

June/July 2019

# ONcall

ready-to-use NEWS

- **Don't forget to share your facilities updates**

When school is out, the real work on district facilities gets done. Often, this work is funded through voter-approved bonds or levies. Make sure you are sharing updates about this work with your public. Keep voters, parents and staff informed about what is happening and why it is important.

- **Graduation welcome speeches: Alternative schools**

High school graduation is an important rite of passage for seniors. Your district has very likely planned the ceremony down to the smallest details. But what about graduates at alternative schools? Graduation is as important — maybe even more so — for students at these schools. Read tips for planning a memorable recognition event for alternative school students.

- **SEO in 2019: Basics and beyond**

Every district has a website. Planning your web presence is a collaborative, lengthy process. After you launch your site, you need a plan to keep it visible and easily found through search engines. Read about the latest search engine optimization, or SEO, tips.

- **Summer PR planning for the new school year**

When the school year ends, put your feet up and catch your breath. And then get to work. Summer is the best time to set up or review systems that will make your communications work smoother and less stressful during the busy school year. Review this checklist to cover all of your planning bases during summer break.

- **Here's to You!**

This issue has information about exercise guidelines, sleep hygiene and the adverse health effects of sitting too much.

- **Insights for Parents: Summer learning**

The summer learning slide is not new, but it continues catch the attention of researchers and educators. Students lose academic progress over the summer that they don't regain for a month or more into the new school year. Parents can slow the summer slide with learning activities, including reading, technology tools and mobile learning apps.

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## Don't forget to share your facilities updates

The students and teachers have gone away for the summer, but the schools are not quiet. The sounds of summer work fill the buildings and the grounds. Summer facilities work is the reason our school buildings last for decades and change to meet the new demands of modern education. Some of the work is routine maintenance and some is exciting new construction, but all of it is important to tell your community about.

### Bond construction

When you pass a bond measure, you don't start building right away. It takes time to plan the work and make the site ready. In the case of new construction, the weather and the plans often converge to make summer the time to cut ribbons and turn dirt. And in the case of renovations, the absence of kids is an opportunity to dig in and get the work done.

The voters need to know right away when work has begun. And they need to know the major milestones as construction progresses. Some people are tuned in during the summer, so immediate updates are necessary. But other people will be in a better frame of mind in the fall to learn about all the summer building activity.

Perhaps the best thing about new construction is that there is always something to show, not just tell. Photo and video opportunities abound every day on a construction site — it is always visually interesting when you build something. Movement makes for good video. Colors, shapes and faces make great photos. And it is not always major milestones that make the most interesting posts and updates. Showing video of the trucks of drywall arriving, with a narration, can be just as exciting as showing the finished product.

Each new job site should have its own presence on the web, where photos and text are consistently and regularly updated throughout the summer. Consider using social media and the web to get the word out. Twitter is great for showing a few photos or a short video with a link to more information on the website.

Web cams are low-cost and can provide interesting footage. Time lapse photography and drones can make for very interesting video of work in progress. Check with your contractor before recording any video or setting up any web cams. Everyone on the site needs to be in the loop if you are taping. Nobody wants to be surprised that cameras were rolling if an accident or safety violation is caught on tape.

Not everyone wants their information digitally. Consider an end-of-summer newsletter or report to go out in the mail to district patrons.

In the case of renovation, it is always helpful to let the public know how the people in that school are adapting to the work that needs to be done. Did the school office move to an

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Washington State  
School Directors' Association

## **Facilities matter to your community**

Summer Facilities  
Work  
June/July 2019  
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Whether you recently passed a bond measure or not, there is bound to be an abundance of facilities work going on in your district this summer. Your community needs to know what is happening and why it is important. By sharing updates about work and the benefits to students, you will help your community feel more connected and more supportive of your stewardship of the investment they have in your buildings and grounds.

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*Contributed by Marcia Latta, communications consultant*

alternate location for the summer? Is the schedule affected in the fall? Will the entire project be finished by the first day of school or will the school need to live with some construction activity still taking place? All of these considerations put a human face on the bond work and help remind voters why they supported the measure in the first place.

