

Dive Into a Book This Summer: The Power of Reading for Every Age!

WDHS Principal, Allison Hoch

School is over for the year, and the temps and sunshine are clearly announcing it is summer here in the Waterpark Capital! Summer activities vary between SDWD students and families, but no matter your family schedule, there is time to READ!

For all 4K-12 grade students, *and for parents too*, summer reading is far more than just a way to pass the time. It's a crucial component in preventing the "summer slide" – the learning loss that can occur when academic routines pause.

Reading is a crucial activity this summer for several reasons. First and foremost, reading helps combat the summer slide. Research and teachers' testimonies consistently show that students who read over the summer *maintain* and even *improve* their reading skills, vocabulary, and comprehension. This gives students a stronger start come September!

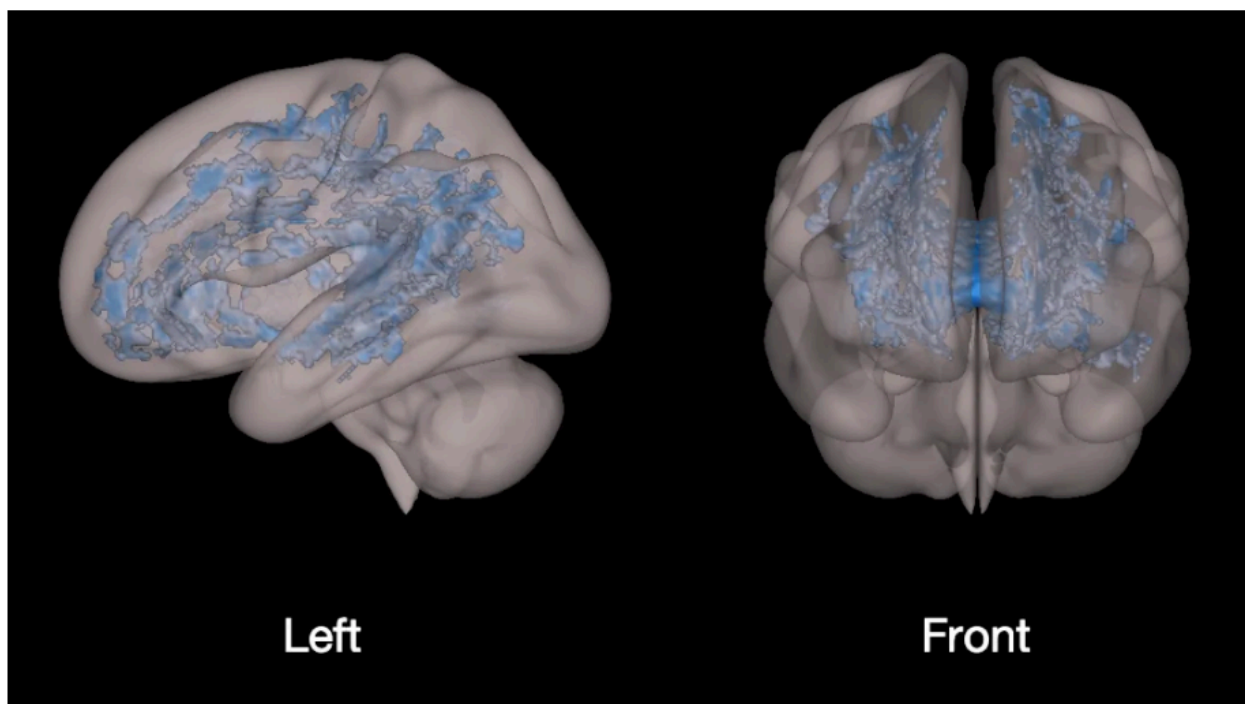
The more kids read, it becomes a habit and transforms from a chore into a passion. Ideally, a passion that continues into their adult lives. Books also offer windows into different worlds, cultures, and ideas. They enable students to build background knowledge, which gives them a leg up in the classroom.

Unlike video games or TV, reading actively engages our brains. We have to visualize characters, settings, and plots. Sitting down with a book also helps train our minds to focus for sustained periods-which is needed in our current fast-paced world.

See the images below of a preschooler's brain- one with excessive screen time and one with reading. The one with excessive screen time is underdeveloped, and the one with reading has growth in language and literacy.

