

Forestville Elementary School's
"Imagine Your Story"
Summer Reading Challenge
June 19 - August 31, 2020



Dear FCS Elementary Parents,

We are challenging *all* Forestville Elementary School families in grades Pre-K to 5th to complete our *Summer Reading Adventure 2020*. Without question, the past few months have been challenging, but you have worked hard to maintain your child's skills. Research confirms that students lose academic ground during the summer months, known as "Summer Academic Backslide". We would hate to see that happen to your child over the next two months. Come September, even the best students are several weeks behind where they were in June. Struggling students can lose up to two months. This is especially true in math and science, but reading takes the biggest hit in the lower grades.

Teachers regularly report that every fall they have to re-teach, not just review, most of what kids were supposed to cover in the spring. The result is serious. All that time spent going over old stuff means the kids aren't getting new and more advanced information. Often kids get discouraged and lose confidence. They know they should know the material. They sense their new teacher's frustration or disappointment and may internalize it as meaning they are failures.

If we want our kids to do well, if we want our young people to be competitive in a global market, we need to do our share. That means expecting that kids will take their schooling seriously and work hard. It means holding the conviction that most of our kids are smart enough to learn grade level material. It means not buying an excuse that math or science or language study is too hard for American kids. Yes, some things do take more effort to learn than others but most kids can master even the most challenging subjects with enough support and focus. It means getting involved with their education in a meaningful way. It particularly means staying involved during the summer when the teacher isn't providing the homework and the projects.

Simple ways to prevent the summer backslide:

1. **The strongest reinforcement for learning is our own behavior.** Emphasize the positive when you tell stories about your own experiences with school. Be a good reading role model. That means reading the newspaper and sharing interesting stories with the kids. It means spending time with a book every day and letting your kids see you enjoying it.

2. **Set aside a few times a week to play “school” for an hour.** Keep it interesting and fun, not a chore. There are a series of colorful workbooks available at book stores, dollar stores and Walmart, but practice sheets can also be found on the Internet. Have stickers at the ready, too. Let your child teach you something. Find academic activities that go over what the kids already know and perhaps that stretch them just a little. You don’t need to teach them new material unless you are really into it. If the kids just keep the skills they already have, they will be ahead of most of their peers when they get back to school in September.
3. **Practice using academic skills during daily activities.** When a child asks a question, have him look it up on the Internet and read you the answer. Making dinner together is a chance to use math by doubling or halving a recipe. Interested in sports? Show the kids how baseball stats are calculated. Going somewhere? Show the kids how to use a map instead of using the GPS. During a vacation, put your child in charge of monitoring how many miles to the gallon of gas our car is getting. Make another sibling responsible for keeping track of how much is spent each day. An older child, with more advanced writing skills could keep a journal of your trip to create a family memory book. Yes, such things take planning and time. But it’s together time as well as learning time. It’s worth it.
4. **Use screen time wisely.** Parents and children can find answers to life’s questions, research topics and play games together on the computer. TV channels that focus on history, travel and nature can be both entertaining and informative. But technology should not be used as a babysitter or a way to just keep them busy for hours at a time so parents can do their own thing. Responsible use of technology comes from learning from parents how to use it responsibly. Kids are protected from online predators and scams by parents who pay attention and protect them.
5. **Exercise their bodies as well as their minds.** Kids need to get out of their rooms and into playgrounds and yards. Teach and model how to be happily active. Go for family walks after dinner and a hike on the weekend. Toss a ball or Frisbee. Teach the kids some old-fashioned games like Freeze Tag, Hide-and-Seek, and Red Rover. Get out there with them and have some fun. It’s as good for you as it is for them.

American kids do have one of the longest summer vacations in the Western world. But time out of school doesn’t have to mean time out of learning. As long as our culture insists on having summers off, it falls on us parents to help our children avoid the summer backslide.

Please consider this and join the challenge! All students of families who successfully complete our challenge will be awarded a special surprise in September!

Thank you in advance for your cooperation,



Mrs. Dunn
Mr. Worosz
FCS Elementary Reading Teachers
Mrs. Schneider,
Elementary Librarian