

Keeping Literacy Alive Over the Summer

By Angela Peery, Ed. D.

Educators, parents, policy-makers, and even some students worry about the “summer slide” – the loss of learning that occurs during the months students are out of school. Educators have long complained about the amount of time they have to spend at the beginning of each school year reviewing previously taught material and getting students back into the “groove” of learning. While all subjects and skills that students learn are important, continually enhancing each child’s literacy may be the one thing that everyone can agree on that is directly related to success in school and in life.

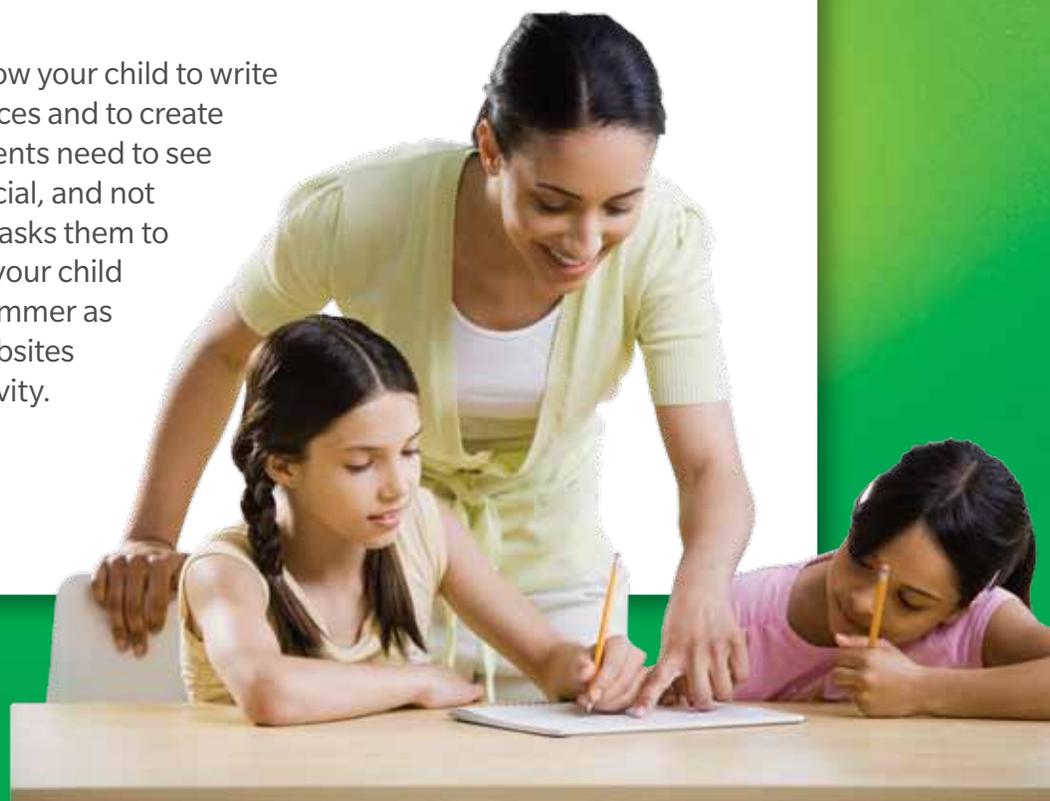
These tips can help families grow students’ literacy skills this summer.

1

Make time for reading. Be your child’s best adult role model of reading. Increasingly, teachers feel pressured to teach reading due to high-stakes testing. Teachers still value and make time for self-selected reading, however students often don’t embrace it for what it can do for their imaginations and their academic learning. Choose a couple of books to read along with your child over the summer. Make a point to engage in authentic conversations about the plot, characters, and lessons learned. Be sure to read books of your own choice, too, and show your children that reading is a pleasurable, lifelong learning activity.

2

Encourage writing. Allow your child to write about his or her experiences and to create imaginative stories. Students need to see writing as fun and beneficial, and not just something a teacher asks them to do. You could even have your child create a book over the summer as there are a number of websites that offer this type of activity.



