

Episode 4: Summer Learning

FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:12;30 - 00:00:31;16

M8: Welcome to number four of our Podcast. In this episode, we are going to talk about summer learning. Joining us is the supervisor of social studies as the interim director of elementary and childhood education. Welcome and thank you for joining us on the podcast.

00:00:31;16 - 00:00:33;04

F2: Happy to be here. Thank you for having us.

00:00:33;04 - 00:00:38;06

M8: So we're talking about summer learning and you just want to start out with what is so important.

00:00:39;08 - 00:01:33;07

F4: Well you know I know from being in the classroom I really first started in the county as a special teacher. And I would literally know that many of the students that I taught would walk out the door in June and never do any scholastic activity all the way till they were returned in August or at the end of August. And so to me it became really important to look at and start you know helping students understand that there are opportunities that they can get engaged in the summer and learning and that's when it became really apparent to me of the need to provide different but really unique opportunities for students in the summer and for me from a former reading teacher perspective was always important for me to keep students engaged in reading and excited about finding new books going to the library sharing what they're reading with friends.

00:01:33;19 - 00:01:56;19

F5: But additionally providing opportunities that kids might not have throughout the year to build some engagement in a diverse amount of possibilities over the summer is if a student doesn't do anything over the summer or just sits in front of TV video games or something and then what does it do to them when it comes they come back in the fall.

00:01:58;10 - 00:03:27;29

F4: Well I mean I really think it depends on the student. I mean I certainly know that we do have students that are going to be independently engaged that they're going to search on websites and they're going to do things it's just that we get the opportunity to create learning experiences in the summer that might be as Wendy said very different than what they might do at home. And you know we want to create those experiences and recognize that students do do things on their own and and we do have programs that really encourage independence. For example we know that the libraries the local libraries every year has a summer reading program because not every student is going to be involved in summer learning through the school. But we also have some things that we're providing that don't have students sitting in summer school but do have some are learning for example and social studies. We've been working at the county on a historical marker series where we're going around the county and we are on weekly releasing a video about a unique aspect of Arlington County where students can see the short video and it gives them some research questions think about and research. They can do that right in their own home. I think you know we've heard we've said this already but I think the idea is engagement and that's what we're really looking

whether it's student engaging in their own home with something that we are providing or it's them physically being present. We're looking for ways to engage students and in learning period.

00:03:28;00 - 00:04:09;15

F5: And this just happens to be that we're doing it during the summer and agreeing I agree with Kathy on that and as well when I think about students having the stamina for learning just like building up with exercise stamina for reading stamina for learning in a classroom. I think any opportunity that they can have to go deeper into something that is appealing to them whether it be a book they're reading researching something will continue to help build that stamina so when they return to the classroom in the fall it isn't like having to build back up again. They're back to being able to focus and be engaged in what they're learning.

00:04:09;15 - 00:05:02;04

F3: So I think that summer learning takes two different formats a lot of times people's perception of summer schools. Oh you get to go to summer school because you really need to build up. Know definitely. We do want students to have an opportunity for summer school for makeup and strengthening but we also believe that our summer school programs provide enrichment and opportunities to go deep a lot of times in our classrooms. We have such a huge amount of content that we're covering large amounts in the summer. We have opportunities to go deep into content and so I think that recognizing that some it's not your old summer school old school summer school that it's we really have evolved into providing new opportunities of engagement and we actually changed the elementary summer school for students that needed additional reading or math help over the summer.

00:05:02;04 - 00:05:54;09

F5: We changed it so that it is a hands on project based learning with science inquiry this summer so every student no matter if they meet additional reading or math support is having time to dig deeper into a problem that they want to solve in the world. Having some hands on science. In fact I was in a first grade class the other day that was looking at different properties of science and creating black and the kids were about as engaged as I've ever seen them. And then from there they were going to be doing some research and they were putting mathematics and reading within the science curriculum so that it was truly engaging for the kids but also helping them with their reading writing and mathematics alone at the same time.

00:05:54;19 - 00:06:10;04

M2: We can't previously say Global Village which is the one that hands on board if you like. What are some of the other somebodies programs that he has provided. Before we started we talked about Innovation Academy and from high school courses out there for students to take part in.

00:06:10;13 - 00:07:47;06

F3: So I speak a little bit about my middle school programs. We have three this summer. One is Google lit trip and literacy based program where the students focus on historical fiction. They map historical fiction and their own personal journey learning Google Earth. And it gives them an opportunity to build up their literacy. But also you know the computers are out and they're investigating and and they're learning how to use Google Earth. So that's one I have another one that we just finished. It was a two week Leadership Academy on Global Affairs where we partnered with the World Affairs Council and we had famous journalists that really spoke kids took up positions as as members of companies and they'd be debated world issues. They went on field trips to the urban treehouse downtown to look at sustainability

and eco systems that a global aspect and it really allowed the students to dig deep for two weeks on global perspectives on issues in the world. And these are middle school these middle school students and then just starting today began my democracy in action which is a two week look at our country and this year the focus is on citizenship and what you can do as a citizen to effect change in your community. And they are headed down to Capitol Hill this Wednesday to meet with the congressman and to also explore what goes on. And then they will come back and they'll research local issues and have their own congressional hearing on issues related to them even just really trying to let these young middle schoolers recognize that as a citizen they have a voice in the community.

