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## Don M. Winn: That Summer Reading Loss (and how to prevent it)

*Jul 9, 2018 by  
Michael F. Shaughnessy EducationViews Senior  
Columnist*

### An Interview with Don M. Winn: That Summer Reading Loss (and how to prevent it)

Michael F. Shaughnessy –

**1) Don, having just celebrated the 4th of July, we are now in the middle of the summer—and thoughts turn to that “summer reading loss” problem. What are your thoughts and what does the research show?**

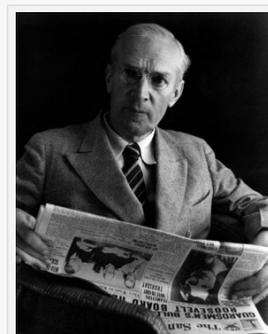
All children, dyslexic or not, face an unintended consequence of the summer break from school: a “summer slide,” or learning loss. A 2011 RAND study revealed that students lose an average of 1–2 months of learning progress every summer, and the effects are cumulative. In other words, without a plan for intervention, educational losses compound summer after summer. According to the study, 20% of third-graders couldn’t read at grade level, and by the eighth grade, the number of students reading below grade level had increased to 33%. The accumulation of several summer’s worth of reading loss is a big factor.

But here’s the thing: even small efforts to counteract the summer reading slide bring big returns. The threshold seems to be at least five books. In other words, if your child reads at least five books this summer, he or she can prevent the loss of hard-won reading skills.

**2) What do parents need to be doing during these summer months?**

- Encourage an interest in reading. Talk with your child and discover what their current interests are. Ask a lot of “why” questions, and then find the answer together through reading. Using online resources counts too: it’s still reading.
- There are a number of interactive platforms which allow your child to read, comment on, and rate the books on their reading list while interacting with friends. I’ll link those below.
- Check your local library for summer reading programs and activities. Some even have author visits!
- If your child is a struggling reader, ask about free audiobooks at your local library, or use <https://www.bookshare.org/cms/> to give them free access to audiobooks. And don’t miss the Sir Kaye series on audiobook—they’re fan favorites!
- Make it fun and foster a sense of achievement by using gold stars, colored stickers, or other marks of completion that they can keep on the fridge, hang in their room, or post online.
- Read aloud to your child. You might be thinking: my kid is in school now, so they should be practicing their own reading skills, not having me do the reading. But according to reading expert Faith Borkowsky, nothing could be farther from the truth. In her blog, she lists 5 reasons why parents should continue to read with their children as long as possible. Not reading to your child can send the wrong message, as if you are saying, “You are in school, not me. If

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you HAVE TO READ, then go and read. That's behind me now." Reading shouldn't be seen by kids as a dreaded household chore like cleaning their room, and when kids see you enjoying reading personally and sharing that enjoyment with them, they get the message that it's an enjoyable priority, not something odious.

### 3) My local library deserves recognition for their efforts—but what have you seen transpiring in your neck of the woods?

Both the Round Rock and Austin Public Libraries have generous summer programs: regular story times with suggested books and events for pre-readers, young readers, tweens, and teens, and hands-on workshops for hobbies and even music! Libraries can be a tremendous help as parents work to raise readers.

### 4) Summertime—and the reading is easy—if you have some favorite characters. What were some of your favorites growing up?

My earliest favorite was Curious George. I never tired of hearing his adventures! I also loved Winnie the Pooh, and when I got a bit older, The Hardy Boys and eventually the Horatio Hornblower series. Of course, there were stacks of comic books around too, and just like today's youth, superheroes were a big part of my life.

### 5) Speaking of favorite characters—what is happening with Space Cop Zack and of course, Sir Kaye?

Space Cop Zack is about to have a new adventure: *The Lost Treasure of Zandor*. It will officially be released on August 21, 2018. The Wishing Shelf Awards in the UK got a pre-release copy, and had this to say in their review: "A fantastically fun space adventure packed full of SoloCopter Lifts, Noot the Tall and Terrible, and a big robot called Cantobor."



## REVIEW

I must begin by saying that, nowadays, I spend a lot of my time enjoying modern thrillers; and even the odd YA novel full of weeping teenagers finding love and then discovering it wasn't. But I don't spend so much time curled up with a comic-style space opera for 7 – 11-year-olds. Well, no longer. I'm now a big fan!