### **Routine and deferred maintenance**

While perhaps not as exciting as new construction or renovation, routine or deferred maintenance jobs can be just as important for schools. Landscaping, roof and parking lot replacements, gym floors and plumbing upgrades are the reason school buildings last through the ages, protecting the investment your community has made over generations. These projects do not need to be part of a bond measure to be important. Regular spending on maintenance is often reduced in tough times and the public needs to know why it matters.

The problem with maintenance is that it is not generally as photogenic as new construction. This is where the communications team has to be a little creative in developing the visual potential of what might normally be considered rather mundane operations. Photos of a new roof will not be appealing, unless they are shown right next to close-ups of the old roofing coming apart. New pavement is just new pavement, unless it is shown next to photos of the old crumbling parking lot and hazardous sidewalks. The old pipes may have looked fine, so show the brown water coming out of the drinking fountain next to the shiny new ones.

In many cases, the best photos and video of routine maintenance are those that show people working. The taxpayers enjoy seeing that not only are the buildings being taken care of, people are being put to work doing jobs that will benefit generations of students to come.

### **Timing is everything**

The time to take photos and interview project managers is when the work is going on. And many updates should be in real time as well. There are plenty of people tuning in during those sweltering summer days.

Summer is not the best time to reach everyone with updates. Many people take summer vacations or otherwise break up their normal routines in the summer. And some community groups skip a few meetings in the summer due to spotty attendance.

So use the summer months to get ready for fall, when people are back into their normal routine and the community groups are back on their normal meeting schedule. When those things happen in the fall, you should have a summer's worth of photo, video and project reports to share.

### **Take the updates on the road**

A highly effective communications technique is to go where people are already meeting to share your summer work updates. Service clubs and business leaders are usually eager to have someone from the district come to their meetings to provide brief presentations. Check with each group to get on their calendar and find out how much time you will have to present. If they leave it to you, generally 10 minutes of slides or speaking with five minutes for questions is a good starting point.

Since you are already going to gather all of your visuals and updates for various groups, don't forget your own school board. Give a presentation to your board in August or September. This presentation can be rather extensive for the board, but tell them that you would like to be invited to give a shorter presentation to any community groups they have connections with.

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## Graduation welcome speeches: Alternative schools

It's that time of year — graduation speech writing for your school community — the excited family members and friends who want to celebrate and see their student walk across the stage without sitting for over an hour.

As an administrator at an alternative school, I often get questions from the public such as: “Does a graduation ceremony really matter for these students? Do the kids really care about that kind of stuff? Isn't it too much of a hassle if there are not that many students walking?”

My quick answer, after working for more than 20 years in education and for more than three years with incarcerated youth is: It absolutely matters because we give meaning and value to honoring and recognizing accomplishments of our youth. It matters because some of our students have never even been on a stage and the sense of pride and satisfaction you can see in their faces is lovely.

It matters because it's creating a culture where education is respected and is worth celebrating. Having a graduation celebration at an alternative school creates a ripple effect of joy that far exceeds the cost of printed programs and a sheet cake from Costco.

Every year, we hold graduation events at our school sites to recognize the achievements of our students. The events are smaller than at comprehensive schools, but they include all of the bells and whistles and are sources of motivation for students throughout the school year.

We aim for three to five student speakers who have gone through a process of auditioning and practicing. We also have an honored guest speaker. As the principal, I make it a point to not be the main speaker. We share the graduation theme and a few facts about our graduates two to four weeks in advance in case they want to integrate those elements into their speech. They have 10-13 minutes for their address.

We keep our language appropriate for our audience. This is not an opportunity to use the latest “educationese” — it is a chance to connect with the community and celebrate collaborative success.

### Principal speech tips: keep it quick, memorable and succinct.

The outline for a basic welcome speech introduction is:

- Welcome
- State who we are
- Recognize families, dignitaries and graduates
- Share the theme
- Thank people for being here
- Perhaps a short “ism” or two, and
- Introduce the next person

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## **Sample welcome speech**

Graduation  
in Alternative  
Schools

June/July 2019  
Page 2

Welcome to Three Lakes High School Graduation. We are a school that honors all, meets students where they are and takes them from good to great. We are not perfect, but every day we try to make a difference.

