Another Way to Win in a Summer Reading Program

For about three years, I ran a summer reading program that gave students the chance to win a variety of prizes, with their chances of winning being increased by the number of books they read. I utilized the popular model – read a book, write down the title, author, your name and number, and put it in the raffle box. Each year, a few participants seemed to read so much and overwhelmed the raffle boxes, it was usually a foregone conclusion who would take home the prizes. While I would never want to punish a voracious reader, it really discouraged others when reading one book a week just wasn’t enough to feel competitive.

Also, this model kind of punished teens who read at a lower level and just didn’t have the capacity to fly through books like their peers. I was also very suspect at some of these “voracious readers” – but I never felt comfortable making any accusations. One summer I tried “scaring” the participants and posted “If you win a prize, you will be asked a trivia question about the book on your raffle ticket”. I can now deem that the summer of tears – as most of the winners couldn’t correctly answer the questions (and I usually ended up caving aside from the one instance a winner told me “well, I didn’t know I had to read it ALL”). I hated to assume cheating was at play, but I needed to come up with another way to structure these challenges.

After much thinking back and forth, I decided to try something different – something I hadn’t heard of but figured it was worth trying. Because I could never prove which teens were reading the books and which teens weren’t, I shifted my goal from “getting teens to read books” to “getting teens to checkout books” – with the latter using the mindset that if they have them in their possession, they will at least try to read them. I also used this new model to try and boost YA non-fiction circulation. So I launched the “Your Receipt is Your Raffle Ticket” summer program. The details are below on a condensed handout…

PASSPORT TO PRIZES

This summer, your receipt IS your raffle ticket!

1. To enter the Young Adult raffle, you must write your phone number on the back of your library checkout receipt (dated from 6/23/11 until the end of the program).

2. The receipt must contain at least one fiction book, and one non-fiction book from either the YA or Adult sections. Other items are welcomed and encouraged!

3. Place the receipt in the raffle box upon RETURN of your items (you don’t want to put it in right away and risk forgetting when your items are due!) You may also wait to put your receipt(s) into the raffle box at a later date to try for a different prize.

4. Only receipts from Young Adults will be accepted into the this raffle.

5. One receipt per day - if you are caught entering multiple receipts from the same day, you will be disqualified. You can check out as many times as you need to, but only one can be entered for the raffle per listeddate.

GOOD LUCK!