



When Classroom Doors Close for the Summer

The Summer Slide

When we think of summer, it's often synonymous with fun. Unfortunately, the summer slide is not a ride at a popular theme park. The summer slide "describes what happens when young minds sit idle for three months" (RIF, 2009). Intellectual pursuits, like reading, take a back seat as kids would much rather ride their bike, play video games, hang out with friends, or take a swim. A 2002 report by Johns Hopkins Center for Summer Learning estimated lost instructional time is equivalent to "two months or roughly 22% of the school year" (RIF, 2009). The report also found that teachers spend approximately one month

re-teaching forgotten material, stealing a month of new learning from students (RIF, 2009). If a cumulative calculation is made, children lose an average of two years of their education on summer breaks.

Parents want what's best for their child. In fact, most parents want a better education for their children than they had for themselves. However, parents are often unaware of the importance of academic continuance over summer or they are aware, but unsure of what to do. Educators can emphasize the importance on summer learning by making suggestions. When parents know what's available,



*"Summer slide affects millions of children each year in this country - but it doesn't have to."
(RIF, 2009)*

they are more likely to reach out. As educators, we are familiar with creative ways to entice kids to read and learn but often forget to pass these ideas on to our parents. Highlight the importance of summer learning; share what you know with parents and challenge students to do more with their summer "break."

Try Technology

Students routinely spend their summers sleeping late and hanging out with friends. Although enjoyable, they may also miss their school routine and learning expectations, such as book discussions. Given that many students have access to computers, think about technology connections that can be utilized for learning. Students can discuss what

they are reading, make recommendations, and maintain a scholarly atmosphere of learning. Log on once a week and encourage those who are reading or participating in educational pursuits to keep up the great work. The time you give is entirely up to you, but your "presence" makes a bold statement. Weekly contact with students maintains the teacher-

student connection, and keeps the doors of academy open. Educators are the life-line for many kiddos and when everyone breaks for the summer, the bond formed throughout the year is severed. If teachers encourage summer learning by maintaining some level of contact, not only will the students benefit but fellow colleagues will as well.

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Special points of interest:

- ♦ *Make the connection from school to summer.*
- ♦ *Save for end-of-the-year novels.*
- ♦ *Books aren't the only learning tool!*
- ♦ *Summer fun ideas.*
- ♦ *Introducing students to books prior to summer break.*
- ♦ *I'm reading to write!*

Start at School

Prior to summer vacation, brainstorm productive activities for the break.

- Keep track of how many cereal boxes you read over the summer.
- What percentage of mail is received with your name? Create a graph.
- Find an author in the library with your first or last name.
- Collect newspaper articles during the summer that interest you.



*"Sit under a tree while reading an adventure tale."
(RIF, 2009)*

- What percentage of the average summer day do you spend sleeping?
- How many landmarks are in your community? Neighboring communities?
- List the places you would like to visit and why.
- If you travel, ask your parents to log the mileage. Keep track of how many miles you travel this summer.
- Pretend you are visiting from

another planet. What do you find strange or interesting about human beings?

- Find one or two words you like but don't use often (phalanges, photosynthesis). Listen for the word, or words, this summer. When you hear or read the word(s), write down the date and time.
- Is there a book character with your name? How are you and the character alike? Different?
- If you could take one friend on a road trip, who would it be? Why? Write down where you would go, the estimated miles traveled and how many days you would be gone.

Keep the Change!

If you've ever moved your "book collection," you may have discovered two things: First, you own a lot of books and second, books weigh a lot. Some books are timeless but others may have fallen down the list as new titles become favorites. Begin the 2009/2010 year with less clutter. Weed through your books and pull multiple copies or books that haven't been touched in years for students to take home.

*"Giving students books to take home is a powerful way to increase the likelihood of summer reading."
(IRA, 2009)*

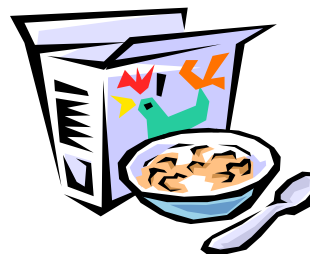
As you begin to look at next year, prepare for the summer of 2010. Keep a classroom "change" jar. Ask

students to drop in spare change or a penny found here and there. As a math activity, ask various groups to count the change monthly as you update a chart of money acquired. In April, use the money collected to purchase popular book titles from book clubs. The money spent may also afford bonus points that can be applied to a wider title selection. In May, allow students to choose a book to take home for the summer.

Beyond Books!

Everyone needs a break at one time or another. "But taking a break from books doesn't have to mean taking a break from reading" (RIF, 2009). Brainstorm things we read that are not "books." This may give students ideas and allow them to venture away from "book reading." Reading is Fundamental suggests the following:

- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Cookbooks
- Brochures
- Song lyrics
- Instructions
- Food and product labels



*"There are plenty of ways to keep reading beyond books."
(RIF, 2009)*

- Catalogues
- Backs of videos/DVDs
- Letters/Email

An assortment of reading material will allow students to be creative and vary what they read.