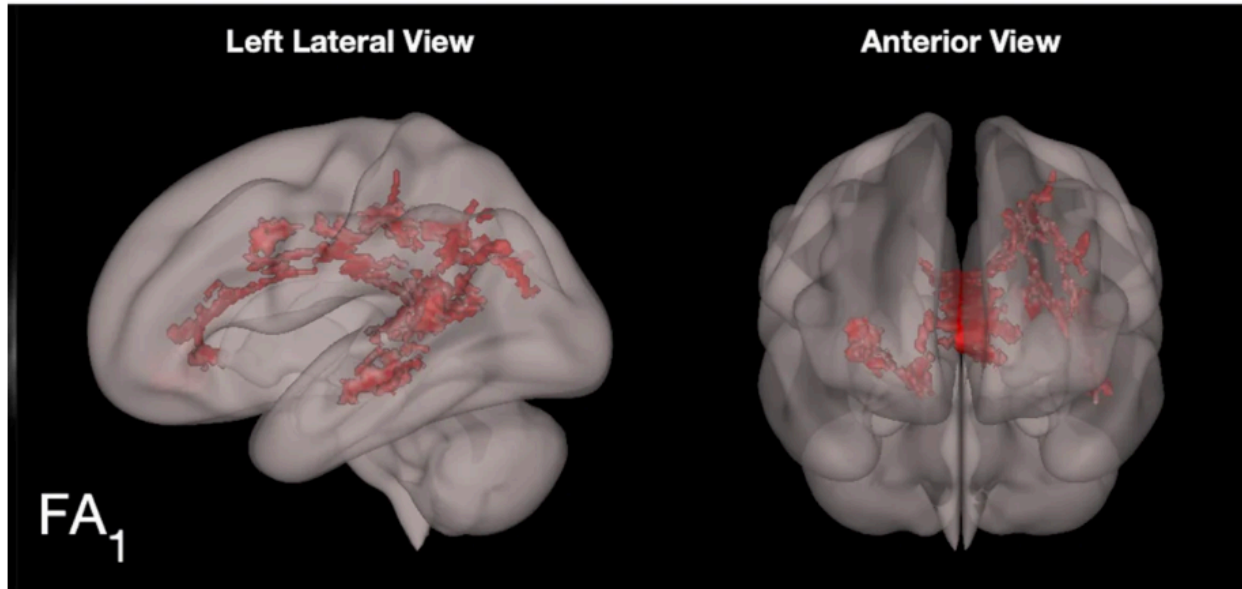
This is the brain of a preschooler who likely spends an average of two hours a day playing on screens.

The blue in this image shows massive underdevelopment and disorganization of white matter in the same areas needed to support learning in school.



This is the brain of a preschooler who is often read to by a caregiver.

The red areas in this scan show a growth in organized white matter in the language and literacy areas of the child's brain, areas that will support learning in school.



Reading is also a great way for any person to destress. Getting lost in a story allows your mind and body to relax. In order to truly get lost in a book, allow your students (and your self) to pick books that they enjoy. Don't worry about the reading level or if they are always picking the same genre.

If you have elementary or middle school students, visit the Kilbourn Public Library for their fantastic summer reading program. [Summer Reading Begins! | Kilbourn Public Library](#) Encourage your middle school student to explore genres that pique their interest- graphic novels, fantasy, mysteries, or non fiction books about their favorite sports or hobbies. (Librarians are happy to help them find books with a certain topic or genre, just ask!) High school students have jobs and sports over the summer- but if you have time to scroll social media, you have time to read for 30min a day.

I love my Kindle app, because no matter where I am, I can always pick up my book if time allows. Parents, if your kids see you reading for pleasure, it sets an example. If you don't know where to start, ask friends if they have read anything good recently. Or visit the library and ask for help finding a book with content you'd enjoy. Keep in mind, that all ages need to read books we enjoy if we want to establish a habit of reading for pleasure. If you or your student starts a book and the story doesn't engage, it's okay to abandon the book and start a new one! (I read mystery novels 99% of the time, because that's what I like!)

This isn't just about homework and academic success; it's about building a culture of literacy in our homes and community.