

Summer Reading Program...not just for fun

Summer Reading Programs are a long-standing tradition with libraries throughout the country, and with good reason. The article *Lost Summers: For Some Children, Few Books and Few Opportunities to Read* presented by Anne McGill-Franzen, and Richard Allington at The Center for Summer Learning at Johns Hopkins University, looked at research that examined learning losses over the summer, especially for students from lower-income families. The article concluded that in the elementary grades, "a summer loss of 3 months accumulates to become a gap of 18 months by the end of 6th grade. By middle school, summer reading loss...produces a cumulative lag of two or more years in reading achievement, even when effective instruction during the school year is available".

In the definitive and classic study, *Summer Learning and the Effects of Schooling* by Barbara Heyns, the author followed sixth and seventh graders in the Atlanta public schools through two school years and the intervening summer. Her findings included that the number of books read during the summer is consistently related to academic gains and that children in every income group who read six or more books over the summer gained more in reading achievement than children who did not. She further found that the use of the public library during the summer is more predictive of vocabulary gains than attending summer school. According to Heyns, "More than any other public institution, including the schools, the public library contributed to the intellectual growth of children during the summer. Moreover, unlike summer school programs, the library was used by over half the sample and attracted children from diverse backgrounds."

To take advantage of Monroe County's free summer reading program guaranteed to turn fun into learning, children throughout Monroe County can sign up at any one of the 16 conveniently located branch libraries and keep track of their reading during the summer. They will also enjoy programs while maintaining and advancing their reading skills.

For more information about the Summer Reading Program or for a complete list of activities, visit the library's website at <http://monroe.lib.mi.us>. For more details on the value of Summer Reading Programs and the benefits to participants, visit <http://www.jhu.edu/teachbaltimore/research/sumschool.html> or <http://statelibrary.dcr.state.nc.us/ld/youth/case.htm>