My name is Joy Koenig, and I am the principal. I am proud to serve in this capacity.

As the theme for this year's graduation is, "the movie of my life," I feel a bit inspired to talk about this ceremony as if it were a movie. Indeed, if this were a movie, I would probably want to run the credits first. I would thank the students, graduates, parents, families, and dignitaries. I would give each one of you time and space on the movie trailer, with your name in bold, honoring the fact that you are here.

And in this manner, I want to thank the students, graduates, families and friends for attending. Graduates, you look lovely and this day is all about you!

Our site superintendent, will be recognizing our state dignitaries and representatives from the governor's office, yet I would like to honor and welcome my district cabinet and superintendents. (Insert names) If you could please stand so we may acknowledge you, I would appreciate it. I would also like to the Oregon Department of Education folks who are here (names) who help support our school.

I would also like to thank Three Lakes staff for the fine education you provide for our students all year — and today, in particular, I would like to thank (name) for taking charge of the decorations as the graduation coordinator.

Typically, after the opening credits, the movie begins. And we have a fine film for you today — four stars, some might say (in spite of the fact that it is raining!)

Please sit back, enjoy, and prepare yourselves for a treat — listening to our students share a part of themselves, celebrate in their success, and continue their quest for the acquisition of knowledge.

So on with the show. Dim the lights — get the proverbial popcorn and together let's enjoy a great movie.

At this point, I would like to introduce (name), the OYA site superintendent. Thank you.

### **In conclusion**

Concluding with the notion of honoring our students, we offer up a declaration of the graduates at the end. This is where we have the audience turn and face their graduate and repeat a choral response of positivity. It really is a great chance to share the energy together, and this has been a new part of our graduation ceremony that has been received with enthusiasm. Here is an example of one:

### **Declaration of Graduates**

When I told my daughter I got to "declare the graduates," she said, "Well, make sure you tell them congratulations, but don't take too long doing it because I am sure there will be cake or something they will want to move on to. And don't start singing or rapping or doing anything crazy like that."

*(Over)*

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## Summer PR planning for the new school year

By the time school ends in June, most school PR folks are ready to let out a huge sigh and kick back for the summer. While it's good — actually critical — to take a breather to rest and regroup, don't lose the opportunity to plan for next year.

Summer is prime time for looking ahead and developing strategies and timelines to accomplish important goals. The pace is slower, and you are more likely to have uninterrupted time to really think through your communication objectives.

Summer provides an opportunity to connect with communicators in neighboring districts about their communication plans and the strategies that worked well for them. Spend a few hours online researching districts nearby to see how they approach communications with their staff, parents and community. Meet with your superintendent and other district leaders to better understand your district's communications challenges and the best way to address them.

Most of all, savor the luxury of a more relaxed pace and, hopefully, a plate that isn't as full as it is during the hectic school months.

The more planning and housekeeping you are able to do during the summer, the less harried you will be when the school starts. It will be a pleasure to start the new year organized and ready to go.

### Here is a checklist of things to address during the summer:

**Review and update your website.** Is it ADA-compliant? If not, this should be a priority. Update your staff lists, school board members and other contacts. Add information about any new programs or district initiatives. Refresh photos. Add calendar dates, including parent conferences, concerts and plays and non-school days. Check links and make sure they are operational. Make it as easy as possible for parents to access information and navigate the various web pages.

**Update publications.** Summer is the perfect time to review and update your district publications (volunteer handbook, student-parent handbook, etc.). Post the updated documents to your website by early August, so they are ready when parents and students start accessing the website for back-to-school information. If there are any critical changes, post a notice on the school website outlining the changes and encouraging patrons to review the updated publications.

