

Curtailing the COVID Learning Slide: Tips for Parents This Summer



Your Turn
Sheena Elliott
Guest columnist

As the school year comes to a close and families are now facing a different summer than they originally planned, educators are turning their attention to helping students who need to catch up lost academic ground before the school bell rings or the video conferences start in September.

School districts statewide should be commended for quickly implementing strategies to keep students learning remotely from home due to the public health crisis. Educators across the state came together to provide new ways to connect with their students. As a teacher who is well-versed in online instruction, I applaud their efforts. However, this quick pivot to distance learning -- commonly called emergency school -- is completely different from a true full-time online school, like Oregon Connections Academy, the school where I work. More than 4,600 students have chosen Oregon Connections Academy for their education and experienced minimal interruption throughout the COVID shutdown since our school is designed for virtual learning.

As we head into summer, educators are worried many students who experienced a disruption in their learning will suffer from the "COVID slide." Even when there's not a pandemic, parents and educators are worried the "summer

slide" -- when students lose academic ground during the summer months -- and now learning loss is even more of a concern.

In an average summer, students can lose up to three months' worth of learning in math or reading according to NWEA, a Portland nonprofit testing organization. COVID learning losses were about the same for literacy, but for math, children often fell a full year behind.

More importantly, at-risk students, those with disabilities, English learners, children who had difficulty accessing digital equipment, and others are likely to experience a greater effect from the COVID learning gap, according to experts.

The COVID slide is unique not only because students are facing social-emotional challenges on top of the academic difficulties, but their families are still navigating daily life with social distancing and other restrictions. Despite the logistical complications, many districts are providing summer learning opportunities since they realize students need scholastic support.

Although kids used to equate summer school with punishment, many of these programs are now incorporating fun activities designed to engage students. Katie Brackenridge formerly with the non-profit Partnership for Children and Youth says, "Summer learning is the sweet spot between summer school and summer camp.

Parents can help ease the "COVID or Summer" slide by allowing their students to access supplemental curricu-

lum during the summer. Due to the Distance Learning for All Plan, many district websites have suggested materials to use. If parents give their students a high level of personal control over their learning activities it will increase their level of motivation and independence.

Parents can continue learning over the summer by having students practice reading. Make reading fun for kids by letting them pick out a fiction book to read for at least 30 minutes a day. Parents can trade off reading pages with younger children, and set up a special reading spot in a favorite chair. Local libraries may also have a summer reading incentive program.

Writing is another important skill to exercise over the summer. Parents should be flexible when children are finding something to write about. Perhaps they'll walk in the forest, listen to music, or do yoga for a few days. Ask them to write up to 10 statements about what they learned from their experience.

Finally, have your child continue their math studies. Math workbooks are a good option because students can use one from the class they just finished or move up to a workbook for the class they're entering next fall. You can also explore learning apps that incorporate math games if your child learns better with interactive lessons.

Distance education or virtual summer camp may not be ideal for every student, however, I hope families find ways for children to engage in learning over the next couple of months, especially if they've slid back a little. I also

hope more teachers and families embrace technology to give children the extra academic support they need.

Alejandro Gibes de Gac, the head of a summer learning program in Philadelphia, summarized the mission ahead best: "I think between now and the day schools reopen, we've got a unique but a fleeting opportunity to demonstrate the power of parent engagement to produce learning outcomes," he said. "And if we do it on a large enough scale, we can fundamentally change the education system for the better, and good."

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Learning Resources

Oregon Open Learning Hub oercommons.org/hubs/oregon: Hosted by the State Education Department it includes math lessons to virtual field trips.

Salem Public Library cityofsalem.net/Pages/library-changes-covid19.aspx: Offering free e-books, audiobooks, streaming movies, and more, all remotely. National Geographic nationalgeographic.org/education/resource-library/ From ancient history to the future of space travel, Nat Geo has it all.

Wide Open School wideopenschool.org/: Take a virtual field trip to the moon or learn new dance moves and everything in-between, hosted by the non-profit, Common Sense Media. ReadWriteThink <http://www.readwritethink.org/>

DACA

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Salem-Keizer schools affected

Thursday's ruling brought celebrations and praise from local educators, activists and politicians.

Reyna Lopez, executive director of PCUN, a Marion County-based organization that advocates for farmworkers, low-wage workers and Latinx families, said those with PCUN were ecstatic.

"This was a source of stress for many of our family members and friends," she said. "Today's Supreme Court decision was monumental, and such a testament to the courageousness of DACA recipients and young immigrants in fighting to create and defend DACA, and to continue pushing for protections for all."

Oregon Department of Education Director Colt Gill said the decision was an important step towards protecting Oregon students, families and educators.

