Summer Reading Alternate Essay

Every summer, SMMUSD middle school students are required to read two books from the summer reading list. The district’s librarians choose the titles based on the books’ reputations and level of difficulty. Middle school English teachers give students credit for reading and doing book reports on their summer reading. The city libraries in Santa Monica have copies of most of the books on the list. SMMUSD believes summer reading is important because it helps students maintain their reading level instead of losing ground during the summer. Some people believe summer should be free time for students, or argue that it is difficult for students to read on their own for a variety of reasons. Write a letter to the JAMS Librarian in which you argue that the summer reading program should continue, change, or end.

STEP 1:

List several pros and cons of the SMMUSD middle school summer reading requirement.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| PROS | CONS |
|  |  |

STEP 2:

Read the sources on the back of this page. Use one color to highlight or underline PROS and another color to highlight or underline CONS. Then add these PROS and CONS to your table above.

STEP 3:

Should the summer reading program continue, change, or end? Write your claim:

**SOURCE A**

**Anderson, R. C., Hiebert E. H., Scott  J. A., & Wilkinson I. A. G. (1985).**[***Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading***](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED253865&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED253865)

A report written for the US Department of Education examines independent reading.  Researchers found that the amount of reading done outside of school was consistently related to gains in reading achievement.  Children will engage in more independent reading when they have greater access to books.  The study concluded that libraries play a crucial role for families that cannot afford to buy books.

**SOURCE B**

**Cooper, H., Nye B., Linsey J., et al. (1996). "**[**The Effects of Summer Vacation on Achievement Test Scores: A Narrative and Meta-Analytic Review**](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=EJ596384&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=EJ596384)**[ERIC]." *Review of Educational Research*, no. 66, 227-268.**

Researchers from the University of Missouri performed a meta-analysis of 39 existing research studies that measured summer learning and school achievement.  The study found that most students lost an average of one month of school learning over summer vacation. Some students, particularly those from disadvantaged households, lost up to three months of learning.  Summer learning loss was greatest in math computation, reading, and spelling.

**SOURCE C**

**Dominican University. (2010, June 22). *The Dominican study: public library summer reading programs close the reading gap*.**

… students who participated in public library summer reading programs scored higher on reading achievement tests at the beginning of the next school year.  Students who participated in public library summer reading programs also demonstrated higher reading achievement than those students who did not participate.  The study concludes by observing that children who participate in public library summer reading programs returned to school ready to learn, improved their reading achievement and skills, increased their enjoyment of reading, were more motivated to read, were more confident in their reading, read beyond what was required in their free time, and perceived reading to be more important.

**SOURCE D**

**Why Free Play Is the Best Summer School by Jessica Lahey**

***The Atlantic* June 20, 2014**

Most schools across the nation have marked the end of another academic year, and it’s time for summer. Time for kids to bolt for the schoolhouse doors for two long months of play, to explore their neighborhoods and discover the mysteries, treasures, and dramas they have to offer. This childhood idyll will hold true for some children, but for many kids, the coming of summer signals little more than a seasonal shift from one set of scheduled, adult-supervised lessons and activities to another.

Unscheduled, unsupervised, playtime is one of the most valuable educational opportunities we give our children. It is fertile ground; the place where children strengthen social bonds, build emotional maturity, develop cognitive skills, and shore up their physical health. The value of [free play](http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/01/recess-without-rules/283382/), [daydreaming](http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2013/10/teach-kids-to-daydream/280615/), [risk-taking, and independent discovery](http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2014/03/hey-parents-leave-those-kids-alone/358631/) have been much in the news this year, and a[new study](http://journal.frontiersin.org/Journal/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00593/abstract) by psychologists at the University of Colorado reveals just how important these activities are in the development of children’s executive functioning.

…

Parents, if you really want to give your kid a head start on coming school year, relinquish some of that time you have earmarked for lessons or sports camp and let your children play. That’s it. Just play. Grant them time free from your ulterior motives and carefully planned educational outcomes. Let them have dominion over their imaginary kingdoms while their evil dragons, white wizards, marauding armies, and grand battles for supremacy unfurl according to their whims and wills.

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August 25, 2016

Andrea Jarvis

2425 16th Street

Santa Monica, CA 90405

Dear Ms. Jarvis:

Every summer, the middle school students of SMMUSD are required to

read two books from the summer reading list. [Claim] \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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[First Argument] \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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[Second Argument] \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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[Conclusion: Remind the librarian what you want her to do.]

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Sincerely,