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Dear Families,

As the school year starts to wind down, our thoughts turn to family vacations, days at the beach, trips to the pool and ways to keep students engaged in activities all while juggling the change in our daily schedule. I know that for many this is a welcome change that allows for families to reconnect after a hectic school year. But did you know research shows that many children lose some previously mastered skills when they are not engaged in educational activities during the summer months? This learning loss is called the “summer slide” and it can be avoided!

Research shows that summer reading is strongly and consistently related to summer *learning*. In fact, reading during the summer not only helps to eliminate summer learning loss it produces reading gains. Our students have been reading and writing all year long and we want them to continue be active readers *and* learners throughout the summer. Students have learned how to “take charge” of their own reading and writing lives and make plans for summer reading and writing.

The “summer slide” can be prevented with some easy and engaging activities that can be incorporated into your daily routine to help your child retain necessary skills for September. One of the easiest ways to help your child avoid the summer slide is through reading. Check out this video from one popular children’s author, Dav Pilkey, on the importance of summer reading [here](#).

This summer I encourage you to read *with* your child, *to* your child and most importantly *listen to* your child read. Find time to read yourself and create a literacy rich environment for your child. Some tips for supporting your reader at home this summer are included in this letter. I hope that you will find them useful as you start your summer vacation.

Happy Reading!

*Michele Henry*

Michele Henry  
Assistant Principal Elementary Curriculum and Instruction

## Ways to Keep Your Child Reading This Summer. . .

Families are an important part of motivating their children to read especially during the summer months. There are many simple ways to motivate your child to read and keep reading *all* summer long!

- **Visit your local library:** If you or your child do not have a library card, now is the time to get one! Not only do libraries have a wide selection of books, they have summer reading programs for readers of all ages. Click [here](#) for a link to the Burlington County Website to check out their great resources both at the branch and online.
- **Have plenty of reading materials available for your child:** Books are great, but other print materials such as magazines and newspapers are a wonderful way to spark a child's interests.
- **Lead by example:** Model strong reading behaviors at home. Children form lifelong reading habits from a young age usually copying the older members of their families so make reading an important part of your daily routine to establish positive reading habits in your child. If they see you reading daily, both for function and pleasure, they will more likely become avid readers themselves. If children see parents going to the library and checking out books, or giving and receiving books as gifts, borrowing and loaning books to friends, they will know their parents place a high value on reading.
- **Help kids find the time to read:** Busy summer schedules can make it difficult to find extended periods of time to read, but there are ways to work reading into your daily routine. Try to think of places where you might be tempted to give your child an electronic device and replace the device with a book instead-waiting in the doctor's office, riding in the car, standing in a grocery line. Reading over breakfast or at bedtime is another way to incorporate more reading time into your day.
- **Combine activities with books:** Encourage your child to read books about the various activities they might be participating in over the summer. For example, if you are headed out to a baseball game suggest that your child read up about a favorite player. Or, if you are headed to the zoo, suggest a study of an animal they are hoping to see up close and personal.
- **Read the book and then see the movie:** Many family favorite books have been made into movies so before you rent the movie and buy the popcorn, check out the book first and then watch the movie. What are some ways that the author's version is similar to the movie adaptation? What was better, the book or the movie? Have a discussion with your child about the big screen version versus the text. Check out the link [here](#) for some family friendly books that have been made into films.
- **Read some books written for older children:** Parents can read books that are meant for adolescents-it can show reading is valued and also act as a talking point with your child about various adolescent or social issues.



## The importance of reading easier books or rereading old favorites:

Let your child read their “old favorites” or easier books at times. Rereading favorite books and reading easier text (for example, your second grader wants to read an easy picture book) is a great way to build their reading fluency and maintain their reading stamina. Just like anything else we want to be really good at, *practice makes better*. Reading easier text allows the reader to focus less on decoding words and work on building their reading fluency- an important part of becoming a strong reader.

## The importance of reading:

Talk to your child about the importance of reading not only for function, but for pleasure as well. Books can serve many purposes as listed below. Use some of these ideas when talking to your child:

- Readers can become experts by reading a lot about a particular topic
- Readers can see the world and visit faraway places through books
- Readers can laugh when they read books by favorite comedians or collections of funny stories
- Readers can get some free advice-characters in their books might have problems/pressures similar to them
- Readers can champion a cause and get smart on an issue that matters to them
- Readers can escape-noise, tension, boredom. . .

## The importance of allowing children to self-select the books they read:

Studies have shown that allowing children to self-select the books they want to read is an important part of keeping kids engaged in reading. This summer encourage your child to start their own personal library. Here are some tips to help you and your child start their own library at home:

- Find a special place for their books and teach your child to treat their books and those borrowed from their local library with care. If a book shelf isn't available, use a box, basket or small crate to hold their books.
- Fill their library by visiting book stores or yard sales-this could be a fun weekend activity.
- Consider giving your child a magazine subscription as a gift to add to their collection.
- Host a “book swap” with friends and neighbors-bring a book, take a book.
- Check out local book stores for reading programs. Barnes and Noble offers a reading incentive to children through 6th grade. More information about this can be found at [www.BN.COM/summerreading](http://www.BN.COM/summerreading)



The Burlington County Library has many wonderful activities planned throughout the summer to keep your children active, engaged and most importantly – *reading!* Please visit their site by clicking [here](#) to check out their calendar of events as well as some book recommendations for all age levels.

Click [here](#) for the Burlington County Library Summer Reading information.

Book recommendations for kids can be found here:

<http://www.bcls.lib.nj.us/kids-recommendations>

Book recommendations for teens can be found here:  
<http://www.bcls.lib.nj.us/teen-book-recommendations>



The Burlington County Library has also purchased access to Tumble books an online e-book system for children. Many popular books are brought to life and read to your child. So if you're headed to a vacation spot and don't want to worry about losing books, take your library card, log into the Tumble books site through the library and your child will have books ready to read at their fingertips. *(To access this service please visit the Burlington County Library website and search "Tumblebooks." You must have a library card to access this service.)*

And be sure to check out this PSA from children's author, Dav Pilkey, regarding summer reading [here](#)

If you are looking for more information about summer reading and summer learning check out our [Preventing the Summer Slide presentation](#) from our Family Learning Series and try these sites:

<http://www.edutopia.org/blog/summer-learning-resources-matt-davis>

<http://www.startwithabook.org/summer-reading-learning>

[www.imaginationssoup.net](http://www.imaginationssoup.net) (Imagination Soup: Reading, Writing, and Learning)

<http://www.booksourcebanter.com/2015/04/21/top-ten-no-more-dreadful-summer-reading-lists-please/>

[www.readwritethink.org/parent-afterschool-resources/](http://www.readwritethink.org/parent-afterschool-resources/)

# Just READ!

