- * "The Last Kids on Earth and the Cosmic Beyond," by Max Brallier
- * "Squirm," by Carl Hiaasen
- * "Monstrous Devices," by Damien Love

During the Hangout, booksellers will introduce the books to the kids along with games, activities, and free giveaways. Barnes & Noble will also sell the books for 20 percent off in stores and online on the day of the event.

To sign up at their local Barnes & Noble, parents can go to bn.com/bnhangout and register for free.

For this Hangout, Barnes & Noble also partner with DOGObooks, where kids can discuss, rate, and review the selected titles. Kids can visit the Kids' Book Hangout page at DOGObooks.com before or after the Hangout.