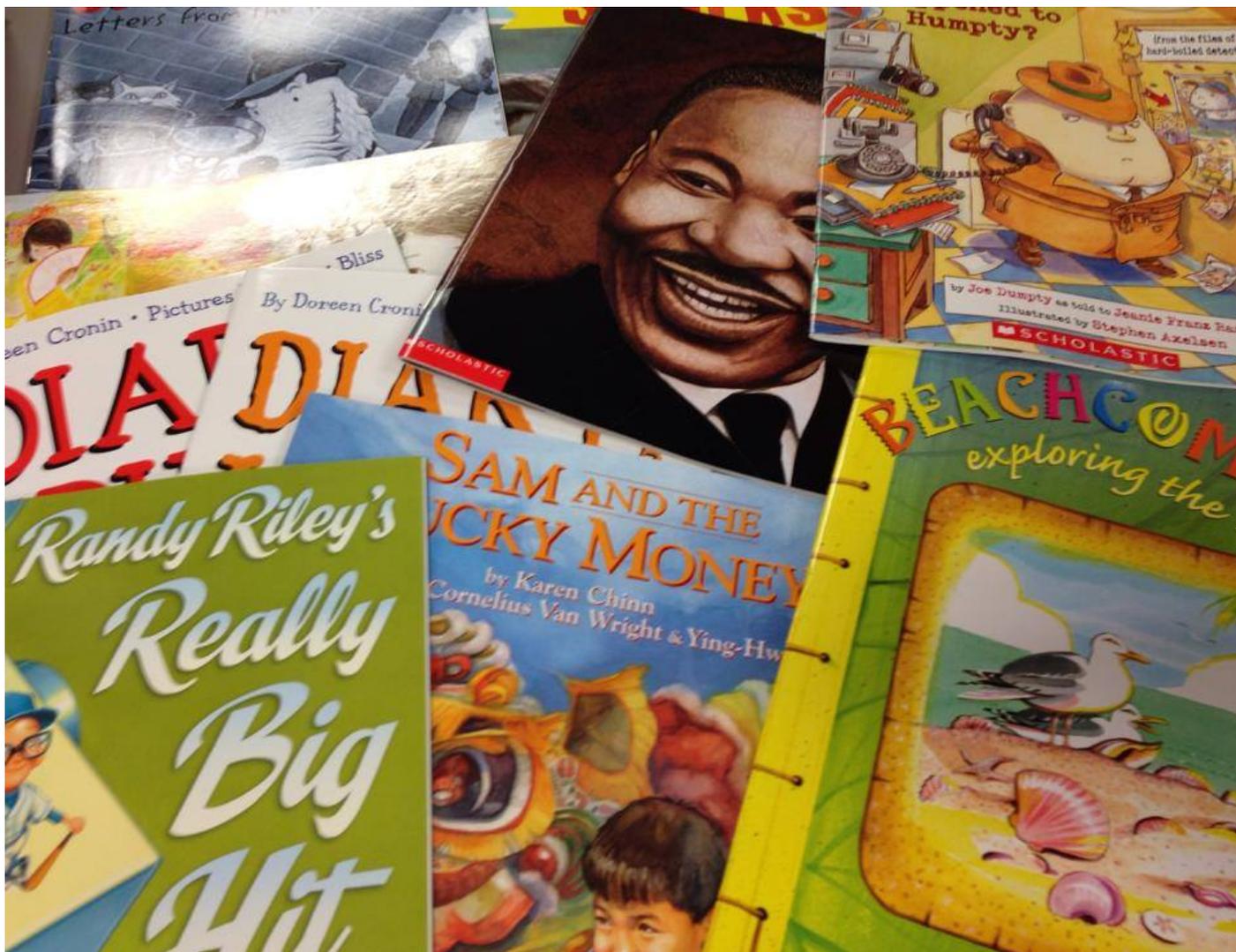


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External Affairs and Policy Communications Press Release

Georgia Announces 2014 Summer Reading Challenge



Summer is on its way, but that shouldn't mean books are left on the shelf. When students don't read during the summer months, they lose educational ground – a phenomenon that lowers achievement potential and widens the achievement gap.

"No student should have to start the school year having fallen behind," State School Superintendent John Barge said. "That's what we know, and that's what we're committed to preventing – because that loss is preventable. When students read over the summer, they can actually make gains in achievement. All of Georgia's students deserve that."

To ensure that Georgia's students don't fall behind while school is out of session, the Georgia Department of Education is working alongside the Get Georgia Reading campaign, the Governor's Office of Student Achievement, and the Council of Chief State School Officers to encourage summer reading. Representatives of those organizations announced Georgia's 2014 Summer Reading Challenge today at Timber Ridge Elementary School in Cobb County.

All students are challenged to read every day this summer, for at least 15 to 30 minutes. Parents and students are encouraged to visit the [Find a Book, Georgia](#) website and make a Summer Reading Pledge. Then they can use the site to find book recommendations throughout the summer, all tailored to a student's interests and Lexile score. (If the child's Lexile score is not known, the site can estimate reading level based on answers to a few simple questions.)

Suggested summer reading goals for students based on grade levels are:

- K-2 students: 10 books
- 3-5 students: 8 chapter books
- 6-12 students: 5 fiction books and 5 non-fiction books

Students need strong reading skills in order to be successful at school and, later, in the workplace. Research shows that students who read proficiently by the end of third grade are more likely to be successful later in life. Students who fail to meet this milestone falter in the later grades.

"Georgia's Summer Reading Challenge will provide access to the language nutrition that all children need, year round, to succeed in school," said Arianne Weldon, director of Get Georgia Reading – Campaign for Grade Level Reading. "Use of summer reading resources supports a climate of learning in the home and community during the summer months, and assists as a bridge to the next school year."

Research has found that when children leave the structured environment of the classroom for summer break, many stop reading – and their reading abilities start to slip. Strong readers plateau. Struggling readers fall even farther behind.

Research also shows that summer loss has an greater impact on low-income children, and can widen the achievement gap. Low-income students lose more than two months in reading achievement during the summer months, despite the fact that their middle-class peers make slight gains. More than half of the achievement gap between lower- and higher-income students can be explained by unequal access to summer learning opportunities.

Summer reading also provides a solution to a problem parents encounter during the summer months. It is the most difficult time to keep children engaged and involved in productive activities, many parents report.

"Reading year round is absolutely essential to the academic advancement of students," said Rita Erves, President of the Georgia PTA. "Aristotle once made a profound statement when he said: 'We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then is not an act but a habit.' A regular reading schedule actually serves to enhance a child's learning

potential. It also provides a wide window of opportunity for students to connect with the world. To that end, Georgia PTA is pleased to participate in the promotion of summer reading.”

A simple solution to that problem is finding books in which students are genuinely engaged – books that are centered around their interests.

Lynn O’Hara, Account Representative for Scholastic, stated the importance of reading very simply: “Read every day, lead a better life.”

More Information

[2014 Summer Reading Challenge Website](#)

Information on summer reading loss: [here](#) or [here](#)





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