

# POTOMAC ALMANAC

www.PotomacAlmanac.com

Newspaper of Potomac  
A Connection Newspaper

An independent, locally owned weekly  
newspaper delivered  
to homes and businesses.

1606 King Street  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Free digital edition delivered to  
your email box. Go to  
connectionnewspapers.com/subscribe

## PUBLISHER

Mary Kimm  
mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com  
@MaryKimm

## EDITORIAL

PHONE: 703-778-9415  
E-MAIL:  
almanac@connectionnewspapers.com

## EDITOR

Steven Mauren, 703-752-4013  
smauren@connectionnewspapers.com

## SPORTS EDITOR

Jon Roetman,  
703-224-3015  
jroetman@connectionnewspapers.com  
@jonroetman

## CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Susan Belford, Carole Dell,  
Cissy Finley Grant, Carole Funger,  
Colleen Healy, Kenny Lourie,  
Ken Moore

## Contributing Photographers

Harvey Levine, Deborah Stevens

## Art/Design:

Laurence Foong, John Heiny  
Production Manager  
Geovani Flores

## Special Assistant to the Publisher

Jeanne Theismann  
703-778-9436  
jtheismann@connectionnewspapers.com  
@TheismannMedia

## ADVERTISING

For advertising information  
e-mail:  
sales@connectionnewspapers.com

## ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES

Display Advertising:  
Kenny Lourie 703-778-9425  
klourie@connectionnewspapers.com

## Andrea Smith 703-778-9411

Classified Advertising  
asmith@connectionnewspapers.com

## Debbie Funk

National Sales & real Estate  
703-778-9444  
debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com

## Jerry Vernon

Executive Vice President  
jvernon@connectionnewspapers.com

Potomac Almanac is published  
by Local Media Connection LLC

## Five Time First Place Award-Winner Public Service

MDDC Press Association

## Four Time

Newspaper of the Year  
An Award-winning Newspaper  
in Writing, Photography, Editing,  
Graphics and Design

# Halting the Summer Slide

Local educators offer suggestions to keep children learning through the summer.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE ALMANAC

Wendy Taylor and her family are spending the summer in the Land of Oz. The North Potomac mother of three isn't vacationing, however, she's helping her three elementary school-aged boys keep their academic skills sharp.

"During the summer, kids should get out and get moving and do things as a family, not sit in front of a television," said Wendy Taylor, founder and director of Learning Essentials, an education consulting firm that serves Potomac, North Potomac, Bethesda and other parts of Montgomery County. "Start a family book club. My husband and I started one this summer with our three boys ages 3 to 9. We're

reading the 'Wizard of Oz' and it appeals to all of them at their levels. We ask them to visualize what the characters look like to you."

Taylor, a former Montgomery County Public School teacher, said she is helping her children, and others, prevent what educators call the "summer slide," a time when students' minds are not challenged and they lose academic skills that they've learned during the school year.

"It's not difficult," she said. "The D.C. area offers wonderful learning activities."

Taylor developed a summer program called Brain Camp designed to help students identify study strategies and organizational techniques that fit their individual learning strengths. ([http://tutoringle.com/services/brain\\_camp](http://tutoringle.com/services/brain_camp))

## Activities to Prevent the Summer Slide

From Wendy Taylor, *Learning Essentials*

- 1. Family Dinner:** Cook with children — plan a menu, shop for ingredients, follow a recipe. Incorporates reading, measurement and nutrition.
- 2. Plant a Garden:** Choose flowers or fruits and vegetables. Ask your child to draw the plant and label its parts. Chart the plant's growth, pollination and maturation.
- 3. Party Planning or Trip Planning:** Have your child plan a back-to-school party or fun event with a budget and guidelines. Reinforces lessons on sequencing, breaking down larger task, math, money and responsibility.
- 4. Blogging:** Have your child start a blog or send emails to family members updating them on his or her summer adventures. Strengthens writing skills, promotes creative self-expression and introduces technology usage.
- 5. Family Book Club:** Read classics together.

IN ADDITION to camps, there are a variety of ways that parents can help children strengthen and maintain not only reading, writing, math and science skills, but also life skills such as organization, creative and analytical thinking abilities.

Shannon Melideo, Ph.D., associate dean of the School of Education and Human Services at Marymount University in Arlington, Va., also encourages parents to capitalize on the resources in the Washington, D.C., region. "Print out a list of things you want to do and put them on a calendar," she said. "You can help

kids get ready for next year by knowing what they're going to be studying and giving them some experience in those areas. For example, if in fifth grade they study ancient civilizations, you can say 'Let's go to the African History Museum and learn about Mali.'"

Such experiences, said Melideo, will empower students during the next school year. "It sets them up for success," she said. "They can relate better to what they're learning if they've had experience with the content. When they're reading something in a text book, they can raise their hand in class and say 'I saw that at the African History Museum.'"

MANY AREA SCHOOLS are also helping parents keep their students on track. For ex-



Wendy and Chris Taylor, pictured with their children — 9-year-old Brennan, 6-year-old Harrison and 3-year-old Creighton — formed a family book club this summer to keep their family reading.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WENDY TAYLOR

ample, children at Potomac Elementary School were given "Summer Fun" packets with activity suggestions to help parents keep their youngsters stimulated during the summer break. Tasks range from writing and mailing post cards and creating stories on storybird.com to completing math scavenger hunts and using the education website brainpop.com.

Blake Giliotti, Potomac Elementary's staff development specialist, said the packet has summer learning opportunities that encourage students to use reading and math. "It can also be as simple as saying, 'Tell me about what you are reading,'" she said. "Engaging in a natural conversation about a book can give you insight into what your child understands, and helps build oral communication skills."

Melideo believes the best way for parents to encourage good reading habits in their children is to model the behavior. "Never go anywhere without a book handy. We all wait at the doctors' offices or in lines. If you're standing and waiting for 15 minutes, it is the perfect time to read. Even when you go to the pool, take a book and read during 15-minute breaks," Melideo said.

She said that what children read is less important than the fact that they actually read. "It doesn't matter if they're reading their favorite book over and over," she said. "I'd rather a kid read People Magazine than nothing, but 'Bridge to Terabithia' would be better."

Other stealthy strategies for keeping children's brains challenged include planting a family garden, creating a photo journal and do-it-yourself projects.

"There are many families who travel during the summer," said Taylor. "Give the kiddos a disposable camera and let them keep picture journals. They can write words or sentences depending on their ages, but it helps with writing skills, sequencing and remembering."

Taylor says do-it-yourself projects like building a scooter, sprinkler or obstacle course integrate math, planning and measuring. "You can integrate money by allowing the children to purchase the items with cash and receive change."