

How to Pay for a Great School Reading Program if You Don't Have Any Money



When you are looking for a reading assembly program for your school, there are lots of things to consider. Why an assembly is the best option, who to get, what to accomplish with the event, and how to schedule it. But a BIG question is how to pay for it. From where will the money come? The most obvious choice is using budgeted school funds. Use the library budget, book fair money, or the reading budget. Talk to the principal about the value of a reading program as it relates to increased test scores. (We have had more than one principal tell us that when asked to list their top five criteria for anything the school does, the top four are “It must raise test scores.”) Principals often have discretionary funds available to use for projects that she sees as being of value. Ask the PTA/PTO for funds. Parent/teacher groups love to sponsor events that the entire school can enjoy and benefit from.

But what do you do if your school doesn't have the funds for the program and you still see a great deal of value in having it? Here are five proven ideas.



[Community Funding](#) - Your school's Partners in Education will often get very excited about bringing in a speaker. Civic organizations can be a source of partial or total funding if the program promotes reading and they get some deserved recognition (for more on this idea, see the back of the left panel of this brochure). Be sure and recognize their contribution as publicly and as often as you can, and invite members of the group to your school to see the program. This will help insure continued support. And of course, ALWAYS get approval from your principal and Partners in Education coordinator before approaching any business or organization in the community.



[Cooperative Funding](#) – If you only have a portion of what is needed to bring in a presenter, there are ways to share the expense. Get another school to split a day, thereby splitting expenses. Contact the Public Library, especially near the end of the school year, to co-fund or fully fund a program that will promote summer reading. Find a presenter who performs reading shows that incorporate science, history, geography, writing, or character education and get funding through another budget item in the school. A lot of our clients use this approach and get the science budget to help pay for a science show that encourages reading!



[Grants and Public Funding](#) – If your school is eligible and you are willing to fill out the paperwork and jump through the hoops, you may be able to get funding for educational programs in reading, science, math or drug awareness from grants or other public funds like Title I, Red Ribbon, corporations, professional associations or foundations. A quick Google search for Reading Grants will reveal a number of companies that care about encouraging kids to read and offer funding for events and continued support if your school meets their criteria. Most county school boards and state departments of education have people who know grants inside out and are eager to help you.



Free Programs – There are ways to get a speaker/author/ presenter to visit your school at no out of pocket cost. Before you bring in a free speaker, **ALWAYS** get references! A free program can be very costly to your credibility if it is done poorly. Some authors come to schools at no cost, but you must do book sales using their system. Always read the fine print, and follow their directions to the letter.



Students and Parents - This idea is somewhat controversial, but several schools treat assembly programs the same as a field trip. You can actually have each student bring money from home, i.e. a dollar or two to pay to attend the daytime assembly. We know that most schools don't like to ask parents to send extra money to school because they are afraid of complaints, but some schools still do this. In fact, years ago, it used to be the main way schools paid for assemblies. While I only recommend this with reservations, it may be the way to go for your needs.

There you have it. Five proven ways to pay for a reading assembly program for your school or public library. For more information about the educationally significant programs we offer, go to www.tommyjohnspresents.com.

How One Library System Funds the Best Summer Program in The Region.

A public library in a nearby state had a common problem. Like every library, they wanted to have a great summer program, but, like every library, funds were in short supply. Knowing that the Kiwanis organization has a big emphasis on reading* every year, the children's services librarian approached the local Kiwanis Chapter and offered a program for an upcoming luncheon. During the luncheon she talked about how many kids are reached through the Summer Reading Club and how important it is for kids to read all summer long. She shared her dream of bringing in special guests who would encourage kids to come to the library and READ! She closed by asking them to consider funding two weeks of programming for just \$500. They approved the sponsorship and she went to work.

She then approached, in turn, the Lions, Rotary, Optimist and the Jr. Women's Club and using a little persuasion and a little guilt ("The Kiwanis are helping us!"), she was able to fund 10 weeks of special guest programming for her summer reading club. Each week she submitted a press release to the local paper and the radio station in town and put up posters telling the community that "This week's program is sponsored by (insert this week's club)" and the summer was a success.

As a matter of fact, it was so successful, that she has sponsored her outstanding summer program like this for 5 years and counting!

Civic organizations love to help. And they really can help your library or media center encourage a child to love reading. Give them a chance to make a difference and you'll be glad you did!

* To find out more about Kiwanis clubs and "Read Around the World," go to www.kiwanis.org/ and click on Service Projects.