3

Make time to build vocabulary. The average American high school graduate knows 45,000-50,000 words, not including proper names, numbers, foreign words, and other such terms. However, the number of words in printed school materials in grades three through nine is estimated at 88,500. Discuss words that appear on signs, placards, and billboards. Demonstrate curiosity about interesting words that appear in places such as the grocery store, doctors' offices, and restaurants. Emphasize word parts that have meaning across different words. For example, the prefix "pre-" means "before." Many common words, like "preview," contain this prefix, and it's an indicator of meaning. Words that contain the root "-ped-" usually have something to do with feet, like "pedestrian" or "centipede." Never waste an opportunity to teach a word to your child. It's time well spent.

4

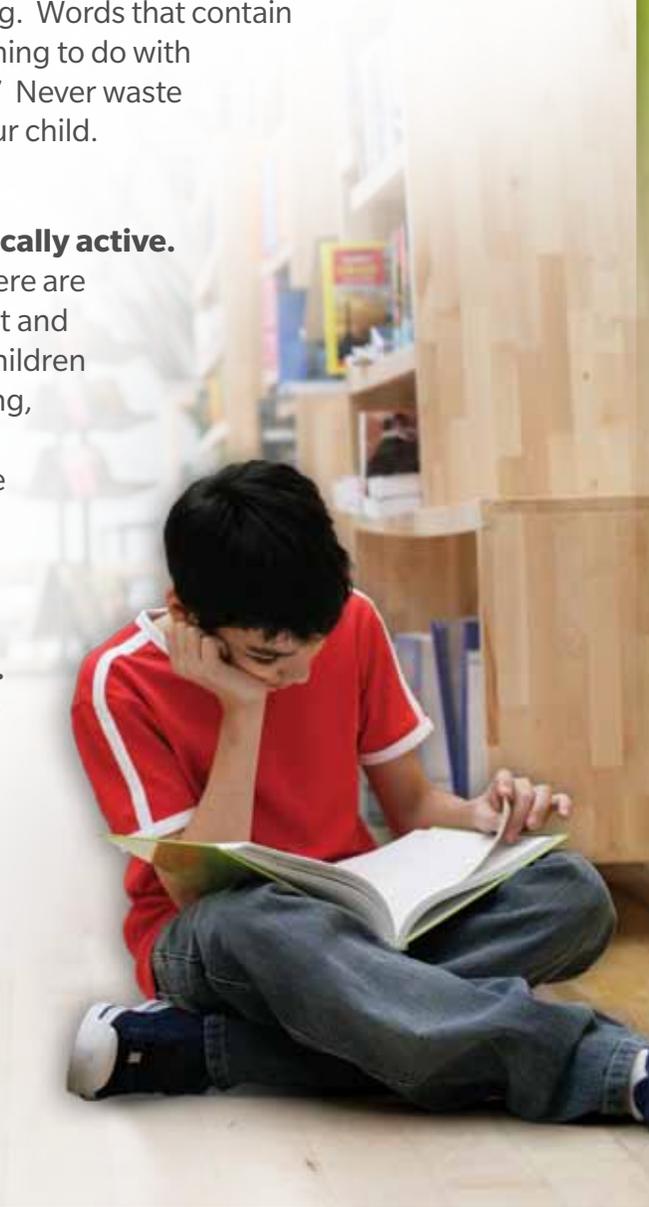
Make sure your children are physically active.

Current brain research shows that there are many cognitive benefits to movement and aerobic exercise. You can join your children in many physical activities (like walking, jogging, or basketball) and have productive conversations at the same time. Physical activity may be a great "before" activity for sustained silent reading. It's much easier.

5

Get out and experience the world.

Visit libraries, museums, zoos, nature centers, historical landmarks, and state and national parks. Students can experience the world from these places that are often close to home. Also, these sites are wonderful for expanding your child's vocabulary, historical knowledge, scientific knowledge, and social skills.



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