**Analyze your communications tools.** Review the analytics from your various communication tools and assess their effectiveness. Determine whether you are reaching the right audiences. Are parents and others engaging with your posts on Facebook? Are your voice

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and text notifications being heard or read? Who is visiting your website and what kinds of devices are they using to do that?

**Plan your social media strategy.** Social media is a wonderful tool for telling your school stories in your own words and photos. But schools often leave it up to parent groups to develop Facebook pages. Sometimes they even follow the lead of supportive students or parents who establish “unofficial” school accounts. Treat Facebook as a legitimate communications tool that receives the same branding and review that your other tools do. Facebook is especially effective at reaching parents and is a great way to share positive stories and photos about what students are doing and accomplishing in school. Map out an ‘editorial calendar’ listing dates for different events and topics that you want to include in your postings during the upcoming year.

**Develop a communications plan.** A communications plan is a road map to reaching your communication goals for the year. A thorough plan will outline various strategies for communicating effectively with different stakeholders, including parents, students, staff, community and media because each group of stakeholders has unique characteristics. An effective plan will also help you identify the purpose of your communications Are you trying to educate the public about a bond measure? Increase parent engagement? More actively engage families of color? Defining the purpose will help you choose the best tools.

**Plan your welcome back messaging.** The content and tone of your welcome back messaging to staff, students and parents shapes attitudes for the coming year. If the messaging is upbeat, inclusive and optimistic, those receiving it tend to feel good about the year ahead. If it’s dull and gloomy, don’t be surprised if there’s a lack of enthusiasm for getting back to work and learning.

Be inclusive as you communicate with staff. Welcome back all staff — including secretaries, food service, maintenance and transportation — and remind them all of the important role they play in their daily contact with students and parents. If you have a theme for the school year, roll it out for staff on their first day back and continue in your welcome back letter to staff, students and parents. Take a moment to celebrate the successes of the past year, so you can build on that success in the new one. Introduce and offer a warm welcome to new staff members. Review any new programs or initiatives and any big events coming up, like dedication of a new building. Make the new year feel exciting and fresh.

**Post list of volunteer opportunities.** Back to school is an ideal time to recruit volunteers. Post a list of school volunteer opportunities on your school and district web pages, along with short descriptions of the task and the time commitment. Plan a short volunteer orientation at your school to welcome and train new volunteers.

In that light, I want to share a few short words, and attendees, I would like to ask you to enthusiastically repeat after me in chorus as we honor the graduates. It is eight short lines and we will end with a round of applause for our graduates. I am going to ask that you turn to face the graduates for this part:

Congratulations!

We are so proud of you!

We think you are amazing!

We think you are worthy!

We know you have worked so hard!

You absolutely deserve this!

Way to go!

Thank you for being who you are!

Applause!!!

To summarize — I leave you with three general thoughts around graduation events:

1. The best part of graduation is the students. So you can't go wrong if you keep the focus squarely on them.
2. Humor helps. Humor heals. Humor humbles us all — so whenever you can make light of any error or mistake that goes on (if it's not egregious and especially if it's yours), then go for it!
3. People bring so many different contexts to a graduation — some have never graduated, some folks struggled in school, and this can be a triggering event for them. I like to have greeters, positive people of power, who can welcome everyone to the event (not just site security). This helps to set the tone, along with some upbeat music as folks enter.

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*Contributed by Joy Koenig, Principal, Three Lakes and Riverside High Schools, located in Oak Creek Correctional Facility in Albany, Ore.*

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## SEO in 2019: Basics and beyond

Since the beginning of the internet, there have been tricks and tips to get your website highest on organic search pages. Much like the old-school phonebooks, where businesses learned that just by adding a few extra “A’s” to the front of their name, they could boost their visibility without shelling out the extra bucks for advertising, there are also ways to leapfrog your website’s accessibility today by using “search engine optimization,” or “SEO.”

Without SEO, you can have the best website in the world, but no matter how long someone searches for it, with however many combinations of keywords, they may never find it.

Fortunately, most web design packages now make the SEO part of your website readily accessible, so you no longer need a degree in computer science for your site to compete. But this means you also don’t have the excuse to outsource it, either. Time to clean up those skills.

