

June 2014



Dear Parents,

Another school year is ending and the long days of summer lie ahead. Even though leisure time activities start to take precedence over academic endeavors, I would like to encourage you to keep reading high on your child's list of summer activities. It really is true that readers are leaders. Just like other skills your children are learning, such as how to hit a baseball or play the piano, reading needs to be practiced every day to maintain and strengthen skills.

There is an extensive body of research that tells us that academic achievement is directly related to how much time children spend reading *outside* of school. This is in large part due to the fact that reading builds vocabulary and background knowledge.

Educators are concerned about summer reading loss or “summer slide” that takes place when children don't read over the summer. It may take a month or two for students who did not read over the summer months to get back to the level at which they were reading at the end of the previous year. While missing out on reading for one or two months may not seem like much, when it happens year after year, the effect can be very detrimental.

**Please make sure your children keep up their reading!**

So how can you make reading a natural fit for your summer? Here are some pointers:

- Make sure your children read every day! Make reading a part of your daily routine.
- Make sure they are reading books that are on their level—not too easy and not too hard.
- Help your children find books about things they are interested in—sometimes the key to getting a child to love reading is simply to find the right genre or author.
- Read to your children—they aren't too old for this! Snuggle up and read them a book that is *above* their own reading level, but which you can read and discuss together. How about some of those classics?
- Bring your children to the library. The Hillsborough Library has a free summer program to encourage reading.
- Make a trip to the bookstore an occasion for fun.
- Find a series your children enjoy; they'll want to keep reading the next book in the series.
- Encourage them to try new genres—magazines, graphic novels or nonfiction books about a topic they are interested in.
- Talk to your children about what they are reading. Open-ended questions (What would you have done if you were that character? What do you like about this book?) can start a meaningful discussion and show your children that you value what they are reading.
- Start a neighborhood book club—invite your child's friends to read the same book. They can exchange their ideas about the book on a shared Google doc and/or have book club meetings to discuss the books.
- Turn on the closed captioning on your TV! This is especially good for children whose second language is English.
- Play word games with your children (rhyming, synonyms, opposites, etc.). Google “word games for children” and you'll find many free websites with fun word games.
- Look for websites and apps that reinforce skills. Scholastic.com is a good place to start.
- I can't overstate the importance of being a reader yourself and letting your children see you reading every day.

Remember, the goal is to make reading such a natural part of your child's life that you won't need to remind them to read. Being an avid reader is the surest path to academic success!

This letter is also posted on the Amsterdam website along with *suggested* (not required) reading lists for each grade level provided by several websites. Have an enjoyable summer!

Sincerely,  
*Mrs. Julie Staats*  
Reading Specialist  
Amsterdam School

Here are some websites with recommended reading lists:

<http://www.readkiddoread.com/>  
<http://www.ala.org/alsc/2014-summer-reading-list>  
<http://www.scholastic.com/bookwizard/>

This website has ideas for summer literacy activities for different grade levels:

<http://www.readwritethink.org>