He said his department would redouble their efforts at ensuring schools and classrooms are safe, inclusive and welcome to all educators, students and their families, regardless of race, ethnicity or immigration status.

Officials with Salem-Keizer Public Schools said the ruling allows them to reaffirm their commitment to creating safe and welcoming environments for all of our students and staff, regardless of where they were born.

"Our students, our educators, our neighbors and our loved ones are Dreamers, and their contributions in Salem-Keizer cannot be understated," said district spokeswoman Lillian Govou.

In a press conference with Causa Oregon, an immigrant rights organization, Juan Navarro said he and other DACA recipients have been anxiously awaiting the Supreme Court decision.

Navarro was born in Guadalajara, Mexico, and moved to Oregon when he was 3. He grew up in the Salem area. Now 27, he attended Chemeketa Community College, received his bachelor's degree from Western Oregon University and his master's degree from Oregon State University.

"I am blessed that I have DACA," Navarro said. "I would not be here without DACA."

He said they needed to continue to fight for DACA and for the 11 million undocumented immigrants who don't qualify the program -- like the parents and families of hundreds of thousands DACA recipients.

Navarro also said those fighting for immigrant rights need to stand with Black Lives Matter and the LGBTQ community.

"We cannot be liberated until we all are free," he said.

Governor calls for action to end bigotry

In a statement issued after the ruling, Gov. Kate Brown lauded the action by the court of protecting DACA recipients, saying they embodied the American dream.

"Oregon's 12,000 valued Dreamers serve in our military, work in our hospitals, pay taxes and make our communi-



Local residents gather during a rally to support immigration issues like DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) and TSP (Temporary Protected Status) at the Oregon State Capitol in Salem, on Nov. 12. MADELINE COOK / STATESMAN JOURNAL

ties stronger," she said.

Brown said the SCOTUS decision was a victory but warned that more work was needed to protect DACA recipients and end bigotry.

"Oregon will always be a welcoming, safe place for all," she said. "Our 33-year-old Sanctuary Law prevents Oregon from enforcing federal immigration law, and I will uphold this law and stand with Oregonian Dreamers. We are at our best when we focus on what we share in common, not what divides us."

She promised to stand with the undocumented community and fight against hate and bigoted attacks.

U.S. Senator Ron Wyden said DACA recipients deserve the protections promised to them by the federal government. He called for the Senate to take immediate action.

"Today's victory is even more reason for Congress to permanently protect Dreamers from the threat of deportation," Wyden said. "The House has voted. Now the Senate must too."

Carmen Rubio, executive director of the Latino Network, said she hopes the decision brings "some stability" to DACA recipients and their families.

She said the 29,000 DACA healthcare workers in the United States have been instrumental during the pandemic.

Causa Oregon Executive Director Adriana Miranda said those fighting for DACA celebrated the victory Thursday with the millions of parents who came to America with a dream and the promise of a better life for their children.

"This victory is theirs," she tearfully said.

This is not the end, Miranda added. "We have a lot more to achieve," she said, but, she and Lopez both echoed the common rallying cry: Sí se puede -- Yes, we can.

Justices split 5-4 on DACA vote

The U.S. Supreme Court case at hand is actually three cases from California, the District of Columbia and New York that were argued together back in November.

The arguments dealt not with whether Trump can end DACA -- most agree

he can -- but whether the way his administration went about terminating the program was lawful.

In a 5-4 vote, the majority U.S. Supreme Court justices determined that answer to be "no" and found the decision to terminate DACA was arbitrary and capricious.

"For the reasons that follow, we conclude that the Acting Secretary did violate the (Administrative Procedure Act)," Chief Justice John Roberts said in the majority opinion.

He added that the decision to rescind DACA "must be vacated."

Justice Clarence Thomas concurred in part of the judgment and dissented in



Gov. Kate Brown speaks during the AP Legislative Preview Day at the Oregon State Capitol in Salem on Jan. 17, 2020. FILE / STATESMAN JOURNAL

part.

He wrote that DACA was illegal from the moment it was created under the Obama administration in 2012.

Trump didn't hold back in his assessment of the court's work, hitting hard at a political angle.

"These horrible & politically charged decisions coming out of the Supreme Court are shotgun blasts into the face of people that are proud to call themselves Republicans or Conservatives. We need more Justices or we will lose our 2nd Amendment & everything else. Vote Trump 2020!" he wrote on Twitter, apparently including the LGBT ruling as well.

In a second tweet, Trump wrote, "Do you get the impression that the Supreme Court doesn't like me?"

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

For questions, comments and news tips, email reporter Whitney Woodworth at wmwoodworth@statesmanjournal.com, call 503-910-6616 or follow on Twitter @wmwoodworth.



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