



Southern Nevada  
Regional Professional  
Development Program

Volume 6, Issue 8

May 2010

# The LeafLIT

**A Literacy Publication**

## SUMMER READING

by  
Melissa Baumunk

Many people have an idyllic image of summer as a carefree time filled with fun memories and good times. Although a delightful image, let us not forget to incorporate opportunities for enriching educational experiences such as summer camps, family vacations, visits to museums and parks, and most importantly, trips to the library! Visiting the library during the summer provides literacy-rich opportunities for continued reading development. To succeed in school and life, children need ongoing opportunities to learn and practice essential literacy skills, not only throughout the school year, but during the summer months as well. Without these opportunities many children face the risk of experiencing Summer Brain Drain or the Summer Slide.

Research shows that children who do not engage in educational activities during summer vacation experience a loss of learning. Research, spanning 100 years, also shows that students perform lower on standardized tests at the end of summer break than they do on the same test at the beginning of the summer (White, 1906; Entwisle & Alexander, 1992; Cooper 1996; Downey, 2004). Low income students lose, on average, two months of reading achievement over the summer months (Cooper, 1996). Also, about two-thirds of the ninth grade achievement gap between lower and higher income students is attributed to unequal access to summer learning opportunities during elementary school (Alexander, 2007).

The good news is that there are studies proving that quality summer reading experiences improve students' academic achievement. Children who read regularly over the summer months maintain reading comprehension and vocabulary skills (National Summer Learning Program). However, with hours of free time and an abundance of technology as a distraction, how can parents encourage their children to read books over the summer months?



**Bill Hanlon,**  
*Director*

*RPDP Literacy  
Team:*

**Shan Cannon**  
RPDP  
799-3835 x245

**Robyn Markovic**  
RPDP-K/1  
799-3835 x242

**Adine Sibley**  
RPDP  
799-3835 x256

**Chelli Smith**  
RPDP-Outlying  
Counties  
799-3835 x230

**Here are some suggested reading activities for ensuring a fun, learning-filled summer.**

## Keep a Schedule



Although there is definitely more room for flexibility, maintain a daily routine during the summer months. Provide a balance between learning and fun in order to keep kids engaged.

## Sign-up



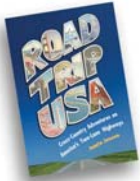
Many local libraries offer summer reading programs for children of all ages. Visit your library and sign-up your family. These programs schedule high-quality events for kids and have an educational focus. Best of all, they are usually free.

## Gather Books



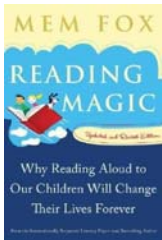
Make books accessible for kids. Search on-line for summer reading lists appropriate for the age and grade-level of your kids. Whether from the library or from your home bookcase, make books easily available for your kids to enjoy.

## Prepare for Fall



Talk with your kids' teachers to find out what they will be covering in class during the next school year. Plan your family vacation around those concepts. If a vacation does not fit into your budget, gather books to read based on those concepts.

## Make Reading Interactive



Reading can often be a solitary activity. Make reading more interactive and provide guidance to ensure reading comprehension. Ask your child to summarize a book he has read. Encourage question and answer discussions about a story. When necessary, reread passages that were difficult to understand. Finally, take time to read aloud to your child.

## Find the "Sweet Spot"



It is important for children to select books that not only interest them, but are at their appropriate reading level. To do so, requires matching your child's reading ability with his level of comprehension along with the difficulty level of the text. The goal in book selection is finding the "sweet spot", books with the right level of challenge without being too frustrating (Kim, 2008).

## Use the Internet as an Extension of Reading



Children ages 9-17 can extend the reading experience via the Internet. Allow your kids to use the internet to look for more books by the same author, to visit websites that immerse them in content related to a book, or to connect with authors and other readers. Best of all, eighty percent of kids who extend the reading experience online say they will always want to read printed books (Scholastic Kids & Family Reading Report™ Reading in the 21st Century: Turning the Page with Technology, 2008).

## The ABCs of Improved Reading

A quick way to remember the essentials of successful summer reading experiences is to think of it as the ABCs of Improved Reading.

**Access to books:** It is critical that kids have access to a wide variety of books over the summer months, but access alone doesn't make a strong impact.



**Books that match readers' ability levels and interests:** For young people's reading skills to improve, they need to read books that align with their own reading levels. Reading books that are too easy or too hard won't help!



**Comprehension, as monitored and guided by an adult, teacher or parent:** The most important piece to making summer reading effective is the help of an adult who can ask questions and guide kids to better understand what they are reading.



With these three ingredients, your child's summer reading will soar! (National Summer Learning Program)

Including some of these exciting reading opportunities into summer vacation can enhance the idyllic, fun-filled summer experience. Summer reading enriches the educational experiences and creates lasting memories. Most importantly, your child will be prepared for the new school year without having suffered Summer Brain Drain or the Summer Slide. **Remember to keep reading fun! You do not want your kids to feel overwhelmed with learning during the summer break.**

## REFERENCES

Alexander, K., Entwisle, D., and Olson, L. (2007). Lasting consequences of the summer learning gap. *American Sociological Review*, 72, 167-180.

Cooper, H., Nye, B., Charlton, K., Lindsay, J., & Greathouse, S. (1996). The effects of summer vacation on achievement test scores: A narrative and meta-analytic review. *Review of Educational Research*, 66, 227-268.

Downey, D, von Hippel, P., and Broh, B. (2004). Are schools the great equalizer? Cognitive inequality during the summer months and the school year. *American Sociological Review*, 69, 613-635.

Entwisle, D., and Alexander, K. (1992). Summer setback: Race, poverty, school composition, and mathematics achievement in the first two years of school. *American Sociological Review*, 57, 72-84.

Kim, J. (2004). Summer reading and the ethnic achievement gap. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 9 (2), 169-188.

Kim, J. (2006). The effects of a voluntary summer reading intervention on reading achievement: Results from a randomized field trial. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 28, 335-355.

Kim, J. S. & White, T. G. (2008). Scaffolding voluntary summer reading for children in grades 3 to 5: An experimental study. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 12, 1-23.

National Summer Learning Program: <http://www.summerlearning.org/>

White, W. (1906). Reviews before and after vacation. *American Education*, 185-188.

For past **LeafLIT** Newsletters visit [www.rpd.net](http://www.rpd.net)



Southern Nevada  
Regional Professional



Visit <http://www.rpd.net/teachers.html> for Literacy Resources