

Avoid the Summer Slide

By ANGEL BURKE
LACONIA SCHOOL DISTRICT

The warm, lazy days of summer vacation can be filled with sleeping in, trips to the beach, and copious amounts of screen time; we know students (and teachers!) need time to decompress after a busy school year.

However, too much relaxation can result in what is known as the “summer slide” when students lose some of the knowledge and skills they gained the previous year. Thankfully, there are many ways to avoid this slide and keep students engaged in learning during the summer months!

According to an article in Psychology Today, “a 2011 study found students can lose up to two grade levels of reading skills due to summer reading loss by the time they reach sixth grade.” They contend that “children do forget skills and knowledge learned in the previous school year. But if families and educators encourage kids to stay engaged in learning throughout the summer, students may not only maintain, but improve their knowledge.”

There are various formal or informal, local or further afield ways to keep your child excited about learning throughout the summer months. One option is that they could sign up for a summer reading challenge through the school, the Laconia Public Library, or online. Scholastic has a summer reading challenge on their webpage called the “Read-a-Palooza Summer Reading Challenge” which includes special recognition for students. The Laconia Public Library has a full calendar of exciting reading themed events that connect to their “Libraries Rock!” theme, which can be found on their webpage or at the library. Each Laconia public school also offers summer

reading options and suggestions for how to stay engaged with literary during the hot summer months.

There are free or inexpensive online resources to continue learning through technology, which is where many students enjoy spending their free time.

Educational games and sites take the fun of traditional video games and infuse learning into the platform. Think about adding apps such as Epic!, Study.com, or Poptropica to the screen-time rotation.

Parents can help their kids find their passion for learning in the summer through exploration. Take a trip to the beach and examine your surroundings as a scientist would; ask questions to get kids wondering and thinking about how to find the answers; tap into kids’ natural curiosity. While cooking, have your child read the recipe to you and measure out the ingredients to practice both reading and math skills. Traveling can incorporate conversations about signs, license plates, and geography. Trips to museums and parks engage students in active and creative learning that allows them to make connections between life experiences and classroom learning.

Don’t let summer become only about downtime; infuse learning into every opportunity to help your child find their passion for learning about the world around them. This edge will not only help better prepare them for when school starts again in the fall, it is also important for students to have a passion for learning because that intrinsic love of learning and self-motivation is what drives kids to stay life-long learners.

Angel Burke is academic coordinator for teaching and learning for the Laconia middle and high schools.



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