

What is it that parents can do to not only keep their children in shape to grow intellectually and physically but also to gain strength of character?

Written by Associate Superintendent Jason Caros

After reading this article, please scroll down to locate your child's specific recommended reading list.

Summer vacation is on the horizon. What is in store for your children?

There is no doubt that students are excited about the prospects of summer vacation, and they certainly deserve some good leisurely activities after all of their efforts throughout the year. If for nothing else, summer vacation helps children to recuperate and recharge their intellectual batteries. Since summer is often viewed as a time for play, rest, and travel, what place can academic activities have in the extended summer break? How do we continue to promote moral virtue in our children during the summer break? On these questions, we have a few examples to follow. Serious athletes, musicians, and other performers operate at higher levels during their seasons but also have what is called off-season training. With student-scholars, things should be no different. Summer provides some time for rest and relaxation, to be sure, but it also affords time for off-season training for the mind, body, and soul.

During the school year, teachers provide the core academic instruction, and parents supplement classroom learning and encourage their children to do their best at school. At the end of the school year, the batons are figuratively passed from the teachers back to the parents. The classroom teachers linger behind and catch their breaths, parents continue to lead their children forth, and the next group of teachers wait for them to hand off the batons in August. What is it you can do to not only keep your children in shape, to grow intellectually and physically, but to also gain strength of character?

First, provide opportunities for your children to be screen-free as much as possible. If you have not watched [Childhood 2.0](#), about the dangers of social media, **I strongly recommend it for all parents of school-aged children**. Every single study related to children and social media, video-viewing on TikTok, YouTube, etc., and extended video game playing, emphasizes the mental, moral and even physical harm that exposure to these mediums cause to children, as well as the addictive nature of them. There are plenty of alternatives. Here are a few, and below you will see even more. Take advantage of wholesome summer camps of various sorts that include outdoor activities, arts & crafts, athletics and exercise, music, etc. and time with live human beings (without devices in-hand).

Second, consider visiting museums and local history sites, and viewing concerts, plays, and other noble performances in the community. There are plenty of family-friendly opportunities in the Metroplex this summer. These experiences help to build student knowledge, they can help to cultivate student affections for the good, the true, and the beautiful, and bring families closer together. Avoid, on the other hand, the types of television programs, films, and video games that promote nihilism, disobedience to parents, and vice in general (note that I am not saying all forms of these are negative). I emphasize this because, as adults, we sometimes assume

entertainment marketed to children must be harmless, but in fact, many of the programs on children's networks and children's films do promote nihilism, they call parental authority into question and elevate the children as the wise one. Sadly, they also promote or make a joke out of lying. Be aware that many television programs or films targeted toward our children intentionally promote political and social causes that may not be aligned with your principles and values. Repeated exposure to these kinds of messages, over time, does impact children. The antidote is you...

Third, one of the elements of our student motto is "Service." There are many formal service opportunities made available through religious and non-sectarian organizations, as well as chances to aid people in our own neighborhoods including the elderly and infirm. Additionally, if you and your children would like to kick-off your summer with service to our school, we will need help on Friday, May 26th setting up for our senior commencement and/or on the Tuesday (30th) morning following the graduation ceremony to break everything down and put them away (look for a sign-up genius about this).

Fourth, and related to service, make sure your children have regular and helpful chores so that they develop self-discipline and a sense of responsibility and contribution within the household. On this note, if you have not listened to the [Building Sturdy Children](#) talk, I highly recommend it. It's about chores and so much more!

Fifth, encourage your children to complete their [summer reading](#) and the accompanying assignment (early grammar grades do not have assignments, only readings). The reading is not heavy, but steeped in classics, and related to the curriculum in the upcoming school year. Also encourage your children to read other kinds of books and texts that are interesting, informative and promote virtue (e.g. classic children's stories, devotional readings, history and science books, useful magazines, newspaper articles, poetry, popular but "good" novels, etc.). Avoid books about nothing, and inane stories (these are, sadly, quite popular these days). For younger children, it is critical you read with them and show your children you too enjoy reading good books. Older students can read on their own, but you can also read the books along with your children and engage in discussions—these discussions will help with retention and deeper understanding.

Sixth, especially for parents of grammar school students, do not neglect mathematics. If there is one thing you must do with math in the summer, it is to make sure your children practice math facts—memorizing addition, subtraction, and multiplication facts (reviewing those facts practiced in school this year). We teach math conceptually via *Singapore Math in K-6*, but we also really emphasize the essential importance of math facts. The great majority of students that struggle in mathematics in the upper elementary grades and into middle and high school are those that are not able to add, subtract and multiply in their heads (math facts should be automatic). If your child currently struggles in math, bringing your children up to speed in this area will help considerably.