### The basics

Since Google is responsible for more than 65 percent of search engine market share in the U.S. and over 92 percent worldwide, we are mostly going to be talking about SEO for Google. <http://gs.statcounter.com/search-engine-market-share>

Google is always tweaking how it ranks pages, but its main goals are to highly rank pages that:

- Contain high-quality, relevant information
- Have relevance to the search topic
- Are of “High Quality,” determined by the number and pedigree of the sites that link to your page and your site

Google is also looking to see:

- How long people stay on your site after they click
- How much unique content you have

### Keywords, keywords, keywords

Keywords are the core of SEO. Keywords are the terms that people are searching for when they go to a search engine. “Punxsutawney School District” is an example of a keyword. “Punxsutawney” is also a keyword.

But what you really want to know is, will your school district show up for the keywords “best school district in western PA”? And that is where SEO comes in. It’s also where LSI keywords come in. Latent Semantic Indexing (LSI) keywords are “conceptually related terms” that search engines use to understand content on a page. It means that whereas once upon

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(Over)

a time you could write “best school district in Western PA” on every page of your website, easily ensuring that Google would rank you highly for those keywords, now Google expects to see additional LSI keywords appearing on your page that relate to being the best school district, keywords like “top-ranked colleges,” “test scores,” “small class size,” and “parent involvement.” In other words, the old adage about content is true.

### **“Content is king”**

This is a phrase that has tumbled around social media for years, but now it’s more relevant than ever. While Google used to crawl websites for keywords and rank your site highly if the key-word in your headline showed up in your article and in your HTML link, Google is a lot smarter now. Today, in-depth content is what ranks best. That ideally means content that is at least 2,000 words and is informational and authoritative, and contains those LSI keywords we talked about.

### **The dirt on backlinks**

“Backlinks take place across the internet when one website mentions another website and links to it. Also referred to as “incoming links,” backlinks make their connection through external web-sites. These links from outside domains point to pages on your own domain. Whenever backlinks occur, it is like receiving a vote for a webpage. The more votes you get from the authoritative sites creates a positive effect on a site’s ranking and search visibility.” Learn more: [www.seoclarity.net/resources/knowledgebase/what-are-backlinks-and-how-do-they-work](http://www.seoclarity.net/resources/knowledgebase/what-are-backlinks-and-how-do-they-work)

Backlinks are a strong signal to search engines that your site is an authority and should be ranked highly. But they’re also fading in usage, especially in comparison with the links and brand recognition created via social media hashtags and mentions.

### **Social media!**

That’s right — search engines are using social media to judge the quality of your site, but maybe not how you think. It isn’t how many times you share something from your website onto Facebook or Twitter that affects Google’s ranking — that would be too easy, right? It’s that the more times you can get people to click on the link that heads back to your site, the greater your search engine ranking will be. In other words, it’s still all about providing good content. <https://blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-seo-experiment/>

In 2018, Google started the process of “migrating sites to a mobile-first index.” The mobile version of your site is now the primary one that Google is using to rank your site. This means if you’ve procrastinated on making a mobile version of your website — that time is past! Mobile is the way of the present and the future. <https://searchengineland.com/5-seo-trends-that-will-matter-most-in-2019-307641>

SEO can make or break your site. But with good content and engagement, and an SEO strategy that takes LSI keywords into account, you can come out on top.

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*Contributed by Megan J. Wilson, Los Angeles-based freelance writer and communications consultant*

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# Here's to You!

Tips for your good health provided by your district

June/July 2019

## Get moving: Exercise guidelines for best health

We all know that exercise is important, and we also know that we probably don't spend enough time being physically active. With few exceptions, Americans don't move their bodies enough for optimal health effects.

