

How to stop summer learning loss before it starts

By JENNIFER COSTLEY

Did you know that reading is responsible for approximately a third of a child's annual vocabulary growth?

How about the fact that two-thirds of kids who cannot read proficiently by the end of the fourth grade will end up in jail or on welfare, and that 85 percent of juveniles in the court system are functionally illiterate?

Libraries have long understood the value of literacy and likewise the cost of illiteracy. We work hard to provide open access to books and educational technology but access alone isn't going to combat illiteracy, nor will it prevent children from falling behind during the summer months.

Research has shown time and

again that math and reading skills deteriorate over the summer when children are not involved in active, educational opportunities. For middle class families, the summer slide is detrimental but for low-income families the slide can be devastating, especially during that crucial time period between the third and fourth grade known as "the fourth grade slump."

The fourth grade slump occurs when students reach a critical transition in their education. Throughout the early elementary years students are learning to read. By fourth grade, students are expected to read to learn. For those who are striving, the transition is smooth. However, for those who were behind in kindergarten to third grade, the transition can create a domino

effect. These students are no longer just struggling with reading, they are struggling in all subjects because a great deal of the fourth grade curriculum is incomprehensible to students who are not reading at a fourth grade level.

So what can you do to help minimize summer learning loss? Get your kids out into the community! Hit up your city's parks and rec department, grab a schedule from the Children's Museum of Eastern Oregon, contact the Arts Center and, of course, visit your library!

Thanks to a generous grant by the Oregon State Library, Oregon libraries receive summer funding to offer the Summer Reading Program, a program that rewards reading over the summer by encourag-



Education

ing children to track their reading, and then turn in a reading log for a prize of their choice. In addition to offering reading incentives, the Ready to Read summer reading grant also makes it possible for libraries to bring in exciting performers. Contact your library today for a list of summer reading events.

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