



THE INVESTIGATOR



Volume 4 Issue 2
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SUMMER READING FUN!

Thank You for reading our fourth installment of The Investigator. We hope you have found the articles and tips from teachers at LCCS helpful. In this last issue of the year, we tried to give you literacy tips and advice to help you and your children continue to grow as readers and writers throughout the summer months!

Enjoy the nice weather, curl up with a good book and continue to write in those summer journals. We look forward to seeing you again in the new school year!!

Debra Silva,
Reading Specialist



Special Points of Interest

- Understanding of Motivation Theory and Literacy Development
- Summer Reading Ideas and tips.
- Summer Math Ideas
- Autism update

Understanding Motivation Theory and Literacy Development: Getting our kids excited about literacy over the summer months. [Debra Silva, Reading Specialist](#)

Our goal in having a balanced literacy approach in teaching our children is to create what the National Reading

Research Center calls, "engaged readers". What is an engaged reader? An engaged reader uses prior knowledge to gain

new information from the text they read. They also have the ability to transfer and apply acquired information into new contexts. Engaged readers are **motivated** to read voluntarily, both for pleasure and for information (Morrow, 1992). These motivated

Understanding Motivation Theory and Literacy Development by Debra Silva, Reading Specialist continued.....

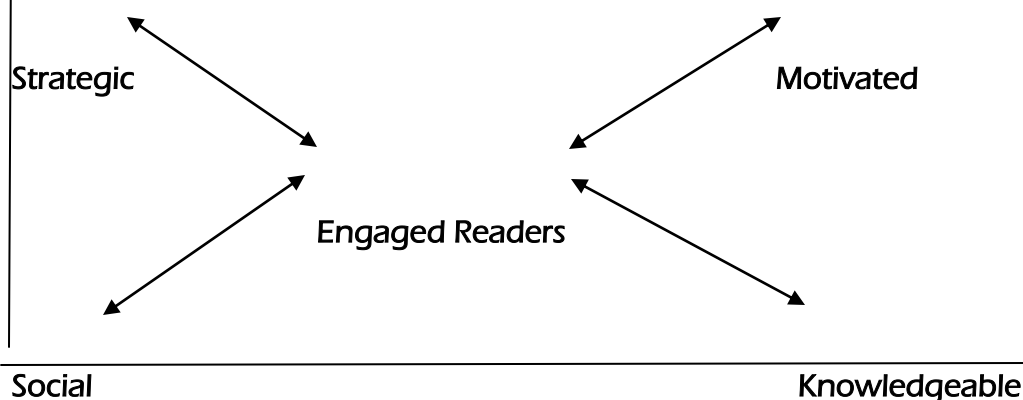


learners also seek out others to gain new competencies as well. (See figure 1.1) So how do we develop motivation in our children? Motivation is defined as an intrinsic desire to initiate, sustain, and direct one's activity. Motivated students return to and continue to work on tasks. In Lesley Morrow's book, *The Literacy Center : Contexts for Reading and Writing*. She discusses several elements she has found to motivate children. They include:

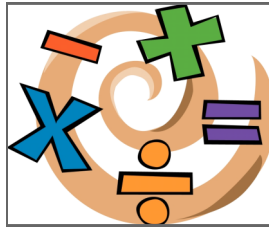
- **The opportunity to have and make choices.** She explains that choice gives children a sense of control and promotes motivation. It is important to offer up as many variety in literacy materials, spaces and activities so that students can decide what interests them. If they are interested in a topic they are more likely to read for meaning and stay engaged.
- **Social Collaboration** Collaboration facilitates children's engagement in a task. Peers are a strong influence on moving forward with literacy activities. Look for local postings at the nearest library, create your own summer reading group. Kids love to discuss books together. Grab a picnic blanket, some snacks and have a little book group with a few friends.
- **Challenging tasks** Challenges promote goal attainment. Tasks must be challenging but able to be accomplished. Encourage your child to step out of their comfort zone and read some material that maybe they hadn't considered. Especially in content areas such as science and social studies. Traveling, map reading, going on unexpected excursions are great ways to get kids excited about history and science.
- **Success** Who doesn't feel good about succeeding?? Success gives students a sense of being competent. Part of success is being able to share completed tasks with peers, teachers, and parents. Brag!! Spread the cheer. Celebrate the reader and writer in all of us with family members and friends throughout the summer.
- **Children's Literature** Good Quality Children's literature is motivating within itself! Go to your local library and books store. Read the last issue of *The Investigator* which discussed Newberry, Caldecott, and Coretta Scott King awarded books.

