



ReadQuest:

A schoolwide Read-A- Thon adventure

**Building a culture of reading through choice,
community, and friendly competition**

**IST 612: Youth Services for Libraries and
Information Centers**

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“ReadQuest: A schoolwide Read-A-Thon adventure” is a school library literacy initiative designed to increase reading-for-pleasure among elementary school students through student choice, friendly competition, family participation, and schoolwide celebration. This program will target students in grades 3–5 in a suburban elementary school setting where the librarian and teachers have observed uneven enthusiasm for independent reading, especially among students who do not already see themselves as strong readers.

The program would combine an eight-week literacy engagement campaign with a six-week Read-A-Thon fundraising competition. During the full eight-week program, students can participate in genre challenges, recommendation walls, buddy reading opportunities, teacher read ins, family reading activities, and reflective reading prompts. During the central six-week Read-A-Thon period, the school will use the official Read-A-Thon platform, that tracks reading minutes, processes donations, provides promotional materials, and rewards while allowing students to focus on self-selected reading rather than required page counts (Read-A-Thon Fundraising Company, n.d.).

The program is backed by research showing that reading enjoyment is connected to stronger reading skills, vocabulary development, academic growth, confidence, empathy, and wellbeing of readers. The National Literacy Trust reports that children and young people who enjoy reading are more likely to have stronger literacy outcomes, while research on reading motivation emphasizes the importance of choice, relevance, access to appealing texts, and social interaction around books (Clark et al., 2024; Gambrell, 2011).

ReadQuest is designed to avoid the limitations of traditional reading competitions that only reward the fastest or highest-volume page readers. Students can read print books, ebooks, audiobooks, graphic novels, poetry, magazines, nonfiction, multilingual texts, or read-aloud materials. Teams would earn recognition not only for minutes read, but also for trying new genres, recommending books, reading with others, and reflecting on their preferred reading experiences. Funding will support future diverse book purchases, various accessible formats, incentives, family engagement supplies, and promotional materials. The success of the program will be measured through participation logs, Read-A-Thon reading-minute reports, circulation data, student surveys, reflection cards, teacher/librarian observations as well as monetary gains.

Rationale and Problem Statement

Many schools are facing challenges in sustaining students’ interest in independent reading, particularly as children move into upper elementary grades and encounter increased academic pressure, an abundance screen-based entertainment, and more structured reading assignments. Reading for pleasure is an important part of childhood supporting literacy development while also contributing to a person’s confidence, imagination, empathy, and personal identity. The National Literacy Trust has consistently reported connections between reading enjoyment and stronger literacy outcomes for children and young people (Clark et al., 2024).

This proposed program addresses the need to move beyond reading as a purely academic task and instead one that sparks joy. When reading is framed only around assignments, tests, or

required minutes, students can conform without developing a lasting and enjoyable relationship with books. Gambrell (2011) argues that motivation to read is strengthened when students have access to relevant texts, choice in what they read, opportunities to interact socially around reading, and meaningful reasons to engage. Having a team building Read-A-Thon builds these motivating factors into the program by allowing students to select their own reading materials, participate in team-based challenges, and share recommendations with peers with similar interests.

The program also reflects developmental needs of upper elementary students. Children in grades 3–5 are developing stronger peer relationships, personal interests, independence, and identity. A schoolwide readathon gives students a shared goal while still allowing individual choice per student. Self-determination theory suggests that motivation increases when learners experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). ReadQuest program would support autonomy through self-selected reading, competence through achievable challenges per selected age groups, and connection through team participation, buddy reading, and family involvement.

The use of a Read-A-Thon program also supports the practical and fundraising needs of the school. The well-established platform allows schools to sign up without contracts, minimums, or hidden fees, and it provides reading-minute reports over quantitative page counts, donation processing, printed and digital promotional materials, stickers, posters, an administrative guide, and pre-written emails and texts to friends and families (Read-A-Thon Fundraising Company, n.d.). This makes the program manageable for the librarian and school staff while creating a potential funding stream for future library materials and literacy programming.