Finally, there is no substitute for time on task! Children need quality time with family as well as quantity.

Do you need more book suggestions that are age appropriate? Do you want to know more information about what book your child is reading? Go to <https://www.arbookfind.com/> or <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/>.

Incoming Kindergarten Students

As for literature—to introduce children to literature is to install them in a very rich and glorious kingdom, to bring a continual holiday to their doors, to lay before them a feast exquisitely served. But they must learn to know literature by being familiar with it from the very first. A child's intercourse must always be with good books, the best that we can find.

– Charlotte Mason



We strongly encourage you to make reading a part of your family's summer schedule. A child must read often to become more fluent, but more importantly, the student should read good books that cultivate his or her affection and promote a love of learning.

Some ideas to help with summer reading and to create a love for reading:

- Have a set time each day for reading.
- Choose books and topics that stir the imagination and promote virtuous behavior.
- Have thoughtful questions ready to spur discussions about the book.
- Have your child choose an interesting passage to read to the rest of the family.
- Read portions of the book with your child.
- Visit the library to explore books of interest.
- Have your child read various texts often, with you, and independently.
- Listen to the audiobook while following text in the book.
- Have your child write about the book and lessons learned in their own journal.

Recommended Reading: The list below is meant to provide you with ideas for summer book selections.

- ✓ Read *to* your child books that have rich language. Read rhyming books *with* your child (for example, *Cat in the Hat* Beginning Reader books). Allow your child to read familiar words and discuss the stories with your child.
- ✓ Begin reading classic nursery rhymes and fairy tales to your child.
- ✓ Two titles you might look for are *A Treasure of More than 300 Classic Nursery Rhymes* and *Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes* by Robert Frederick (use classical editions; please do not use Disney versions and other adaptations).
- ✓ Any *Cat in the Hat* Beginning Reader book written by Dr. Seuss and others, such as *The Cat in the Hat*; *Green Eggs and Ham*; *Hop on Pop*; *Put Me in the Zoo*; *One Fish, Two Fish*
- ✓ Books by A.A. Milne (e.g. Classic *Winnie the Pooh*) and by Beatrix Potter Incoming

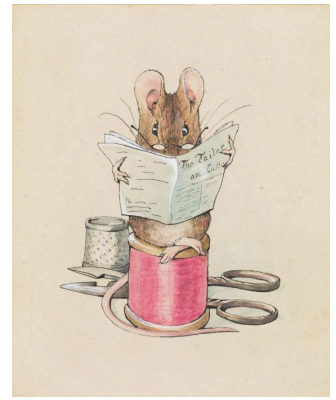
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First Grade Students

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Some ideas to help with summer reading and to create a love for reading:

- Have a set time each day for reading.
- Choose books and topics that stir the imagination and promote virtuous behavior.
- Have thoughtful questions ready to spur discussions about the book.
- Have your child choose an interesting passage to read to the rest of the family.
- Read portions of the book with your child.
- Visit the library to explore books of interest.
- Have your child read various texts often, with you, and independently.
- Listen to the audiobook while following the text in the book.
- Have your child write about the book and lessons learned in their own journal.

Recommended Reading: The list below is meant to provide you with ideas for summer book selections.

- ✓ Read to your child books that have rich language. Read rhyming books *with* your child (for example *Cat in the Hat* Beginning Reader books). Allow your child to read familiar words, and discuss the stories with your child.
- ✓ Any Cat in the Hat Beginning Reader book written by Dr. Seuss and others, such as *The Cat in the Hat*; *Green Eggs and Ham*; *Hop on Pop*; *Put Me in the Zoo*; *One Fish, Two Fish*
- ✓ Books by Beatrix Potter, such as *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny*, *The Tale of Tom Kitten*, *The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck*
- ✓ Books and poems by A.A. Milne, such as *Winnie the Pooh*, *Now We Are Six* (poetry), and *When We Were Very Young* (poetry) *use the originals
- ✓ *Curious George* books by H.A. Rey
- ✓ *Amelia Bedelia* books by Peggy Parish
- ✓ *Corduroy* by Don Freeman
- ✓ Mother Goose and Other Traditional Poems/Stories and American Folk Legends (e.g. Johnny Appleseed) *use classical editions, not modern adaptations
- ✓ Read several of Aesop's Fables with your children in preparation for the 1st-grade curriculum (e.g. The Tortoise and The Hare, The Ant the Grasshopper, The Boy Who Cried, Wolf).

