

CONCORD MONITOR

My Turn: Parents can help stop the summer slide May 20, 2019

By CHRISTINE BRENNAN

Summer is coming. As the school year comes to a weary end, students across New Hampshire are looking forward to the rejuvenating promise of summer vacation and days spent at parks, camps and beaches.

But students should not stop learning just because school is out of session. In fact, keeping kids engaged and learning through the “classroom” of the summer season is one of the most important keys to academic success. Research reliably demonstrates that a significant part of the gap between high-achieving and low-achieving students comes from how well students have retained learned material when they return to school.

Stopping this “summer slide” falls mainly on parents. But creating a learning environment with child-directed activities can be easy and fun. And the New Hampshire Department of Education wants to help. Building on a popular program begun last year, the NHDOE is kicking off the 2019 Summer Learning Challenge. Visitors to education.nh.gov/learning-challenge will find several helpful resources to help stop the summer slide.

NHDOE is pleased to partner with Scholastic’s Summer Reading Challenge in inviting kids to log the number of minutes they spend reading throughout the summer. Scholastic’s Read-A-Palooza is also partnering with bookstores and libraries nationwide to encourage summer reading and will be giving away more than 200,000 books.

Finding the perfect paging-turning summer read can be challenging. So NHDOE is again joining with Lexile for Find A Book N.H. This free, online resource allows students and parents to search by grade, difficulty level and subject matter to find the best-matched books for kids’ preferences. Whether you have a third-grader who loves Pokémon, or a seventh-grader who’s into Minecraft, Lexile’s search engine will suggest appropriate titles. You can build an entire summer reading list around your child’s demonstrated interests.

New Hampshire’s wonderful libraries are teaming up for the N.H. Summer Reading Program, sponsored by the Children’s Librarians of New Hampshire. You can find an amazing array of resources available for the whole family at your local library, or at the New Hampshire State Library. Make a weekly trip to the library part of your summer routine.



Some studies have shown that math skills are the most susceptible to the summer slide. It is around this shortcoming that Quantile designed the Summer Math Challenge. This free, six-week math skills program is designed for students who have just completed first through eighth grade math curriculum. Parents who enroll their children online will receive a daily email, beginning Monday, June 17, with grade-appropriate math puzzles, activities and resources.

New Hampshire families participating in school nutrition programs can check out the Summer Nutrition section of the Summer Learning Challenge site. You’ll find a list of New Hampshire schools and community organizations providing meals to students throughout the summer, as well as a link to a terrific new smartphone app called Range. The nonprofit group TechSoup has compiled data from the USDA’s Summer Food Service Program to display where free meals for kids will be available throughout the summer.

While most programs don’t post until school is out, by downloading the app now, you can get an updated list of meals and nearby locations as they become available.

Summer in New Hampshire affords families lots of opportunities to explore, discover and play. Providing your children the opportunity to engage in the structured play of sports teams or the unstructured free play of a trip to the beach or park is vital to supporting their social skills, planning and problem-solving abilities, as well as perseverance and self-regulation, all skills needed to achieve in school and in life.

The summer does not need to be a time when students slide behind. The Summer Learning Challenge can turn summer into a chance to bound ahead. But it is up to you, moms and dads and grandparents.

Actively-involved parents remain the single best educational tool any student can have. Speak with your child’s teachers about areas where your child could use a little extra attention this summer, and ask about recommended summer reading to prepare for class this coming fall.

Just two to three hours per week can make the difference between a student being ready to go in September and having to spend the start of the school year relearning last year’s lessons. Summer is definitely coming, but the summer slide does not have to be inevitable.

Visit education.nh.gov/learning-challenge to learn more.

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