ReadQuest's Read-A-Thon aligns with the American Association of School Librarians' standards, especially the Shared Foundations of Include, Collaborate, Curate, Explore, and Engage (American Association of School Librarians, 2018). Having students explore new genres, collaborate through team challenges with friends, curate personal reading choices, and engage with reading that reflects both their own lives and the recommendations of others helps create a reading culture that feels social, inclusive, and personally meaningful rather than required work.

Finally, the program responds to equity concerns in literacy engagement. Rudine Sims Bishop's framework of books as "mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors" emphasizes that children need access to books that reflect their own identities and introduce them to the lives of others (Bishop, 1990). Having a successful readathon should therefore not simply just reward students who read quickly or have strong home literacy support, instead, it should create multiple entry points so all students can participate meaningfully.

Equity and Diversity

ReadQuest is intentionally designed to make the Read-A-Thon accessible to a wide range of learners, both mentally and physically. The program expands what counts as reading by

including print books, ebooks, audiobooks, graphic novels, magazines, poetry, nonfiction, multilingual books, and read-aloud experiences. This is especially important for multilingual learners, students with learning differences, reluctant readers, neurodiverse students, and children who may not yet have a positive reading personality. Students will be encouraged to choose both “mirror” books that reflect their own lives and “window” books that help them understand the experiences of others (Bishop, 1990).

To be sensitive to the diverse reading habits of the students, the competition will not publicly rank individual students by reading level, page count, or total donations raised. Instead, classrooms and teams will be recognized for participation, growth, teamwork, creativity, and engagement. Students can earn recognition for reading in different ways, including listening to an audiobook, reading with a family member, trying a new genre, recommending a book, visiting the library, or sharing a short reflection while respecting the honor system of a parent’s signature for work completed.

Family participation will also be flexible. Families may support the program by helping students log reading minutes, listening to a child read, reading aloud together, discussing a story, visiting the public library, or sharing the Read-A-Thon donation link with relatives and community members. This flexibility recognizes that families have different structures, schedules, languages, financial resources, and levels of familiarity with school fundraising programs.

Plan of work and theory of change

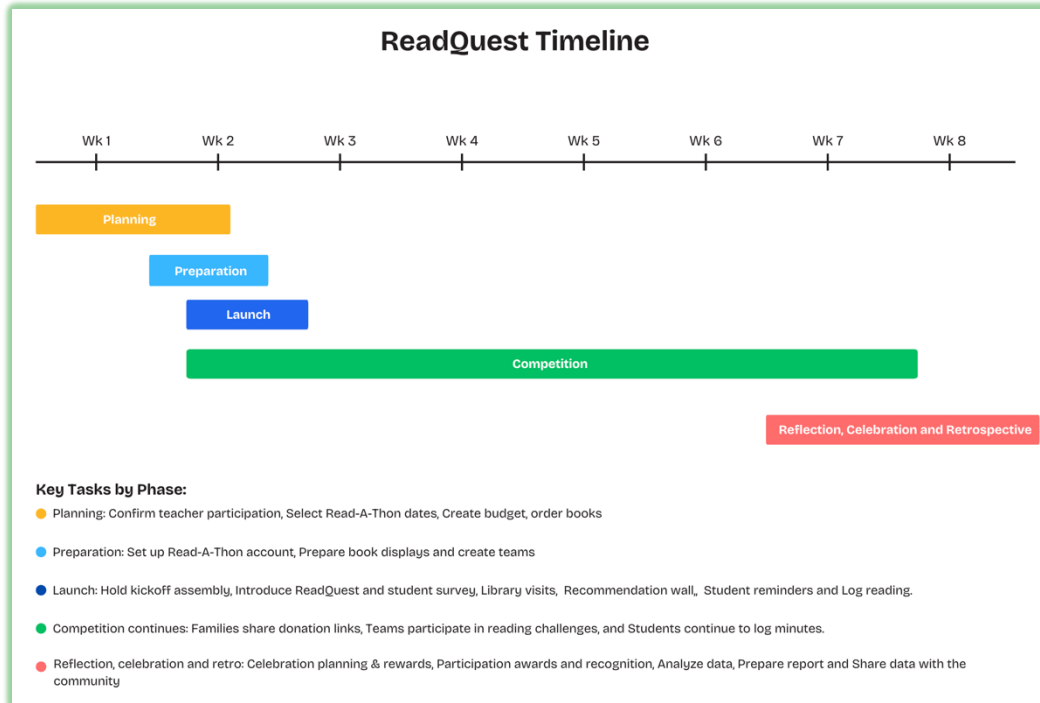
The theory of change behind ReadQuest is that students will increase their voluntary reading when they have access to appealing books, meaningful choice, social encouragement, family support, and visible recognition for their efforts. If the school library provides diverse materials, inclusive reading challenges, peer recommendations, family engagement opportunities, and an easy-to-use readathon platform, then students will read more often, develop stronger reading identities, increase library use, and contribute to a stronger schoolwide reading culture.

