

COVID-19 Can't Stop Literacy

By Aimee Adams, Events Coordinator, Medina County District Library, Ohio

2020 has been one heck of a dumpster fire of a year for stats. Many of us faced forced closures due to our states' restrictions, budget cuts, and layoffs, and we saw the very real fear of COVID-19 at our doorsteps. If your library is like mine, the Summer Reading Program (SRP) is our biggest yearly event. It is my favorite time of year, and I'm frustrated with COVID-19 for taking that away from my families. In April, I sat on video conferences with my coworkers, assessing how we could make SRP work this year. We wanted to be a beacon of normalcy in these crazy times. After all, the heart of SRP is the enhancement and improvement of literacy skills.

In a survey of 100 library employees representing 33 states and 3 Canadian territories, I discovered 100% of respondents are still offering a SRP. Reasons for modifications include:

1. Health/safety concerns (95%)
2. Library closures (62%)
3. Lost time in planning (14%)
4. Budget cuts (10%)

Despite a global pandemic, "libraries adapt, that's what we've always done, it is what we will always do" as one respondent stated. I received many comments that libraries and SRP are more important than ever with the quarantine delays this past spring. One response was so optimistic I feel compelled to share: "If you are able to still provide a modified version of your SRP you should. Everyone has had to [adjust] and [make] accommodations because of the pandemic and the library is no exception. We are also able to set example for our community on how to be flexible and do our best to make it work."

Remember: you are all rock stars at what you do. We are setting examples on flexibility, adaptability, and demonstrating our bedrock value of literacy.