

Stepping Stones

Ripon Area School District * Student Services Department * May 2016



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“Every child is gifted. They just unwrap their packages at different times.”

Author Unknown

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Change is Inevitable!

Anne Lang

Happy Spring!

This is the last newsletter of the 2015-2016 school year, and my last newsletter, as I am retiring (again) on June 30th. It has been a great pleasure serving the Ripon Area School District students, and I wish everyone well. I know you will welcome your new Student Services Director, Ms. Julie Krackow, who is coming to us from Holmen, Wisconsin.

Congratulations to Ms. Kara Olson, who will be the new Student Services Director in Markesan. Ms. Karalyn Dehn-Massen will leave the elementary school psychologist position to work at the middle school and high school.

Speaking of change, have you been keeping up to date on the construction at the High School? The district website has Weekly Construction Updates for the community to follow. The updates can be found at <http://www.ripon.k12.wi.us/community/weeklyconstructionupdates.cfm>. This week the construction update included the following:

Budget

- The project is currently on budget. CG Schmidt and the District continue to evaluate potential risks to preserve the required contingencies.

Schedule

- Landscaping will continue throughout the week.
- MEP overhead and underground rough-in will continue.
- The masons will wrap up the HS Band practice rooms and move on to the MS Band practice rooms.
- The demo crew will be working on removing the plaster ceiling in the former Ag classroom.
- The pool contractor is on site prepping the inside of the pool for the new plaster.
- The structural steel framing for the skylights in the east corridor will begin.

Other

- RASD will be hosting a Neighborhood Meeting on Monday, May 9th, at 6:00 PM in the new Ripon High School Community Room.
- For any questions regarding the project, please call or email Ryan Schmidt at 414-758-7386 or Ryan.Schmidt@cgschmidt.com. Photos

Better Hearing & Speech Month

Jodi Kulick, Melissa Edinger, and Katie Artymiuk-Nickel



Are you concerned that your kids spend too much time on tablets, smartphones, or other devices? Do you have fewer conversations with your kids than you'd like because of technology distractions? Do you find yourself constantly asking your kids to lower the volume on devices because you can hear the music blaring through their earbuds or headphones?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you are a typical parent in the digital age. These are struggles for most of us as technology increasingly becomes central to our lives and our children's lives.

During May, our professional association—the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)—celebrates Better Hearing & Speech Month. Given that, we want to take this opportunity to remind you of the important roles that verbal communication and personal interaction—free from technology distractions—play in children's academic and social development.

Kids today are using devices for hours every day—time that once was reserved for talking and reading, interactive and imaginative play, outdoor experiences, and other activities. Yet, the primary way young children develop their speech and language abilities is through verbal exchange—talking and reading with parents. This is a precursor for their own reading abilities and overall academic success. Children also learn from hands-on experiences. Educational apps can play a part, but they are in no way a replacement for what is learned through person-to-person communication. As we head into the summer months, when children no doubt will have more time to use devices, consider carving out some device-free time each day. You may be surprised by how little they (and you) miss it!

Another pressing issue related to technology use is hearing damage. Unfortunately, there has been a significant spike in hearing loss in young people in recent years. This coincides with the rise in popularity of mp3 players, tablets, and other devices. Even mild hearing loss can lead to reduced academic achievement (particularly in reading and math), poor self-concept, and feelings of social isolation, among other consequences—so, encourage your kids to keep the volume on their devices to half level and to take listening breaks. Hearing loss due to unsafe listening habits can be prevented, but once it occurs, it is irreversible. Teach (and model yourself) these good habits early.

Finally, this is an opportunity for us to remind you about our availability should you have any concerns about your child's communication development. Speech, language, and hearing disorders are among the most common disorders in school-aged children. Communication disorders are also treatable and some can even be prevented if identified early.

Screen Time

UW Extension Family System

Tips on Screen Time

- ❖ Use screen time for interactive and creative activities. Read an e-book on a tablet; paint, color, or draw using safe, child-friendly websites.
- ❖ Minimize commercial time. Try recording programs and fast-forwarding through commercials or mute commercials when watching live shows.
- ❖ Have active screen time. Dance to YouTube videos; play video games that demand jumping, hopping, stretching, and other movements.
- ❖ Choose educational shows and games. Visit the library and ask for suggestions of educational DVDs or television shows you can check out; ask your child care provider to recommend learning games young children can play on a tablet or smartphone.
- ❖ Balance with screen-free activities such as going on a picnic, taking a walk, playing in the park, doing a craft projects, baking, etc.