*According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about half of adults over 18 meet the federal physical activity guidelines. Only 23.5 percent meet the guidelines for both aerobic and muscle-strengthening activity.*

### How much exercise do we need?

Most health experts agree that guidelines for exercise are at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic exercise per week - or a combination of the two spread out over the entire week. They also suggest strength exercises twice per week. Guidelines for very young children are for structured and unstructured play throughout the day. Children and teens should aim for at least 60 minutes of activity every day. <https://medlineplus.gov/howmuchexercisedoineed.html>

### Why is exercise essential?

Endurance, or aerobic, activities, such as walking, biking, running, swimming, etc., increase your breathing and heart rate. They keep your heart, lungs, and circulatory system healthy and improve your overall fitness. Strength training makes your muscles stron-



ger and keeps your metabolism efficient.

### Your brain on exercise

The physical benefits of exercise are obvious, but research has also found a strong link between exercise and mental health, specifically a reduced risk of depression and anxiety and improved memory. "A single, moderate workout may immediately change how our brains function and how well we recognize common names and similar information, according to a promising new study of exercise, memory and aging. The study adds to growing evidence that

exercise can have rapid effects on brain function and also that these effects could accumulate and lead to long-term improvements in how our brains operate and we remember. [www.nytimes.com/2019/05/01/well/move/how-exercise-affects-our-memory.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/01/well/move/how-exercise-affects-our-memory.html)

Scientists continue to study brain health and exercise, but the early results should help motivate us to move more, especially to ward off brain decline as we age.

"Scientists found that a 12-week program of treadmill walking changed the working of portions of the brain involved in semantic memory — our knowledge of the world, including recall of names and concepts. After four months of exercise, those parts of the brain became less active during semantic-memory tests, which is a desirable outcome, suggesting that the brain becomes more efficient at processing." <https://nyti.ms/2DNw5FV>

# Do you practice good sleep hygiene?



If you are constantly tired, waking up frequently, having difficulty falling asleep and generally fatigued and unrested, you may have poor sleep hygiene.

The National Sleep Foundation defines sleep hygiene as a variety of different practices and habits that are necessary to have good nighttime sleep quality and full daytime alertness. It is important for both physical and mental health and can result in positive benefits for everyone from children to older adults. [www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/sleep-hygiene](http://www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/sleep-hygiene)

## How much sleep should we get?

Sleep needs vary by age and individual. Young children need much more sleep than adults. The recommended amount of sleep for ages 18-64 is seven to nine hours per night. For adults over 65, it is seven to eight hours. <http://bit.ly/2H0kKEw>

## Tips for better sleep hygiene

If you are sleeping less than you should, the following tips from the National Sleep Foundation may help you rest better.

**Limiting daytime naps to 30 minutes.** Napping does not make up for inadequate nighttime sleep. However, a short nap of 20-30 minutes can help to improve mood, alertness and performance.

**Avoiding stimulants such as caffeine and nicotine close to bedtime.** And when it comes to alcohol, moderation is key.

**Exercising to promote good quality sleep.** As little as 10 minutes of aerobic exercise, such as walking or cycling, can drastically improve nighttime sleep quality.

**Limiting food right before sleep.** Heavy or rich foods, fatty or fried meals, spicy dishes, citrus fruits, and carbonated drinks can trigger indigestion for some people.

**Ensuring adequate exposure to natural light.** Exposure to sunlight during the day, as well as darkness at night, helps to maintain a healthy sleep-wake cycle.

**Establishing a regular relaxing bedtime routine.** A regular nightly routine helps the body recognize that it is bedtime. This could include a warm shower or bath, reading a book, or light stretches.

**Making sure that the sleep environment is pleasant.** Mattress and pillows should be comfortable. The bedroom should be cool – between 60 and 67 degrees. Avoid bright light from lamps, cell phone and TV screens.

## Excess sitting can undo the benefits of exercise

A new study found that inactivity during the day can undo the benefits of your daily workout.

Scientists studied the effects of what is sometimes called “The Sitting Disease” to learn more about how the lack of physical activity affects health.

Regular exercise reduces health risks such as heart disease, Type 2 diabetes and other chronic conditions.

