

Library Spotlight

Westland District Library: Connecting Community & Inspiring Young Readers Through Summer Reading

Westland District Library, located on New Zealand's West Coast, is a central hub for the small yet dynamic community. The main library hosts everything from storytimes for young people to Tai Chi classes for seniors. The service area, however, is expansive, and the most remote volunteer run community libraries only receive book deliveries once every three months.

Pauline Leclerc, the program and outreach services librarian, was determined to create an inclusive summer reading program that would reach all library users, regardless of their location. By implementing best practices from a Beanstack training session, Pauline successfully energized her staff, increased program participation, and, most importantly, inspired young people in the community to read.



“ It was absolutely unexpected—we had to buy more prizes! The numbers just blew us away.

Pauline Leclerc

Program and Outreach Services Librarian
Westland District Library, NZ

The Vision: More Connection, More Participation

Westland District Library had run summer reading programs in the past, but they struggled with low engagement. Traditional methods (paper logs and manual tracking) made keeping families involved and measuring success difficult.

Pauline's goal: create a program that could reach beyond the library walls and provide a fun, consistent, and rewarding experience for every child across the district.

Staff Training and Engagement

Including staff in the process and empowering them to use Beanstack confidently was vital for the program's success.

- **Test the Waters with a Staff Challenge:** Running a staff-only challenge before the summer allowed the team to explore the platform, troubleshoot issues, and build excitement internally.
- **Let Your Team Be Your Champions:** Active staff involvement was crucial. Once team members saw how easy Beanstack was to use, they became enthusiastic ambassadors for the program.
- **Gather Feedback:** At the end of the program, Pauline gathered feedback from frontline staff, identifying valuable insights and ideas to improve next year's challenge.

Reimagining Summer Reading With Beanstack

By following Beanstack's best practices, Pauline created a dynamic summer reading program that kept young people engaged throughout the summer.

- **Offer Prizes and Recognition:** Small rewards like colorful erasers, pencils, and stickers kept motivation high. A special certificate and free book at the end served as an exciting finale for many readers.
- **Encourage Friendly Competition:** Pauline created a giant map that was displayed in the library. Kids were encouraged to place a sticker every time they earned a Beanstack badge. "That map filled with stickers was a hit. Kids loved seeing their progress—and their friends, too."
- **Host Fun Events:** The library ran engaging programs alongside the reading challenge, from "read to a dog" sessions to LEGO days.
- **Ensure Flexible Access:** By offering online tracking and participation, rural families who couldn't regularly visit a branch could still fully participate.

Outcomes That Matter

The revamped summer reading challenge didn't just boost participation, it deepened the library's impact:

- Participation and challenge completions more than doubled.
- Rural families stayed connected and engaged throughout the summer.
- Staff noted increased community interest, stronger engagement, and lasting momentum.

LOOKING AHEAD

Building on this success, Westland District Library is planning a winter wellness challenge and a program specifically for the local high school. The library's experience demonstrates the potential for even small libraries in remote areas to make a big impact through creativity, thoughtful planning, and offering flexible participation options.