How much screen time?

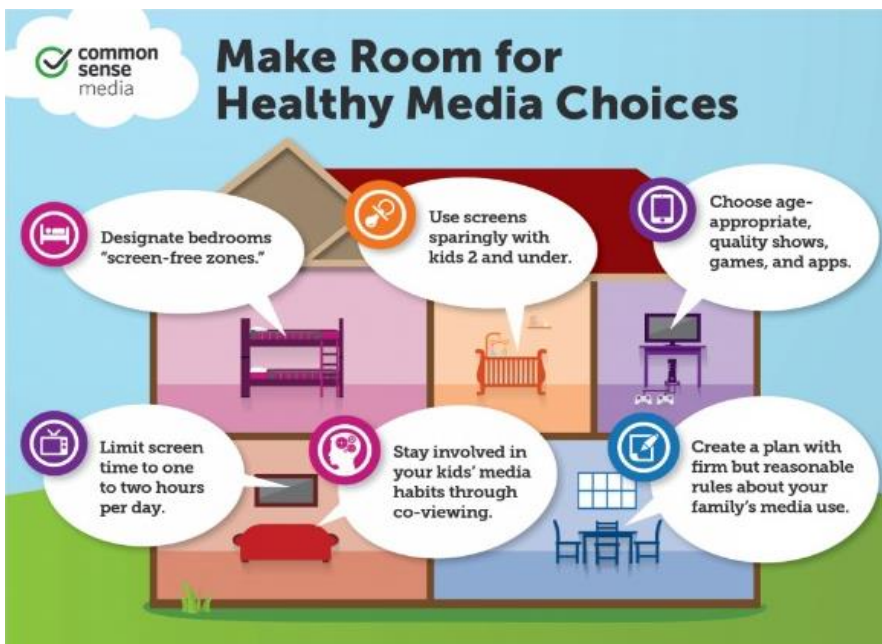
Aim for quality screen time rather than a specific amount of time. Play a touchscreen game together. Talk about a television show while watching it. Some screen time can be educational, but it is important not to go overboard. Other environments and learning experiences are important too.

How does too much screen time affect children?

Too much screen time has negative impacts on preschool children's health and wellbeing. Television viewing among 3 to 5 year old children is linked to being overweight and obese. Children who spend more time watching screens interact less with their families, which means they have fewer opportunities to develop creativity, problem solving, reading, and learning skills.

How can you make screen time a learning experience for children?

Make screen time social! Use digital screen devices (tablets, smartphones, computers) as a time for children to interact with parents, sisters, brothers, other relatives, and friends. Studies show children over 3 years old can benefit from carefully monitored screen time experiences that share high quality information. Active, hands-on, and engaging activities while using technology are usually the most effective.



Limiting screen time now has benefits from later.

Turn off the TV and digital devices more often and keep them out of children's bedrooms. Children who have less screen time at a young age tend to do better in school, engage more fully in their classroom activities, eat healthier, and be more physically active.

For more information on limiting screen time or proper use of digital media with your children, please contact Sara Richie, Family Living Educator at UW-Extension, at 715-365-2750.

Summer Volunteer Work can Build Character & School Skills

Quashnet School Parents Make the Difference Newsletter

The world's problems can feel overwhelming. But kids can learn that every person makes a difference, and when people work together, the results are amazing! Summer volunteering is a great way to achieve this-all while building your child's confidence, compassion and talents. This will make him/her an even better student next year. Start by discussing:

- ❖ **Interests.** What subjects interest your child most? How do they relate to others' needs? If they love animals, they might help an animal rescue group. If they are interested in business, they might help organize a charity fundraiser. Enthusiasm is a great motivator.
- ❖ **Skills.** Your child's strengths, such as baking or reading, can be gifts to others. They might hold a bake sale or read to younger children. Sometimes it's fun to learn new skills, too, such as how to help with landscaping or home repairs.
- ❖ **Needs.** Perhaps you've noticed a park that needs sprucing up. Or maybe a homeless shelter needs food. Your child's school may even need help over the summer. Find out who's organizing volunteers. You are likely to find lots of volunteer opportunities in your community.
- ❖ **Schedules.** Volunteering takes time, and busy families only have so much of it. Set realistic goals that leave room for other priorities. Depending on your commitments, you might volunteer just a few hours here and there- or take on one large exciting project!



