

Summer Slide and the Importance of Reading over the Summer

“Summer slide” is the tendency for students, especially those from low-income families, to lose some of the achievement gains they made during the previous school year. The following information is provided to help school administrators and educators with key talking points, along with resources and research for developing school- or community-based programs to help stem summer slide.

Your local public library offers a well-established summer reading program that encourages kids, teens, and often adults to read over the summer. Educational, fun enrichment activities throughout the summer are an important feature of the programs—and they’re free. Contact your nearest public library to find out more about its summer program and explore how your school might promote it to your students, and how you might collaborate; visit the [directory of Colorado libraries](#) to find the phone number and location of libraries near you.

A [white paper](#), commissioned by the Collaborative Summer Library Program, thoroughly reviews the existing literature on summer reading to critically examine the evidence base related to the need for, and the effectiveness of, summer reading programs. The literature reviewed demonstrates that reading over the summer does stem summer slide, with children in low socioeconomic families in most need of and benefiting most from summer reading programs.

In summer 2014, the Colorado State Library invited Colorado public libraries to ask parents in their communities to help evaluate the effectiveness of their local library’s summer reading program for their children by completing a survey. The [survey results](#) are compelling, demonstrating that children’s enjoyment of reading, reading skills, and reading by choice often increased after participating in summer reading, especially among families participating in summer reading for the first time and parents of children ages 4-6.

Additional Resources

These links offer graphic-based views of summer slide and achievement gap impacts. These are offered for informational purposes only and are not endorsed by CDE/State Library.

- [Summer Reading Makes a Difference for Colorado Families](#), Colorado State Library
- [Summer by the Numbers](#), National Summer Learning Association
- [The Achievement Gap](#), National Summer Learning Association
- [How to Help Your Kids Skip the Summer Slide](#), Target
- [Kids Who Read Beat Summer Slide](#), First Book
- [Summer Learning Loss Increases the Achievement Gap](#), Partner for Children

Organizations

- The [National Summer Learning Association](#) offers a wealth of online resources, high-quality research, and an excellent annual conference related to summer learning and preventing summer slide. The Publications & Resources tab of the website particularly leads to excellent research and practical tips for summer program providers.

- [Summer Matters](#) is a California organization that provides research and tools on preventing slide that are relevant nationwide.

Research Findings on Summer Slide:

- Children in low-income households fall behind an average of 2 months in reading during the summer. And, summer slide is cumulative, with these learning losses building up each summer.
- Summer learning loss accounts for two-thirds of the 9th grade achievement gap in reading between students from low-income households and their higher-income peers.
- Students from low-income households with access to books over the summer see significantly more gains in reading scores from spring to fall than students from high-income households with access to books and those from low-income households without access to books.
- Differences in children’s summer learning experiences during their elementary school years can ultimately impact whether they earn a high school diploma and continue to college.

Addressing Summer Slide:

- Access to books is critical. The public library is an excellent free resource for families to have access to books of a wide range of interests and reading levels, as well as librarians to guide children and families in selecting great books.
- When children select reading materials themselves and read for enjoyment, they receive the most gains in reading achievement, including better reading comprehension, writing style, vocabulary, spelling, and grammatical development. Also, the longer that this free voluntary reading is practiced, the more consistent and positive the results. Thus summer programs, such as those offered in public libraries, that allow and encourage children to choose what they read are likely to be most successful.
- Children and teens tend to read more when adults in their lives encourage them to read, and also when they see those adults reading often themselves.
- Children that feel that reading is fun tend to read more often, so summer programs that help make reading enjoyable and social are most successful.
- Reading just 4 to 6 books over the summer has the potential to prevent a decline in reading achievement scores from the spring to the fall, so even small steps are very beneficial.
- Preventing summer slide is most effective when community organizations—including schools, public libraries, community centers, parent groups, social service agencies, and others—work together to encourage kids to read, make reading fun, and to reach families about the importance of reading over the summer.
- Parents, caregivers, and other adults can help stem summer slide by reading themselves, as children that see adults in their lives reading often tend to read more themselves.