<http://www.nea.org/tools>

Figure 1.1 Qualities of Engaged Readers



THINK MATH=THINK FUN, ALL SUMMER LONG BY ERICA SMITH, MIDDLE SCHOOL MATH TEACHER



Summer time is almost here! I know you have your to-do list handy of all the things you need to prepare before summer gets started! Have you registered your child for summer camp? Check. Have you figured out vacation plans? Check. What about the pool? Check. Wait a minute! Although summer is the time for vacation and fun, there is one major thing missing from that checklist. You see, your child's education is very important, right? You are not just concerned about your child's future ten months of the year. I suggest that you think about ways to keep your child's mind actively engaged in the critical thinking skills that are needed to be successful in life.

Research by Cooper and colleagues (1996) determined that students of all income levels regress in their math ability by one month over the summer months (if no summer learning takes place) (Blazer, 2011). This decline is cumulative and is worse among younger children (Smith, 2011). "Cooper and colleagues speculated that math skills declined more than reading skills over the summer because children's home environments tend to provide more opportunities to practice reading than math," (Blazer, 2011, p.2). This research also shows that great gains can also occur during these summer months if students are given the opportunities to use their math skills during the summer (Blazer, 2011).

So, how can you help your child to maintain and even improve his or her math skills over the summer? Here are a few simple things that you can add to your weekly to-do list to enhance your child's critical thinking skills. Mental math is a life skill that many students (and adults) do not value. In the age of the calculator at your fingertips (a.k.a cell phone) many people don't think mental math is necessary. I guarantee that adding a few of these mental math activities and some of the other ideas to your list will not only enhance your child's math experience, but will help boost his or her confidence in math as well!

Shopping fun- While shopping at the food store (or even for clothes), have your child keep a running mental estimate of the total. The eggs cost \$3.99, round that to \$4. The milk is \$4.99, round that to \$5. The loaves of bread are 2 for \$5. That's easy, you add \$4 + \$5 + \$5 and you have \$14 so far.

A night out for dinner- It's a sticky, hot, summer evening and you decide to go out for

THINK MATH=THINK FUN, ALL SUMMER LONG BY ERICA SMITH, MIDDLE SCHOOL MATH TEACHER

CONTINUED.....

sushi. When the bill comes, pass it to your child (fourth grade and up could definitely try this). The bill comes to \$25. Ask your child, "How can we figure out how much tip to leave if we want to leave a 15% tip?" (Hint: You can find 10% easily just by moving the decimal one place to the left and then half that number for 5%, you would get $\$2.50 + \$1.25 = \$3.75$). "What about if I want to leave a 20% tip? ($\$2.5 + \$2.5 = \$5$).

Family Game Night- Once a week put away the iPads, iPhones, etc. and break out an old-school board or card game. Monopoly, Blockus, Mancala, Chess, Dominos, Phase 10, and 21 are just a few fun math games that use critical thinking skills.

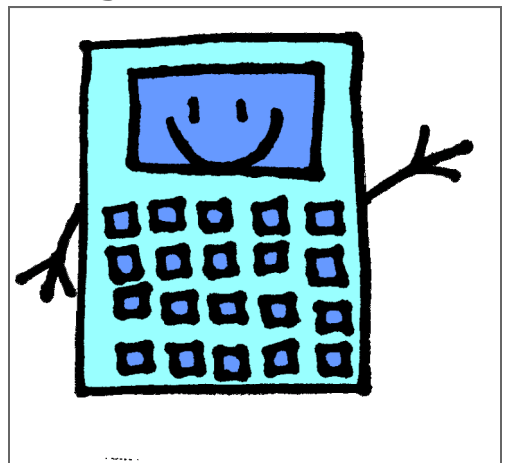
Online Learning Tools- There are cool online games that are fun and help maintain and build math skills.

www.funbrain.com –This resource has some cool areas and access to parallel sites that are also pretty engaging. I enjoy sending my nephews to the Math Playground to practice operations with decimals. Math Baseball is one of my favorite games.

www.gamequarium.com –This site has many different components. The math area has some cool problem solving links and even an everyday math area to challenge your thinking.

www.khanacademy.org –This site was introduced to me by a fellow colleague who has seen great benefits when using it with her classes (Thanks Ms.Rha). The program is a series of instructional videos, games, and challenges created to help your independent learner to progress in his or her math ability. It seems very game-oriented and fun for the students who have used it.

Please take **advantage** of your time to engage in learning **with** your child this summer! They will only reap great benefits from thinking critically throughout the summer and will not suffer from the loss of important mental math **life** skills. You won't regret it!



