

Summer reading loss is a real thing; library programs can help

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FULL TEXT

Summer vacation can be a slippery slide causing children to lose some of the reading skills they learned in school.

Two months of "summer reading loss" occurs over the summer months when children are away from the classroom and not participating in formal literacy programs. It can take six weeks of school time in the fall to re-learn old material to make up for that summer reading loss.

Often it is the students who can least afford to lose the reading gains who fall the farthest behind when they return to the classroom after a summer break. This was demonstrated by a study of high- and low-income students. Both groups of students made comparable gains in reading achievement during the academic year. However, by the end of sixth grade there was about a three-grade level achievement gap between the high- and low-income students due to low-income students having less access to reading materials.

Access to reading materials has been shown to be the most important factor for increasing the reading development of children. In fact, time spent reading is the best predictor of reading achievement. It's simple: The more students read, the better readers they become.

What can parents and caregivers do to curb summer reading loss? The good news is that it only takes 2-3 hours of reading a week during summer vacation to prevent summer learning loss. Support your children's reading development over the summer months by tapping into their own reading interests. Look for reading materials that relate to interests that the child enjoys, such as baseball, animals, or art. And it's not just books. Consider audio books, ebooks and children's magazines.

All these are available for free at your local public library.

The Fox Cities libraries are great resources to help minimize that slippery summer slide. Every public library offers a summer reading program that brings children and families into the library for reading and activities. Over 9,000 Fox Cities children and teens participated in the program last year. Libraries are rich with literacy-enhancing programs such as storytelling, music, creative arts, and performances. There is often also a reading incentive component that encourage children to read throughout the summer. And library staff are always on hand to help children select appropriate reading materials for their interests and reading levels.

Avoid the summer slide. Ask at your local library for information on their summer library program and sign up today.

Appleton Public Library: apl.org/summer

Menasha Public Library: menashalibrary.org/summer

Kimberly-Little Chute Public Library: kimlit.org

Neenah Public Library: neenahlibrary.org/summer

Kaukauna Public Library: kaukaunalibrary.org

Katrina Wulff is youth services manager at the Neenah Public Library. Library officials in the Fox Cities write a monthly column about library services and opportunities.

Katrina Wulff

Guest columnist

DETAILS

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