



Leadership. Advocacy. Communication.

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Libraries Make Student and Parent Lives Easier and Help Students Succeed!

As the new school year begins, students and parents' lives can be simpler and their efforts more successful by using their local libraries. Florida public libraries provide electronic resources, books, and assistance that can help students succeed in their school work. The Division of Library and Information Services of the Florida Department of State partners with local libraries and provides a comprehensive foundation of resources called the Florida Electronic Library (FEL) that is available to all Floridians. These libraries and the FEL support K-12 students and schools on evenings, weekends, and holidays, and complement services provided by school media specialists.

While many libraries are finishing up their summer schedules with back to school programs, this is a good time for students and parents to make a mental note of the ways public libraries can help them during the year ahead. It is also a good idea to check your local library for a schedule of events and programs.

Computers and Internet Access – Public libraries offer computers with Internet connections, word processing software, printers and assistance in using them. Most libraries provide free wi-fi so you can bring your laptop, tablet, or eReader with you!

Reader's Advisory – Libraries are still in the business of helping readers find books to match their needs and interests. When students need help finding the right book for that report librarians are ready to help. And they have copies of The Sunshine State Reading list and other lists teachers use to guide students' reading development.

Help with Research for Reports and Assignments – Research can be an intimidating undertaking for students regardless of their grade level. Librarians help young students identify resources appropriate for their grade and help them get comfortable using them.

Online Resources – Most libraries provide licensed material from their websites that teachers require and that is not freely available on the Internet. Teachers generally require students to use reliable published sources, reference material, and magazine and journal articles, and local libraries pay license fees in order to provide them. This is important for students and parents to keep in mind when deciding which information to use on the Internet. You will find these listed on your library’s website under electronic resources or homework help.

Florida Electronic Library – The FEL, a service of the Division of Library and Information Services of the Florida Department of State, provides a comprehensive collection of information on a wide range of topics for Floridians of all ages, including resources selected especially for K-12 students. The intent is that the peer-reviewed material covers all areas of knowledge and at reading levels that make it accessible for all. A few of the resources can be categorized as:

- Florida History
- General Reference
- Health
- Newspapers
- Magazine and journal articles
- Photos, Paintings and Art
- Basic ebooks
- Business and Jobs/Careers Resources

Ask a Librarian.org – This statewide service assists all Floridians, including students, with homework questions and research projects. There are 117 Florida libraries, including public, college, and university libraries, that collaborate to provide Floridians with free online reference service from 10 a.m. to midnight Sunday through Thursday (EST) and until 5 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. Start with the Ask a Librarian link from your local library’s web site because for some libraries that connects you directly to their reference staff. You can also go directly to the Ask a Librarian page. Using either approach you will be able to chat or text with a librarian. The librarian will direct you to the information you need and can even take you to the information on your library’s website.

Free Ebooks – Many libraries license popular e-books, including books for young readers, that customers can check out or download from the library’s websites to their eReaders or computers. Some libraries participate in programs like the Open Library that make additional free ebooks available to library cardholders. This is another service that you can use without having to go to the library. The ebook market is still getting sorted out and can be frustrating, but fortunately library staff can help you find ebooks compatible with your ebook reader.

Check Out Your Community Library for Additional Services – Services provided for students and parents by Florida libraries vary from community to community and some offerings are quite extensive. Some provide formal home

work help and tutoring programs in the library, some provide these services over the web, and some do both.

These are exciting times as K-12 students – indeed all Floridians – are challenged to master the 21st Century learning and information skills necessary for success in today's world. Florida public libraries are prepared and ready to make K-12 student's and parents' lives easier and help students succeed!

Visit www.flalib.org or call 386-438-5795 for more information.

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