The Read-A-Thon website will serve as the fundraising and reading-minute tracking tool during the central two-week competition. The broader six-week program will be led by the school librarian and supported by classroom teachers, families, and community partners.

Logic model

Problem	Students are not reading for pleasure as much as desired.
Inputs	Library books of various platforms, school staff, classroom teachers, families, Read-A-Thon platform, and incentives.

Activities	Launch assembly, Read-A-Thon sign-up, reading-minute tracking, genre challenges, buddy reading, family reading night, student recommendation wall, and final celebration.
Outputs	Eight-week program is completed, six-week Read-A-Thon completed, students in grades 3–5 participate, students and reading minutes tracked on platform, donations processed, book surveys and reflections collected.
Short term outcomes	Students increase voluntary reading, try new genres and formats, report greater enjoyment of reading, library circulation increases and some additional families participate in literacy activities with their children.
Long term outcomes	Stronger schoolwide reading culture, increased reading identity, improved library engagement, more equitable participation in literacy programming and funds raised for future library materials.
Impact	Bigger long-term change, a stronger school-wide culture of joyful and lifelong love of reading.



Outcome based evaluation plan

Outcome	Indicator	Data Collection Method	Interval	Target
Increase reading-for-pleasure participation	Number of students participating in weekly reading activities	Participation logs and classroom tracking sheets	Weekly	80% of grades 3–5 students participate in at least 4 of 6 weeks
Increase reading volume during the competition	Total minutes read during the six-week Read-A-Thon	Read-A-Thon reading-minute reports	End of Weeks 3, 5 and 7	Students average at least 2 hours of reading a week during the six-week competition
Increase library use	Circulation of materials for grades 3–5	Library circulation reports	Baseline, weekly, final	20% increase in circulation compared with the previous six-week period
Increase reading motivation	Student self-reported enjoyment of reading	Pre/post student survey	Week 1 and Week 7	25% increase in students reporting that they “like” or “really like” reading
Increase exposure to diverse formats	Students try a new genre, format, author, or subject	Challenge cards and reflection slips	Weekly	70% of participants try at least one new genre or format
Increase social reading culture	Number of student recommendations shared	Recommendation wall, book talks, and reflection cards	Weekly	At least 50 student recommendations collected
Support equity of access	Participation across classrooms, reading levels, and support groups	Teacher/librarian observation and participation logs	Midpoint and final	Participation includes students from all grades 3–5 classrooms and reading support groups
Raise funds for library literacy materials	Total donations received through Read-A-Thon	Read-A-Thon fundraising report	End of Week 4	Raise more than invested into the Read-A-Thon for future literacy programming