A Productive Summer

Ron Fairchild, executive director of the Center for Summer Learning at Johns Hopkins University, says that “parents always say summer is the hardest time to make sure their kids have productive things to do” (JHU, 2009). JHU has suggested learning tips we can pass on to parents that cover not only academics but social, emotional and physical areas as well:

- Visit the local library; participate in free library summer programs.



Participate in summer enrichment programs when available.

grams.

- Take educational trips (landmarks, museums, parks, nature centers, zoos).
- Math matters. Measure, cook, conduct science experiments, open a savings account, exchange money by making small purchases, and keep out the flash cards!
- Turn off the TV and video games. Ride a bike, take a walk, shoot some hoops, go for a swim or play fetch with your pet.

- Look for things you can do for someone else. Help your neighbor with their yard, offer to wash their car or take their newspaper up to the door on a rainy day.
- Set weekly goals and try to maintain a routine or schedule.
- What will be read next year? Plan ahead by reading the book during the summer. When the book is read for a second time, comprehension will be dramatically increased.
- Learn more about your town, heritage or family.

Scary Statistics

Richard Allington, a leading researcher, has demonstrated that a consistent relationship exists between those in challenging socioeconomic circumstances and reading capability. According to Allington, “by the time a struggling reader reaches middle school, summer reading loss has accumulated to a two-year lag in reading achievement” (IRA, 2009). International Reading Association President, Linda Gambrell, encourages educa-

tors to find novel ways to reach students prior to summer break.

Provide brief overviews of multiple books from various genres. Ask students to write down titles that interest them. “If a teacher shares 12 to 15 books a week during the final four weeks of school, students will be introduced to 50 or 60 books for potential summer reading” (IRA, 2009). Another idea is to share “3-a-day.” By quickly sharing a variety of

“There are a number of things that individual classroom teachers can do to encourage summer reading.”
(IRA, 2009)

genres, “you could share up to 60 books for potential summer reading.” Gambrell’s goal is to pique student interests, hopefully encouraging them to read over the summer.

Writing Welcomed

As students enter into third and fourth grade, the expectation to “write” is placed in the forefront. Many students hear a version of “write about something you did this summer” upon their return from summer vacation. For some students, the task is an easy one; for others, the task is much more burdensome. Remind students that if they maintain a journal or simply

record events, like those suggested in *Start at School* (refer to page 2), they will have interesting, innovative ideas upon return. It’s not about the trips you take or the places you may go. Summer can be an opportunity to make discoveries in your town or

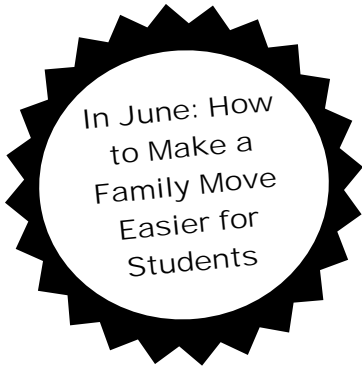


Writing ideas are right under your nose.

around your house. By reminding students that they will be asked to write, they may be more apt to think of things throughout the summer, avoiding the infamous “I don’t know what to write about” mental block.

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Promoting social & emotional fitness for kids.

Daphne Morris, M.Ed., met Trevor Romain in 1992 when he visited a school as a guest speaker. Impressed by Trevor's profound and meaningful impact on students, Daphne joined The Trevor Romain Company in 2006. A former elementary school principal, Daphne holds two Master's degrees in education.

May Q&A

Q: How do I motivate students to continue learning this summer?

A fun way to energize students for their upcoming summer break, while sneaking in learning at the same time, is to ask them to write down 3-5 things they would be interesting in knowing more about. Their goal this summer is to research everything they can about one of the things or persons on their list. Examples: (1) If a student chooses an animal, they may observe and take note of the animal in captivity. The library and internet are other search options. (2) If a student wants to learn more about his family, he may interview family members about their recollections of history and create a family tree. (3) A student may be interested in a sports figure. Ask her to re-search the athlete's background, taking notes of facts and notable performances. By asking students to focus on their interests, the challenge is enjoyable and well-received.



Resources:

International Reading Association. "Closing the Summer Reading Gap: You Can Make a Difference!" <http://www.reading.org/General/Publications/ReadingToday/RTY-0804-summer.aspx> (accessed April, 2009).

Johns Hopkins University. "Keeping Kids Sharp to Avoid 'Summer Slide.'" http://www.jhu.edu/news/home08/may08/summer_slide.html (accessed April, 2009).

Reading Is Fundamental. "10 Options for Reading Outside the Book." <http://www.rif.org/parents/tips/tip.msp?View=69> (accessed April, 2009).

Reading Is Fundamental. "Keeping Kids Off the Summer Slide." <http://www.rif.org/educators/articles/summerslide.msp> (accessed April, 2009).

Reading Is Fundamental. "RIF's Ter-RIF-ic Summer Reading Tips for Families." <http://www.rif.org/parents/tips/tip.msp?View=14> (accessed April, 2009).



Reading Is Fundamental. "Summer Reading Tips for Kids." http://www.rif.org/readingplanet/content/summertips_forkids.msp (accessed April, 2009).