Do you need more book suggestions that are age appropriate? Do you want to know more information about what book your child is reading? Go to <https://www.arbookfind.com/> or <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/>.

Incoming Second Grade Students

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We strongly encourage you to make reading a part of your family's summer schedule. A child must read often to become more fluent, but more importantly, the student should read good books that cultivate his or her affection and promote a love of learning.

Some ideas to help with summer reading and to create a love for reading:

- Have a set time each day for reading.
- Choose books and topics that stir the imagination and promote virtuous behavior.
- Have thoughtful questions ready to spur discussions about the book.
- Have your child choose an interesting passage to read to the rest of the family.
- Read portions of the book with your child.
- Visit the library to explore books of interest.
- Have your child read various texts often, with you, and independently.
- Listen to the audiobook while following the text in the book.
- Have your child write about the book and lessons learned in their own journal.

Recommended Reading: The list below is meant to provide you with ideas for summer book selections. Teachers may discuss the first book listed in the first days of school.

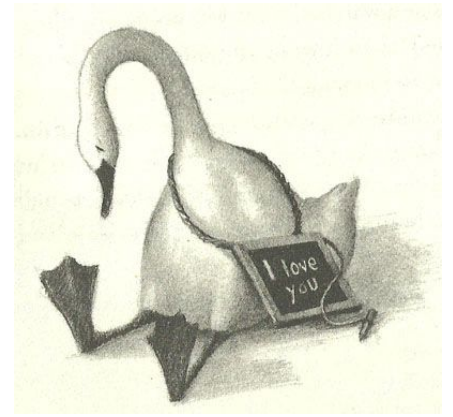
- ✓ *The Hundred Dresses* by Eleanor Estes
- ✓ *Roxaboxen* by Barbra Cooney
- ✓ *Dinosaurs Before Dark* (Magic Tree House) by Mary Pope Osborne
- ✓ Traditional fairy tales, tall tales, folk tales of your choice (avoid watered-down versions)
- ✓ Original Stories by Hans Christian Andersen (e.g. *Little Mermaid*, *Thumbelina*)
- ✓ Just So Stories by Rudyard Kipling
- ✓ *DK Eyewitness Books – Ancient Greece* by Anne Pearson
- ✓ Books by *Tomie de Paola*
- ✓ Magic School Bus books about weather, magnets, tools, the body, insects, animals, plants
- ✓ Books from the Little House Series by Laura Ingalls Wilder

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Incoming Third Grade Students

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Some ideas to help with summer reading and to create a love for reading:

- Have a set time each day for reading.
- Choose books and topics that stir the imagination and promote virtuous behavior.
- Have thoughtful questions ready to spur discussions about the book.
- Have your child choose an interesting passage to read to the rest of the family.
- Read portions of the book with your child.
- Visit the library to explore books of interest.
- Have your child read various texts often, with you, and independently.
- Listen to the audiobook while following the text in the book.
- Have your child write about the book and lessons learned in their own journal.

Recommended Reading: The list below is meant to provide you with ideas for summer book selections. Teachers may discuss the first and second books listed in the first days of school.

- ✓ *The Trumpet of the Swan* by E.B. White
- ✓ *Little House on the Prairie* by Laura Ingalls Wilder
- ✓ Traditional fairy tales, tall tales, folk tales of your choice (avoid watered-down versions)
- ✓ Original Stories by Hans Christian Andersen (e.g. *Little Mermaid*, *Thumbelina*)
- ✓ *Just So Stories* by Rudyard Kipling
- ✓ *DK Eyewitness Book – Ancient Rome* by Simon James
- ✓ Magic School Bus books about weather, magnets, tools, the body, insects, animals, and plants • Other Books from the Little House Series by Laura Ingalls Wilder
- ✓ *Mr. Popper's Penguins* by Richard Atwater
- ✓ *Pippi Longstocking* by Astrid Lindgren

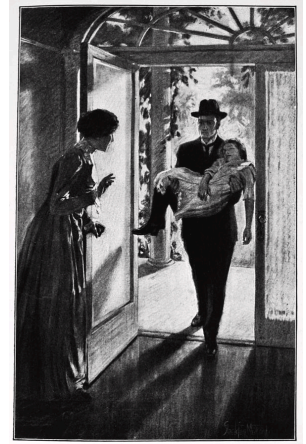
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Incoming Fourth Grade Students