Avoid That Summer Reading Slump

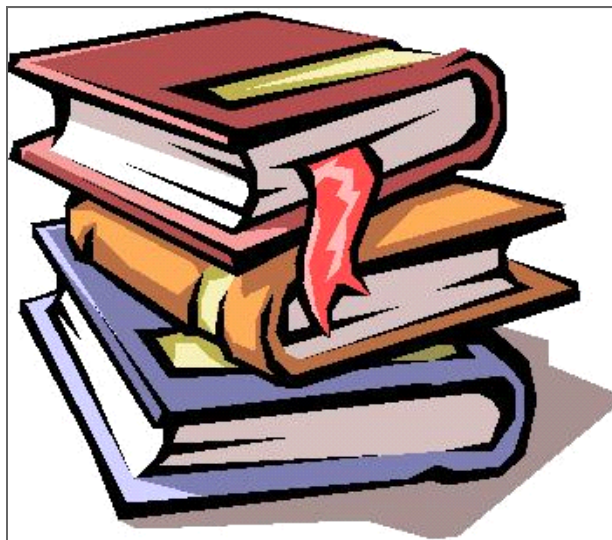
By Lori Kraemer, Middle School ELA Teacher

It's the most wonderful time of the year- summertime where the living is easy! What better time is there than to curl up in a hammock or stretch out on a beach towel with a really good book? There's no better time for reading than summertime!

At Learning Community Charter School, middle school teachers challenged their students to read at least forty books, independently, in addition to all assigned reading, throughout the school year. The results? Students are reaping the academic, social, and emotional benefits of immersing themselves in literature, and the classrooms are alive with the sounds of students who can think critically about things like theme and symbolism, students who can analyze characterization, make meaningful inferences, and identify what makes another person's writing worthy of their attention! Students are seeing themselves on the pages of these books and also seeing places they have never imagined before. So, as we enter this highly celebrated season, it is important to insure students maintain that their enthusiasm and zest for reading- it's fundamental!

Summer book groups, participation in the public library's summer reading incentive program, trips to the local bookstore's book signings and readings are activities that may cause the average middle school student to baulk and snicker. But it really doesn't take much to keep reading going for another 10 weeks until the fall! It may only take just one more solid read! Here are few suggestions to keep them going. The author Anna Quindlen eloquently stated, "Books are the plane, and the train, and the road. They are the destination, and the journey. They are home." In your travels, in your downtime, in the day and in the nighttime, may you enjoy the summer by reading some really, really good books!

You will find a link to some great summer reads just under the tab for this issue. It will be labeled "great summer reads". Just click it to open it.





April is Autism Awareness Month! In New Jersey, 1 in 49 children are believed to have Autism in comparison to the national rate of 1 in 88. Our Middle School students are starting to have conversations with their teachers and classmates on Autism, what it is and why it's important to spread awareness. Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and autism are both general terms used to describe a group of complex disorders of brain development. These disorders are characterized, in varying degrees, by difficulties in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication and repetitive behaviors. They include autistic disorder, Rett syndrome, childhood disintegrative disorder, pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS) and Asperger syndrome. These disorders are under an umbrella that is identified as Autism Spectrum Disorders.

ASD can be associated with intellectual disability, difficulties in motor coordination, attention and physical health issues such as sleep and gastrointestinal disturbances. Some individuals with ASD excel in visual skills, music, math and art.

Autism appears to have its roots in very early brain development. However, the most obvious signs of autism and symptoms of autism tend to emerge between 2 and 3 years of age. Organizations such as Autism Speaks continues to fund research on effective methods for earlier diagnosis, as early intervention with proven behavioral therapies can improve outcomes. Increasing autism awareness is a key aspect of this work and one in which LCCS play an invaluable role.

What's happening now? The DSM-V (Diagnostic Statistical Manuel-5th edition) will be released in May 2013. The DSM-V is known as a handbook of diagnoses. Two change will be made this year, The first change is the separate diagnostic labels of Autistic Disorder, Asperger's Disorder, and PDD-NOS, which will now be replaced under one umbrella term known as "Autism Spectrum Disorder". The severity of the diagnosis will be based on the amount of support needed regarding challenges with social behavior, communication, and behaviors present. For example, one might be diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder under Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3. According to the DSM-V's website, they state that the reasons for the sudden changes are due to the following:

Autism by Nancy Jaber Continued

*The current diagnosis is not accurate nor precise as it should be-different health professional diagnose the same individual with various disorders of autism and some change their diagnosis annually while symptoms remain the same.

*Since autism is best defined as a similar set of behaviors, it should be characterized by a single label according to the individual's severity.

The second change involves the current three symptoms which include domains of social impairment, communication deficits and repetitive/restricted behaviors. These three domains will now become two- social communication impairment and repetitive/restricted behaviors.

The DSM-5 committee assures individuals who currently have a diagnosis such as Asperger's syndrome that they will keep their current diagnosis. No individual will *lose* their diagnosis because of the current changes in the diagnostic areas. In addition, the DSM-V committee stresses the fact that the new DSM-V is considered to be a "living document" that will continue to be modified and developed as new studies and research is conducted.

For additional information please email Nancy-Jaber@lccsnj.org and/or visit <http://www.autismspeaks.org/what-autism>