

The School Library Monthly Update



STEP INTO A READING ADVENTURE!

January begins a fresh chapter, and it's the perfect time to launch (or re-energize) your school's participation in South Dakota's America's 250th Reading Adventure. This statewide celebration invites readers to explore stories of our nation and our state through books, missions, and meaningful connections with history. In this month's update, you will find practical ways to introduce the program to students and teachers, promote participation in everyday library routines, and use the new year as a springboard for creative reading engagement. We also highlight simple ways to honor International Creativity Month with reader-centered activities your students will love.

See more on page 2.

TO-DO

- ✓ Consider applying for the [2026 School Achievement Through Libraries \(SATL\) Award](#)! It's open year-round.
- ✓ Join the chat! The January School Library Collect + Connect is Wednesday 1/7 at 3:30pm CT. [Enroll HERE.](#)

REMINDERS

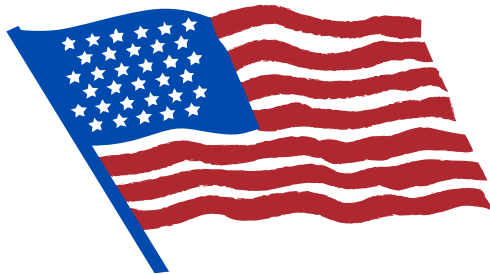


Check out [SDSL's CE Catalog](#) for all continuing education opportunities.



You can also view [SDSL's Training Calendar](#) for CE/PD opportunities from our database vendors, etc.

**EVERY MONTH, WE WILL HIGHLIGHT
A SATL AWARD RECIPIENT! SEE P.5!**



A READING ADVENTURE

THROUGH AMERICA'S HISTORY

THE SD STATE LIBRARY INVITES YOU TO
EXPAND YOUR MIND AS WE CELEBRATE
OUR NATION'S 250TH ANNIVERSARY.
JOIN US FOR A SELF-PACED, SELF-
REPORTED READING CELEBRATION FOR
ALL AGES. YOU CAN ACHIEVE READING
MILESTONES, READ A TITLE FROM OUR
CHALLENGES, OR JUST ENJOY READING.



VISIT READERZONE.COM AND SIGN UP
FOR PROGRAM CODE SD250

America's 250th Reading Adventure: Practical Ways to Launch a Strong Start

Start with a Quick, Clear Overview

Students and teachers engage more deeply when they understand the “why.” Keep your introduction simple:

- It's a yearlong reading adventure connected to America's and South Dakota's history.
- Participants earn points by reading relevant books and completing missions.
- Small prizes reward participation, and everyone is entered for a larger drawing.

A 2–3 minute explanation during classes is all you need!

Offer Weekly or Monthly “Micro-Missions”

Micro-missions keep the program fresh. Rotate them on a predictable schedule. Examples:

- Read a book set in a different decade.
- Talk with a family member about a memory connected to a place in South Dakota.
- Find a book about an invention or discovery that shaped America.
- Read outside or in a new spot for 10 minutes.

These missions build meaningful connections without adding complicated tasks.

Create an America250 Corner

Dedicate a small, visible area to the program. Include:

- A curated book display featuring historical fiction, biography, graphic nonfiction, and South Dakota history.
- A “This Week's Mission” sign with one low-effort task students can try.
- A tracker or visual showing how many participants or points the school has collected.

This space becomes a consistent reminder without requiring daily maintenance.

Empower Teachers With Ready-to-Use Ideas

Support classroom teachers by offering:

- A short list of recommended read-alouds for different grade levels.
- A template for a “Historic Highlight of the Week” they can add to their board.
- A set of three simple missions students can complete from any classroom.
- A brief explanation teachers can place in their newsletters or communication tools.

When teachers feel equipped, participation grows quickly.

Integrate the Adventure Into Your Routines

The reading program doesn't have to feel separate from your everyday library flow. Try:

- Adding America250 stickers or labels to qualifying books (simple and visual).
- Bookmarking relevant titles in your catalog with a genre tag or collection list.
- Highlighting America250-related reads during book talks.
- Incorporating missions into stations or choice boards during library class.

Integration ensures the program becomes part of the library culture rather than an extra.

Connect the Program With Your Existing Reading Culture

Use America250 as a natural extension of what you already do well:

- Tie it to your January library display.
- Use it as a theme for a winter reading challenge.
- Integrate it with your student reading identity work.
- Pair it with your Book of the Month or First Chapter Friday routines.

The program becomes a thread that supports, rather than replaces, your library's identity.



INTERNATIONAL CREATIVITY MONTH: INSPIRE CURIOSITY IN THE LIBRARY

January's celebration of creativity offers an opportunity to help students see the library as a place where ideas grow, imagination thrives, and originality is welcome. You don't need elaborate supplies or major projects, just small, intentional invitations that encourage students to play with ideas and express themselves as readers.



Create a "Try Something New" Display

Highlight books that encourage curiosity and experimentation:

- How-to guides
- Craft and maker books
- Poetry collections
- STEAM picture books and middle-grade titles
- Graphic novels with inventive art styles

Invite students to add sticky notes sharing one new thing they want to try in 2026.

Make a "What Are You Creating?" Wall

Give students a place to share:

- Drawings
- Short poems
- Reading reflections
- Projects they're working on in class
- Creative accomplishments outside school

This interactive feature reinforces that creativity shows up in daily life, not just in art class.

Offer Low-Prep Creativity Stations

These can run for one week, one class period, or all month:

- Story Starter Cards: Students pick a card and write the opening sentence of a story.
- Design-a-Book-Cover: Provide blank templates for students to redesign a favorite book cover.
- Poetry Play: Use cut-out words for magnetic poetry or "found poem" activities.
- Character Mash-Up: Students combine two characters from different books and describe their adventure.

Stations build engagement without requiring daily supervision.





Sioux Falls Jefferson High School Library



Librarian: Emelia Gulck

At Jefferson High School, librarian Emelia Gulck leads a library program rooted in strong professional leadership, thoughtful collection development, and a deep commitment to student and staff success. Emelia serves the district as a Destiny administrator and library leader, supports colleagues with training and tech liaison work, and contributes to strategic planning as a member of the building leadership team. Guided by data and student interest, she curates materials that both support classroom learning and inspire reading for pleasure. Emelia has expanded multilingual resources, partnered on community initiatives like Everybody Reads, and created a welcoming library space that reflects the many cultures of Jefferson's student body. Her collaborative teaching, community partnerships, and student-centered outreach make the JHS Library a vital hub for learning and connection.



Supporting Multilingual Learners

With district grant funding of \$2,500, Emelia added 142 new foreign-language titles (Spanish, French, Russian, Ukrainian, Arabic, Amharic, Portuguese, Swahili) to better serve students from more than 40 countries of birth. Students also access multilingual audiobooks and e-books through Sora, ensuring inclusion across formats.

Building Belonging Through Connection

Emelia has transformed the library into a gathering place. Flexible seating invites students to relax, collaborate, and socialize, and the library's welcoming atmosphere draws students in throughout the day. This focus on community strengthens relationships and encourages students to engage more deeply with library resources.

Reaching Students Where They Are

With more than 1,000 students voluntarily enrolled in the library's Canvas course, Emelia has created a highly effective extension of the library. Updates, announcements, and embedded research modules make it easy for students to access resources. Teachers love it too, using shared modules to integrate digital library tools directly into their courses.

Everybody Reads

Last year Jefferson set a bold goal to log 1,000 books in March. Promotion included school newsletters, posters with QR codes, and an interactive game where students added dots for each book read. Many students took pride in seeing their names on the board and competed amongst friends to see who could have the most dots.