



## Avoiding the Summer Slide during a Pandemic

By Educator Barnes – May 20, 2020

My sons, who attend school in Washington Township, and my nieces, who attend school in Hamilton Southeastern, are wrapping up the 2019-2020 school year tomorrow. Over the next few weeks, other students will do the same. When summer arrives, there is always conversation about avoiding the summer slide which refers to students losing some of the

knowledge they learned at school during the summer. For some students, the slide has already begun.

The reality is some students stopped learning once school buildings closed. Some students did not have an opportunity to learn the standards that would have been covered during the fourth quarter because teachers were given the directive to only review what they had already taught. My sons' school took that approach before spring break, but after spring break, there was new content. Our sons only had a good grasp of new content because we had to teach it to them. That makes me think about the students who had parents who could not do this because of skill or time. My sons would not have understood equivalent fractions, idioms, similes, and metaphors without our assistance.

Knowing children have already fallen behind, of course, parents are worried. Here are some tips to avoid or at least decrease the summer slide.

### 1. **Talk to the teacher.**

The person who is supposed to know a child's academic ability best is his or her teacher. The teacher can give parents specific feedback on what they can do to help their child stay academically active during the summer.

### 2. **Read and respond**

Of course, this former English teacher and literacy coach is going to suggest reading. I can see my former students rolling their eyes now, but I always told them they would only get better at reading if they actually read. I want to push it a step further. There should also be a response aspect. Reading should be an active experience. Parents should discuss the book with their child or have the child write a written response. Children can question the text by writing down questions they have or would like to ask the author. Summarizing the text, whether that is verbal or written, is also a good skill to practice.

### 3. **Practice math fact fluency**

Children will struggle in math if they cannot easily add, subtract, multiply and divide. There is nothing worse than seeing a 6th grader counting on his or her fingers because the student lacks math fact fluency. Before purchasing an app or buying flashcards, parents should check with their children's teachers to see what tool they recommend. Many schools already pay a subscription for resources that might still be available to students during the summer.

#### 4. **Explore the world**

Exploration can cover science and social studies. Science and social studies, many times, are on the back burner in schools. This is an opportunity for parents to learn what their children want to learn. It is summer, so students should have some fun. My sons love science. We are going to get out into nature and talk about what we see. During this quarantine, they grew crystals and cracked open some geodes. I plan to find what I can to help them learn what they want. Children are more likely to retain what they enjoy.

Overall, parents should find a few activities to keep their children academically active. Don't try to replicate school at home, but also, don't completely forget about school either.