

Summer literacy campaign aims to prevent 'summer slide'

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The school year is coming to a close, which means for many students learning will be taking a back seat as they embrace the summer break.

Suzette Daley, an education assistant and local literacy advocate, has launched a summer literacy campaign through her company Mini-Intel with the goal of helping young students avoid the 'summer slide'.

'The summer slide is the loss of academic skills over the summer months due to lack of practice,' explained Daley. 'Once they return to school in September, a lot of students will have to relearn skills so if we can avoid that loss and remain consistent the student can return with a lack of pressure or stress.'

Daley's campaign focuses on encouraging parents to read with their children and also provides tips on supporting summer literacy.

Here are some tips Daley is sharing to support summer literacy:

1. Utilize students report card

Daley suggests reading over the child's report card and referring to it to help as a guide.

'A lot of time the report card is tucked away for the summer, but everything you need to know about your child is written in the report card based on how they operated throughout the year, areas of development and what will need to be practiced throughout the summer,' said Daley.

2. Read or tell stories to your child every day

Daley says a good way to continue summer literacy is to talk with or take part in the learning process with your child.

'Children love stories and there's different ways that parents can be creative - it's not just about books. Encourage your child to read newspapers, articles, picture books, comic books or even tell a story through drawings. If you read or tell stories to your child every day they will eventually read or tell stories to you.'

3. Schedule learning time

'We don't want to create a summer learning burden. What I'm promoting is out of 24 hours, dedicated approximately 30 minutes to structured learning such as reading or workbooks where your child can have daily practice of numeracy or literacy skills,' said Daley.

4. Use the local library

Daley says utilizing the local library is her most basic tip for families as an essential tool to help encourage summer literacy.

'The library has all the essentials that are necessary to get you through the summer in terms of literacy. There are ample books and programs readily available and if parents can't make it to the library, they can access it digitally,' she said.

Rose Dotten, CEO and Head Librarian at Shelburne Public Library, said the local library puts a focus on literacy for all ages in everything they do.

One way the local library is helping children with their summer literacy is through the annual TD Summer Reading Club.

"Children who read during the summer are so much further ahead when they go back to school, and those who don't do literacy activities are actually behind when they go to the next grade," said Dotten, who has a background in education and literacy.

Starting on Canada Day and running until August 19, the TD Summer Reading Club, through the Beanstalk app, awards participants with badges for reading books as well as taking part in programs at the library.

"Everything we do is literacy based and the only way we can give children this literacy gift is by getting them here," said Brittany Hooker, Shelburne Library children's programming.

Hooker said the programming aspect in the reading challenges hosted by the library is a significant part in supporting literacy.

"Something we found in the past is when you have a literacy challenge where the focus is to read then those maybe more reluctant readers get discouraged right away. Giving them another opportunity to come to these programs such as the science club, they might not think their doing literacy activities, but they're having to read and follow steps."

At the end of the TD Summer Reading Club the Shelburne Library gives out three prizes ? most books read, most programs attended, and most book and programs attended.

As part of her summer literacy campaign, Daley will be hosting a Summer Literacy Day event on August 12 from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.