

Soar or Slide? Prevent Summer Reading Loss



More than a century of research has shown that many students backslide academically during the summer months when school is out. Summertime is far from idyllic for low-income students, who on average lose more than two months in their reading performance. This effect snowballs over time, so that disadvantaged children are almost three grades behind their higher income peers in reading by the end of fifth grade.

What Parents Can Do

Parents play a key role in helping their children maintain—or improve—their reading achievement during summer months. Join the [June 12th webinar](#) sponsored by [The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#) to learn more about what parents can do to prevent summer reading loss, and try these tips:

- Get a library card for each reader in your family. Public libraries are valuable allies that not only provide all important *access* to books, but also free reading programs, and free or reduced price passes to language-enriching experiences such as museums and aquariums.
- *Engage* young readers by selecting books that match their interests and abilities. According to [Harvard researcher James Kim](#), "Children should choose books that interest them, but the goal is to find that 'sweet spot' where the reading level is challenging, not frustrating." He suggests using the

'five-finger rule'. "Ask a child to read 100 words from a book and teach the child to raise one finger for each word that is too difficult to figure out. If the child has more than five fingers up, the book is probably too hard."

- *Talk* with your children about what they are reading in order to gauge their understanding. Ask "who, what, where, and when" questions as well as "how and why" to stimulate critical thinking skills.

How Teachers Can Help

Teachers set the stage for successful summer reading by alerting their students to opportunities to interact with books and words when they are not in class.

- Provide ability-appropriate reading packets when you send off students for summer break. [ReadWorks](#) offers free, summer-themed passages for rising 1st and 2nd graders, and for students entering the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades and beyond.
- Create ways for your students to record and report on their summer reading.
- Offer book lists by ability and interest.
- Lend out books that you are ready to retire from your classroom library.

How Districts Can Plan Successful Summer Programs

Principals, superintendents, and other school administrators should know that studies show 6-week summer learning programs can produce statistically significant gains in reading performance.

- Check out the [National Summer Learning Association](#) (NSLA) annual [Summer Learning Day](#) on June 19, designed to "elevate the importance of keeping kids learning, safe, and healthy every summer."
- Read NSLA's report "[Accelerating Achievement Through Summer Learning](#)" to learn about effective summer learning programs across the country.
- Discover how to create a powerful summer learning program in your school or district. Download the free Rand Report, "[Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children's Learning](#)."

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Our Mission is to **EMPOWER TEACHERS** to ensure that every child learns to read by third grade.

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