GET
INVOLVED

Reflect on the School Year with your Child & Celebrate Success

The Parent Institute

The last few weeks of school can make a positive difference in how your child does next year. Now's the time to look back, look forward, give thanks and celebrate. Here's how:

- ❖ Talk to your child's teacher. Get their thoughts on your child's strengths and weaknesses. How have they improved? Where do they need more work? Ask what you can do to help them this summer.
- ❖ Talk to your child about the school year. Ask what they think went well during the year. Help them figure out what changes they should make for next year.
- ❖ Review your child's successes. Look over school work you've saved during the year. Point out how much they have learned- how many new words, for example. Or how they can add and divide. Or how their writing has improved.
- ❖ Help your child list learning goals for the summer. Guide them, based on what you've learned from their teacher.
- ❖ Encourage your child to thank those who have made the year a good one- teacher, bus driver, food service worker, crossing guard, etc. This will help them appreciate how many people have helped them. Help them write thank you notes even.
- ❖ Celebrate with a special activity and enjoy some one-on-one time with your child.

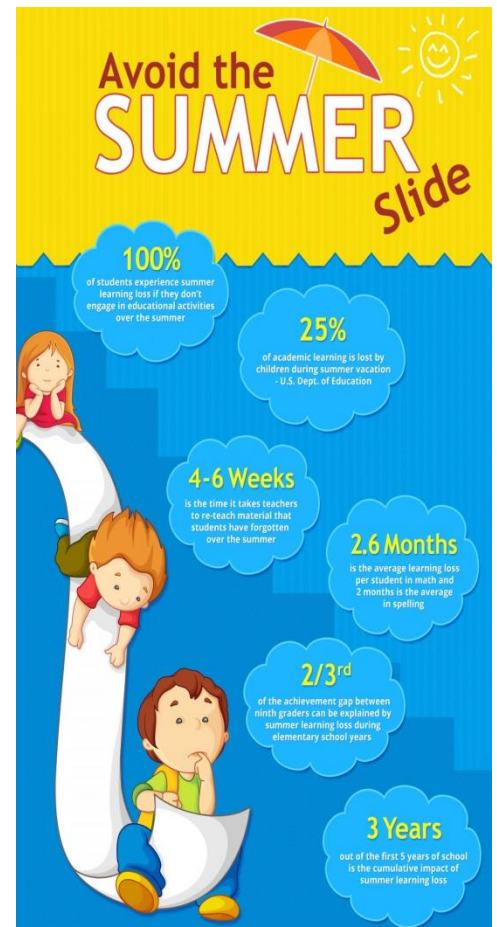
Avoid the Summer Slide

Kara Olson

As the sun becomes warmer and the days become longer, the excitement of summer vacation begins to bubble up in students. Summer means a break from the hard work of learning and time to relax and have fun riding bikes, vacationing, camping, and swimming! Time to rest and spend time with friends and family is important. However, it is also important to find a balance of work and play.

This long break in learning results in students forgetting some of the skills they learned during the school year. On average, students lose/forget at least two months of learning in both reading and math. This results in teachers spending an average of 4-6 weeks in the fall re-teaching and students relearning the skills that were forgotten over the summer. Overtime, this can result in a delay in gaining more skills and also increases the achievement gap between students who struggle and those who are at grade level. Below are ideas to encourage your middle and high school students to continue to learn and use their skills over the summer months.

- Attend summer school for academic or fun based classes.
- Weekly word game - learn new vocabulary words and challenge to see who uses the word the most.
- Play games such as Monopoly, Life, Scrabble or Cribbage to work on math, vocabulary, and critical thinking.
- Encourage your child to read at least 20-30 minutes a day. ANY kind of reading (i.e. magazines, sports results, books) and help your child identify things to read in their area of interest.
- Read the same book your student reads and discuss what you think!
- Listen to audiobooks and follow along in the text.
- Read a book and then watch the movie that was based on the book. Discuss similarities and differences between them.
- Teenagers are often on the go. Have a “conversation notebook” to write with your student about their day or interests. (This continues to work on writing skills)
- Visit the zoo, museums, or hiking trails and keep a journal about the experience.
- Encourage your child to get a job and teach/help them budget and manage their money.
- Work math into a hobby or interest areas (i.e. comparing sports statistics, measuring for crafts)
- Have your students plan a meal for your family and follow the recipe. Extra credit is to double the recipe or cut it in half to challenge the use of fractions.
- Have your child plan a family trip somewhere. Collect and read about places to visit via the internet or brochures. Give them a map to determine how to get there, calculate gas mileage, and estimate costs.



Have a wonderful summer and find time to relax and have fun with your students. Make learning fun and a regular part of your days! Most importantly, READ, READ, and READ!