Budget

Category	Description	Estimated Cost
Additional audiobooks and ebooks	Accessible formats for multilingual learners, reluctant readers, and students with reading differences	\$500
Promotional materials	Posters, bookmarks, team trackers, hallway display supplies	\$200
Student incentives	Stickers, buttons, certificates, small prizes, classroom recognition items	\$300
Family engagement night	Snacks, take-home reading materials, public library card information	\$350
Evaluation supplies	Printing surveys, reflection cards, participation folders	\$100
Celebration event	Read-in materials, decorations, participation awards	\$350
Contingency	Replacement books and extra supplies	\$200
Employee time & effort	Data analysis, email prep, design planning, and communication efforts	N/A
Total:		\$2,000

Fundraising

Read-A-Thon's system will be used as the program's fundraising and reading-minute tracking platform. According to the company, schools can sign up for **free** with no contracts, minimums, or hidden fees. The platform provides donation payment processing, real-time fundraising overviews, reading-minute reports, printed flyers, digital flyers, posters, stickers, an administrative guide, pre-written emails, and support materials (Read-A-Thon Fundraising Company, n.d.).

Two fundraising options are available: under the school-sponsored rewards model, the school provides and manages student incentives and receives 80% of total donations. For the Read-A-Thon prize store model, Read-A-Thon manages student rewards and the school receives 75% of total donations (Read-A-Thon Fundraising Company, n.d.). For this program, the school-sponsored rewards model is recommended because it allows the librarian and school staff to keep incentives literacy-focused, low-cost, and inclusive while maximizing the percentage of funds returned to the school.

Funds raised through Read-A-Thon will directly support library materials, reimburse used material fees, and assist with future literacy programming, including purchasing additional diverse books, audiobooks, graphic novels, multilingual materials, and financially supporting family literacy events. Additional fundraising may also be pursued through DonorsChoose, a nonprofit crowdfunding platform where public school educators can request donations for

classroom, library, and student learning materials (DonorsChoose, n.d.). Two additional local fundraising options include the local parent organizations and the Piedmont Education Foundation. These partnerships could help expand the program's reach and long-term sustainability. The Piedmont Education Foundation is especially relevant because it is a nonprofit organization that supports Piedmont Unified School District by funding innovative programs, promoting academic excellence, and providing sustained financial support.

Any additional funds raised after the completion of the Read-A-Thon will support reading programs at the school, including updated classroom libraries, teacher professional development related to literacy instruction, online learning subscriptions, and digital literacy resources such as typing skills, digital citizenship, basic programming, and updated equipment. A small portion of the funds will also be directed toward supporting the Oakland Public Library, which serves as an important neighboring library resource for many school families, especially as Piedmont does not have a public library of its own.

Dissemination and Promotion Strategy

ReadQuest will be promoted through multiple channels to reach students, families, teachers, and the broader school district families. The librarian will introduce the program during a school assembly and at the weekly classroom library visits. Teachers will receive a short program overview, weekly reminder slides, and classroom participation materials. Families will receive reminders in the weekly class emails, the school wide emails and a physical flyer explaining the concept and instructions for the Read-A-Thon.

During the 8 weeks, volunteer student will create book recommendations to be displayed in the library and hallways to help make peer reading more visible and social. At the end of the program, the librarian will prepare a brief impact report for the principal, general school staff, parent organizations, summarizing participation rates, reading minutes, circulation changes, survey results, student reflections, funds raised, and plans for sustaining the program in the future.



Konstella Connect Parents	
Beach Read-a-Thon Update 4/28/25 Translate Email	
Beach Elementary School	
Everyone,	
With 6 days to go in the Read-a-Thon, here's another update on the progress of our readers and the donations. Thank you to the tremendous number of teachers and parents who have supported the Read-a-thon so far! Our students are reading up a storm!	
As of 5 pm today, our kids have logged over 127,000 minutes and we've raised almost \$40k! Here's the breakdown:	
Total Minutes Read	127,468
Total Reader Accounts Activated	300 out of 327
Total Raised	\$39,173
Amount to Beach Libraries	\$29,380
Prize Amounts for Readers	\$5,875.95

Sample data and design ideas from local Beach Elementary School's Read-A-Thon in 2025
 (T. Cothran, personal communication, June 25, 2026) (Beach Elementary School, personal communication, April 28, 2025)



References

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