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The Importance of Summer Reading

By: Amber Weiland

In my last article, Avoiding Summer Regression, I spoke about how to avoid summer regression and gave some tips to prevent it from happening. The focus was the importance of summer reading and the reasons why our children should be reading daily.

Before we start, let's do a quick recap on what summer regression is since reading and summer regression are associated with one another. Summer Regression, also known as the summer slide or summer learning loss, is the loss of academic skills and knowledge over the course of summer holidays.

The US Department of Education's research shows children on average, are back 25% in reading skills each summer. To prevent this from happening, our children need to read on a daily basis for at least 20 minutes a day. But as parents, we need to be involved as much as

possible and make sure our children are setting time aside to read.

Reading is important for all ages, not just school-aged children. In order to instill a love of reading in them, we need to start early while they are still infants. We all want our children to be their best at everything they do. We spend so much time making sure their schools are good and their teachers are exceeding expectations, but as parents, we have the power to develop our children's learning potential simply by making books an integral part of their lives.

One of the primary benefits of reading to your toddlers or preschoolers is a higher aptitude for learning in general. Numerous studies have shown that students exposed to reading before preschool, are more likely to do well in all aspects of formal education.

Now, how do we instill a love of reading in our older children... our children that are tethered to their phones and computers? I know reading is one of the last things they probably want to do during the summer but it is our job to help them experience this growth so they don't experience the summer slide.

Hopefully, students have been reading at least 20 minutes a day to help them prevent summer regression but if your student hasn't started yet, it's not too late to help them get a foot up on the slide.

If your child isn't into books, perhaps they'd be interested in magazines, newspapers, and sometimes even audiobooks, as a last resort. If your child is into gaming, let them get a magazine that features video games he or she plays. If you have a child that is into fashion or music, get them a fashion magazine. There are eBooks and online magazines and most magazines have online versions as well as most newspapers. You can also have your child go to the library and pick out books or magazines that they want to read, at no cost. And as a last resort, there are audiobooks. Students may not gain fluency skills but they will build on their vocabulary and comprehension strategies.

Sadly, many families living in poverty have little or no access to essential resources that support academic performance. This results in their falling weeks, and sometimes months, behind their more advantaged peers. It is shown that early summer learning losses have later life

consequences, including, high school curriculum placement, whether kids drop out of high school, or whether they attend college. I've found some free online resources to hopefully help get books into hands or on the screens of some of these students so they can also have access to reading, too.

There's one last thought I want to leave you with that really blew my mind once I read and reflected on it. The few months of loss in reading skills compounds over the years; by the time children reach middle school, those who haven't read during the summers may have lost as much as two years' worth of achievement. This was astonishing to me. So get those books out and start reading!

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