“Inactivity, meanwhile, has almost the opposite physiological effects. People who spend most of their waking hours sitting face heightened risks for many chronic diseases. They often also experience metabolic problems that raise the risk of diabetes and heart disease, including insulin resistance, poor blood sugar control and high levels of triglycerides, the fatty acids from food that linger in the blood if they are not metabolized.

While this is still an area of scientific study, the early results show that not moving during the day can make regular workouts ineffective.



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# I N S I G H T S

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## FOR FAMILIES



### Keep learning this summer



**June/July  
2019**

INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Insights is produced by Marcia Latta, communications consultant.

Summer vacation is a needed break from the school routine, but many educators notice a significant decline in academic progress when the new school year starts. By some estimates, students don't regain their progress from the previous school year until one or more months into the new one.

#### **Which students are at risk of the summer slide?**

Summer vacation isn't new, but research into summer learning loss is gaining new attention. The Brookings Institute published several findings:

- (1) on average, students' achievement scores declined over summer vacation by one month's worth of school-year learning,
- (2) declines were sharper for math than for reading, and
- (3) the extent of loss was larger at higher grade levels.

Importantly, they also concluded that income-based reading gaps grew over the summer. Middle-class students tended to show improvement in reading skills while lower-income students tended to experience loss. However, they did not find differential summer learning in math, or by gender or race in either subject.

<https://brook.gs/2vFwdml>

#### **Slowing the summer slide**

##### **Reading:**

Fortunately, the growing attention to the summer slide has created new opportunities for enrichment. Many communities have added new fun educational programs for kids. Most libraries host some kind of incentivized or structured reading program to encourage reading.

According to Oxford Learning, continuing to read can make a difference: "Studies show that reading four to five books over the summer has a positive impact comparable to summer school enrollment." <http://bit.ly/2H5sWT1>

Parents can encourage reading, too, by scheduling regular trips to the public library, bringing books on family outings to the park or beach, reading to young kids regularly, and modeling reading during dedicated quiet time at home.

##### **Technology**

Despite concerns about overuse of technology — specifically cell phones and video games — students need to learn good technology

(Over)

skills. And technology tools can make learning more fun. There are many recommended educational tools to build technology skills.

The following apps are recommended by eLearning Industry as “outstanding applications that engage children’s brains and allow them to have fun while they’re learning.”

<https://elearningindustry.com/10-top-educational-apps-for-kids>

**Duolingo:** This effective and fun app offers a variety of languages, and is completely free to download and use.

**DragonBox:** The DragonBox series is an educational game that teaches math fundamentals with fun activities. There are five learning apps for learning math, including algebra and geometry. All five games in the app require up-front payment but don’t have in-app purchase charges.

**Quick Maths:** This app is aimed at making kids familiar with numbers and imparting general math skills for students in grades two to six. It can help students improve and maintain their math while away from the classroom.

**YouTube Kids:** Exclusively made and curated for kids, Youtube Kids offers educational videos and entertainment content to inspire and enhance young minds. This app is free, easy to use and offers family-friendly videos.

**Science360:** This tablet-only app was created by the National Science Foundation. It features advanced science, engineering news images, and videos for children. All content is high-quality and updated every week. It offers a 360-degree view to allow kids to explore 3D images from every angle.

**Crossword Puzzles:** There are a variety of crossword puzzle apps available for kids. These apps are great tools to help students build vocabulary in a fun, engaging way.

**Flow Free:** This simple puzzle game is appealing to kids of any age. There are 2,000 puzzles available for free.

**Spelling Stage:** This spelling app is great for vocabulary development. It includes a wide range of words for preschoolers through adults.

**My Molecularium:** This entertaining educational app offers fun games for high school students to easily understand and learn chemistry concepts related to molecular structure, chemical formulas, and skeletal formulas.

### **Physical Fitness**

Summer fun should include plenty of outside activity. In addition to physical health benefits being active improves memory and concentration. It also reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression. “The national recommendation is that children and adolescents aged 6 to 17 years should have 60 minutes (one hour) or more of physical activity each day of a combination of aerobic, muscle-strengthening or bone-strengthening activity.

[www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/facts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/facts.htm)