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Some ideas to help with summer reading and to create a love for reading:

- Have a set time each day for reading.
- Choose books and topics that stir the imagination and promote virtuous behavior.
- Have thoughtful questions ready to spur discussions about the book.
- Have your child choose an interesting passage to read to the rest of the family.
- Read portions of the book with your child.
- Visit the library to explore books of interest.
- Have your child read various texts often, with you, and independently.
- Listen to the audiobook while following the text in the book.
- Have your child write about the book and lessons learned in their own journal.
- Have your child write favorite words or quotes from their books in a special journal.

Recommended Reading: The list below is meant to provide you with ideas for summer book selections. Teachers may discuss the first and second books listed in the first days of school.

✓ *Pollyanna* by Eleanor H. Porter (ISBN 978-1-890517-06-9)

**Pollyanna* can be purchased from a bookstore or online bookstore or at this site:
<https://www.coreknowledge.org/product/pollyanna/>

✓ *Can't You Make Them Behave, King George?* By Jean Fritz

✓ *The Reluctant Dragon* by Kenneth Grahame

✓ *The Sword in the Tree* by Clyde Robert Bulla

✓ *Guns for General Washington* by Seymour Reit

✓ *The Horse and His Boy* by C.S. Lewis

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Incoming Fifth Grade Students

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- Have a set time each day for reading.
- Choose books and topics that stir the imagination and promote virtuous behavior.
- Have thoughtful questions ready to spur discussions about the book.
- Have your child choose an interesting passage to read to the rest of the family.
- Read portions of the book with your child.
- Visit the library to explore books of interest.
- Have your child read various texts often, with you, and independently.
- Listen to the audiobook while following the text in the book.
- Have your child write about the book and lessons learned in their own journal.
- Have your child write favorite words or quotes from their books in a special journal.

Recommended Reading: The list below is meant to provide you with ideas for summer book selections. Teachers may discuss the first and second books listed in the first days of school.

- ✓ *Who was William Shakespeare* by Celeste Davidson Mannis
- ✓ *The Shakespeare Stealer* by Gary Blackwood
- ✓ *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien (for advanced readers)
- ✓ *Heidi* by Johanna Spyri

Do you need more book suggestions that are age appropriate? Do you want to know more information about what book your child is reading? Go to <https://www.arbookfind.com/> or <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/>.

Incoming Sixth Grade Students

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- Have thoughtful questions ready to spur discussions about the book.
- Have your child choose an interesting passage to read to the rest of the family.
- Read portions of the book with your child.
- Visit the library to explore books of interest.
- Have your child read various texts often, with you, and independently.
- Listen to the audiobook while following the text in the book.
- Have your child write about the book and lessons learned in their own journal.
- Have your child write favorite words or quotes from their books in a special journal.

Recommended Reading: The list below is meant to provide you with ideas for summer book selections. Teachers may discuss the first and second books listed in the first days of school.

- ✓ *Greek Myths* by Olivia Coolidge
- ✓ *Herodotus and the Road to History* by Jeanne Bendic
- ✓ *Archimedes and the Door of Science* by Jeanne Bendic
- ✓ *Augustus Caesar's World* by Genevieve Foster
- ✓ *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien

Do you need more book suggestions that are age appropriate? Do you want to know more information about what book your child is reading? Go to <https://www.arbookfind.com/> or <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/>.

Recommended Reading for Founders Classical Academy Parents

Reading is not only for our students. You, as parents, have the power to model reading while developing an enjoyable habit. To stop the busyness of the day to sit and read exemplifies the importance of expanding our minds, even as adults.

Here are a few recommendations to further understand our classical philosophy and education. Enjoy!

The Making of Americans by ED Hirsch, JR

Why Don't Students Like School by Daniel T Willingham

Reading in the Wild by Donalyn Miller

The Book Whisperer by Donalyn Miller

Read-a-loud Family by Sarah Mackenzie

Cultural Literacy by E.D. Hirsch, Jr.

A Thomas Jefferson Education by Oliver DeMille

The Power of Habit by Charles Duhigg

Any books by Charlotte Mason

Arithmetic for Parents by Ron Aharoni

Igniting a Passion for Reading by Steven L. Layne

To read as a family:

The Moral Compass by William J. Bennett

What your ____ Grader Needs to Know by E.D. Hirsch



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