Space Cop Zack: The Lost Treasure of Zandor follows Zack and his robot, GARG, as they attempt to stop Menace and his evil pals from nabbing a lost treasure. This very pacey stuff. Every page is filled with a new challenge for the hero to overcome, whether it be Jeweled Cave Clingers that bite or a molten mudslide. Now, I'm no longer a ten-year-old boy, but I still remember what I enjoyed back then. And, trust me, I would have enjoyed this. It reminded me of the old 1960s space comics: Buck Rogers and Lost in Space, with a strong hero to rally behind and a host of evil monsters that were, simply put, evil – in every way. No greys. Just good and bad. And kids love it when they know who to cheer for and who to boo. Well, there's plenty to cheer for in this visually stunning, battle-filled adventure.

Just a note on the drawings: WOW! They are soooooo cool! I loved them. All of them. The story's good but the pics blew me away.

To sum up, this is a fun adventure that 99.9% of 7 – 11-year-old boys are going to love. Not only is it superbly illustrated, but the plot is so fast-paced, I almost needed a sleep after reading it. I can just see a bunch of boys enjoying this and then discussing at length who'd win in a fight between Jeweled Cave Clinger and sleeping Ultracompact Land Fish.

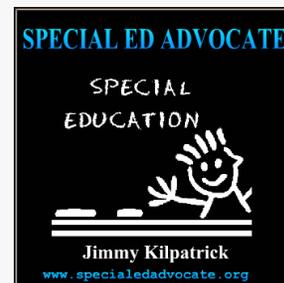
Wonderful stuff!

A 'Wishing Shelf' Book Review  
[www.thewsa.co.uk](http://www.thewsa.co.uk)

And there's more fun for fans of Sir Kaye: a prequel to the story, "Mystery of the White Knight." This is the first in



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a new series called "The World of Sir Kaye." Each story will feature beloved characters from the Sir Kaye series in their own, stand-alone adventures. In this installment, Beau has a big mystery to solve.

Who is the White Knight?

He ruins fields so nothing can grow, burns down entire villages, and terrifies the people of Knox. People say it's the new queen's fault—that she's a bad ruler. They want to take her throne away and give it to someone else. But she's only been ruling for one month! When disaster strikes, can her nephew Beau save the throne for the queen and solve the mystery of the White Knight?



#### 5) Any resources you would suggest for parents?

Use online tools like <http://pbskids.org/games/reading/>, <http://www.read.gov/kids/>, <https://www.tweentribune.com/>, <https://bookopolis.com/#/>, <https://www.biblionasium.com/#tab/content-spring-selections>, and for older kids, <https://www.goodreads.com/> and <https://litpick.com/>.

#### 6) What have I neglected to ask?

There are lots of learning opportunities in more urban areas; if your kids are like most, they love gadgets and tech. And those passions have many upsides, including offering your child a gateway into future skill sets they will need when they enter the job market. What could be better than combining the techie fun kids love with the opportunity to learn this summer?

If your child is at least 6 years old, they have a wonderful opportunity this summer: Microsoft Stores are offering a plethora of free workshops and children's camps at their nationwide store locations, which will run from May 2018 through the end of August 2018.

Classes and camps are divided by age, but cover all ages between 6 and teens. Want to offer your 6-to-8-year-old the chance to learn about computers, including learning basic coding skills? Done!

Would your 8+-year-old love to learn how to make movies, even in 3D? They'll learn to storyboard, editing, and develop skills on Microsoft's latest 3-D animation and movie-making software. There will even be a movie premier for parents to attend at the end of the camp!

Is your 8+-year old a fan of robotics? Look no further: one camp offers the opportunity to program an OH-bot <http://www.ohbot.co.uk/>, bringing it to life with facial expressions and speech!

Minecraft fans will get to learn the fundamentals of coding for this popular video game!

The "Create a Difference In Your World" workshop will take your child through researching a local issue they care about, and show them how to use technology to create action plans to fundraise, volunteer, or get the word out about their chosen cause.

STEM Saturdays (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) offers kids between the ages of 11 and 14 (or younger kids with parental support) the chance to dive deep into these four topics, the foundations of which are each so pivotal to future educational goals.

And finally, don't miss out on summer programs at museums. Imax has a wonderful movie currently, "Dream Big: Engineering Our World" that helps kids embrace the facets of math and the sciences that are actively touching people's lives around the world.

Have a great summer!

#### 7) Do you have a website and what would I find there?

My team and I work hard to make my [website](#) a dynamic resource for parents, homeschoolers, and teachers. Articles on dyslexia and helping reluctant readers are easy to find in the archive, and teaching aids, activities for

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