Get the Facts about Summer Brain Drain

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Summer brain drain is coming!

Although it sounds like something related to "The Walking Dead," the term defines the learning loss all youth experience when they don't engage in educational activities during the summer – yes, this happens to all kids.

More and more studies prove that kids' brains shut off when schools close down for the summer. According to Ron Fairchild, executive director of the Johns Hopkins University Center for Summer Learning,, students lose approximately 2.6 months of grade level equivalency in mathematical computation skills over the summer.

One reason that youth experience brain drain is because of how we view summertime. After all, shouldn't summers be when kids can be kids? Wouldn't it be great if students return to school with easygoing stories of how they spent their vacations? Don't we want to help our kids build memories of playing in summer camp and spending unstructured days exploring neighborhoods, libraries and museums?

This summer, help your children avoid brain drain by pledging to make it a season of learning, as well as a trove of memory-building fun. There are plenty of ways parents can create or find high-quality summer learning opportunities so students don't lose the knowledge they worked so hard to learn in school.

- **Take time to read together every day.** You can read aloud to young learners while encouraging your older, independent readers to spend 20 minutes exploring nonfiction, fiction and news daily. Most local libraries have activity-rich summer reading program with incentives and rewards for books read, too. Check out the library locator on ocpl.org to find a branch near you.

- **Take a field trip.** Orange County is rich with museums, zoos, local parks and walking trails. Ask your child to keep a journal about each activity.

- **Ask your kids to join you in the kitchen.** Cooking together is one of the best ways to integrate math and reading while teaching students to follow directions. Let older kids design the menu, too. Together, you can put together your favorite family recipes in a cookbook and build a keepsake.

- **Plant a garden**. You'll watch their pride grow as they see their plants thriving. Plus, gardening is an engaging way to practice math skills and pick up key science concepts.

- **Cultivate young logophiles.** That's a spelling bee-worthy term for a lover of words. Help your kids keep up their vocabulary skills by posting a new word on the refrigerator every week. Challenge them to use it in conversation and award points toward prizes or other incentives.

- **Get crafty.** You can nurture creativity and keep kids learning with summer arts and crafts projects. Make family dinners even more special by asking kids to design placemats. Create 3-D picture frames with leaves, shells and other souvenirs picked up from field trips. Teach environmental education by encouraging students to "upcycle" materials in your home into art projects or useful objects.

- **Select a summer camp based on your child's interests.** At the Irvine Public Schools Foundation Summer Enrichment Academy, we offer over 400 courses and camps to students from any school or district. Every year, more than 6,000 students participate in our Summer Enrichment Academy, and there's still time to sign up your students in grades K-12 at www.ipsfacademy.org/sea. Courses include LEGO® Engineering, Robotics, Scratch Program-ming, sports, culinary arts, music, Improv, STEAM, and much more. There's something of interest for every student!

Leave the brain drain to fictional zombies. Our kids deserve better.