

Summer doesn't mean learning should stop

BY KATIE ALWYN

If kids don't actively work on math, science and literacy skills in the off-months, they risk losing educational gains made during the year—up to several months. This well-documented phenomenon, often referred to as 'summer slide,' is especially damaging in low-income neighborhoods, or when kids are already behind grade level.

Camp is one way to make sure the learning continues, like at Women's Housing and Economic Development Corp's Summer Arts Day Camp here in the Bronx, where we reinforce STEM and literacy through creative activities. Unfortunately, there are not enough city-funded camp slots for all families that need them. WHEDco regularly has a waitlist of hundreds of kids whom we wish we had funding to support. And of course, there are plenty of other reasons why a family might not have access to camp in the summers.

The good news is that there are lots of free ways that parents can help prevent summer learning loss and set kids up for success in the school year. It's easier than it sounds. Every year WHEDco shares ideas with parents from our afterschool program.

Here are just a few:

If they had their way, kids might spend all summer on the computer or playing video games: Luckily, they can do that while learning, with the abundance of online, kid-friendly coding programs, designed to teach kids the basics of computer languages along with analytical skills. We especially like Scratch, a free program developed by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for ages 6 to 15 that you can access at scratch.mit.edu.

Join the summer reading

challenge: While your local branch of the New York Public Library is a great resource all year round, their Summer Reading challenge is an especially fun way to motivate kids to pick up a book, between their 'Read for the Stars Game' and lots of events. Learn more at www.nypl.org/summerreading2019.

Practice storytelling: Reading stories is critical, but making them up helps kids too! Clip photos from magazines, newspapers, or even coupon inserts, and have kids pick five to tell you a story about, in order.

Embrace everyday math: Have your kids help you cook—they can count out ingredients, and use measuring cups and spoons to help them visualize fractions. If you buy a treat from the ice cream truck, ask them how much change to expect. If they are still practicing numbers, have them count the steps to your apartment.

Head to the park: The Bronx is home to NYC's first and third largest park (Pelham Bay Park and Van Cortlandt Park are both larger than Central Park) and are great resources. A visit to Van Cortlandt Park's Nature Center can help with a summer science fix, and the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation hosts kid-friendly events throughout the borough.

These are just a few ideas from WHEDco, but get creative with learning, and try to tap into your kids' passions. The bonus to all these activities is the time spent bonding and engaging with their education—a key factor to success in school. With a little effort, they'll be prepared for September, and beyond!

(Katie Alwyn is WHEDco's senior director of Education and Youth Development.)

As Stated presents heartfelt commentaries on Hector Figueroa, the president of the powerful 32BJ SEIU union, who died at 53 years old, the 2020 Census citizen question, a remembrance of man's first walk on the Moon and the retirement of NYC's Corporate Counsel.

Councilman Fernando Cabrera released the following statement regarding the death of 32BJ president Hector Figueroa..... I received the news of the passing of 32BJ SEIU president Hector Figueroa with deep sadness and a profound sense of loss.

"Hector's human compassion drove him beyond the ranks of his members to stand with workers in other industries for decent wages and working conditions. Hector Figueroa was a true hero of working people."

Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie on the passing of 32BJ SEIU President Héctor Figueroa.... Héctor spent his career fighting to improve people's lives. In addition to being a friend, he was a critical partner in the progressive policies we fought for in the Assembly Majority, and were finally able to achieve this year. His leadership as president of 32BJ SEIU has put them at the frontline fighting for social and economic justice, voting rights, immigrants' rights and environmental protections. Héctor's dedication to labor and human rights was unmatched."

Senator Alessandra Biaggi issued the following statement on the passing of 32BJ SEIU President Hector Figueroa.... "Hector was a New York titan whose legacy is difficult to capture in words. He fearlessly and willingly stood up to anyone who stood in the way of true progress and change.

"His memory will forever live on in the people who so deeply loved him and in our continued work to carry out his vision for justice."



SENATOR ALESSANDRA BIAGGI
Courtesy of Senator Alessandra Biaggi's Office

Congressman José E. Serrano released the following in response to President Trump's Executive Action restating efforts to use citizenship information from other executive branch agencies to supplement the 2020 Census survey.... "I am glad the President appears to have finally realized it is pointless to continue pushing for the inclusion of a citizenship question in the 2020 Census. This is a victory for those of us who have fought for the Department of Commerce to eliminate the citizenship question from the form, and to ensure a fairer and more accurate count."

Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz commented on the 50th anniversary of man's first walk on the Moon.... "As a child, I distinctly remember the awe-struck inspiration I felt as I watched two American astronauts become the first people to ever walk on the moon's surface. Our country was unified behind this incredible scientific effort, and we felt like we could accomplish anything we set our minds to.

"With less computing power than a modern cellphone, we were able to send three human

beings into space, land two of them on the moon, and return them all home safely. This is the mentality that we need to have again, as we explore solutions to climate change and other immense challenges that face our society."

Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz issued the following statement in response to the denial of a temporary restraining order against Dinowitz's legislation to repeal non-medical exemptions to school vaccine requirements.... "I am glad that science has prevailed once more and that the public health will continue to be protected while our judicial system works through this lawsuit. My legislation is not and has never been about religion. It is about protecting public health.

"Those who are opposed to vaccinations should not be allowed to put the health of other people's children at risk—end of story. Similar legislation has been upheld in California, and the policy has been in effect for many years in West Virginia and Mississippi. I am confident that my legislation will withstand this lawsuit and our children will be more protected from vaccine-preventable diseases."

A statement from Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark on the retirement of Corporation Counsel Zachary W. Carter.... "His six years as the city's Corporation Counsel capped a remarkable career including U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, a magistrate judge in the Eastern District, a judge of the New York City Criminal Court and Executive Assistant District Attorney in Brooklyn, as well as years in private practice.

"Zach has been instrumental in bringing more fairness to the criminal justice system. He has been a tremendous partner with the Bronx district attorney's office, and I value his support and insight."

LET US HEAR FROM YOU

Letters to the editor are welcome from all readers. They should be addressed care of this newspaper to Laura Guerriero, Publisher, the Bronx Times Reporter, 3604 E. Tremont Ave., Bronx, NY 10465, or e-mail to bronxtimes@englocal.com.

All letters, including those submitted via e-mail, MUST be signed and with a verifiable address and telephone number included. Note that the address and telephone number will NOT be published and the name will be published or withheld upon request.

No unsigned letters can be accepted for publication. The editor reserves the right to edit all submissions.