00:07:47;06 - 00:07:50;08

F4: And so it's a very engaging opportunity.

00:07:50;12 - 00:09:27;28

F1: And from the elementary perspective in particular are our Title 1 schools of the eight Title 1 schools. We are doing a two week Innovation Academy and that is a full day opportunity for 800 kids in the elementary Title 1 schools to participate. The morning session is all about a problem based learning and they're doing some maker space work and they're doing research around topics that are relevant to our area and our community. And the second part is they were given enrichment opportunities so similar to what a lot of students we get into after school enrichment. We're providing through educational theatre company. We have a tap dancing with geometry we have Arlington's soccer with a variety of opportunities for kids that were based on their choices so that they can spend the entire day and get some opportunities they might not get otherwise. Additionally we have a summer trolley that every Wednesday for Carlins springs. Barcroft Randolph and students will be able to take. We have two more weeks left where they'll be able to come take the trolley from their neighborhood to the public library closest to them for a story time and book checkout and those have been particularly fun because teachers from their school have been there to help with book check out and and do riding the trolley just gets these families in the habit of coming to the public library on a weekly basis.

00:09:27;28 - 00:09:42;02

M9: Great fun I've done the great find time and just so people are familiar with the petroleum trolley goes around picks kids up in their school boundary correct with their parents and brings them to their local community and then takes them back home.

00:09:42;04 - 00:10:19;23

F1: Yeah right at the library there are two different things the library has programs what sort of things are you so they're doing a story time and like the magic right. The theme this summer is health and wellness. So we've been trying to give some healthy tips. They get a healthy snack at the end of the story time and then it's really been about helping guide students to book choices for check out and at all of the libraries we have close to a dozen teacher volunteers that know these students and know what their interests are and are helping them with their book checkouts.

00:10:19;25 - 00:10:32;29

M2: Few of those schools you mentioned just checked only to those Web sites of why correct times are forgotten. It's very far like you said. Two more weeks left. So we also talked about middle schools.

00:10:33;01 - 00:10:35;11

F2: I don't want to forget the highest number of high school.

00:10:35;12 - 00:12:41;02

F3: So you know high school students are very interested in credits and we do have a large number of students at the high school earning make up and strengthening but we offer a lot of new work too. They can in pretty much any of their major core subjects they can get new work credit which is a very compressed time to take a course where you're getting a full year and about five week period. This year I implemented a new kind of program boy for the past few years I've had virtual courses where students can take virtual courses summer I offer virtual EPF economics and personal finance virtual U.S. Virginia history and virtual US Virginia government where it's would students work at home. They can come in for help to learn those content areas and get a full credit for that. But we tried something different this summer and it's a blended course. Sometimes students are reluctant at high school to come to summer school everyday because they have jobs where they have outside interests are involved in a lot of times like swimming and baseball and other activities so our blended format. The students come to school Monday Wednesday Friday and then they have virtual work that they do on Tuesdays and Thursdays and we tried it this summer with economics and personal finance we have about 55 students that sign up for that and the teachers are really pleased at how much the students have kind of embrace that. So it gives them flexibility but that's you know those are some of the things that we look at. Now we do have an I don't know a lot about it but I know we have the superintendents seminar which is a program that we have we ran before Summerskill started and that is an opportunity for a group of students to really look at some enduring ideas of us and to understand and it's run out of the gifted services office. And of course we have opportunities our students in high school often go to the governor school there are many opportunities for high school students. And I really the reason why I went heavy in creating roots meant the middle school is that was kind of an area that didn't have a lot of enrichment.

00:12:41;06 - 00:12:53;21

M2: These courses take through some school fees involve some parents planned for next summer. Do you have to get teachers signed off to get into the or are you just signed up how does that work.

00:12:53;21 - 00:13:20;11

F3: There's definitely fees but as our summer school programs are sliding fees depending on income and in some cases you do have to have parental permit excuse me teacher permission to get in. I know that with for example virtual courses we advise that they talk to their counselor because you know some students may be ready for a blended course. Some student maybe needs to be in a face to face and then some students can handle virtual.

00:13:20;11 - 00:13:52;14

F5: But yes and a lot of them there are sign offs for the elementary the young scholars Innovation Academy is all through teacher and administrative recommendations and elementary strengthening summer school which we think has turned into quite a fun and engaging experience for kiddos that is additionally from the teachers of those students will recommend that a child come first for that five week summer school.

00:13:52;15 - 00:14:04;25

M2: We talked about some of those of course is that we offer. There's also programs with the library that some schools have checked out programs where they check out books believes some schools do a meal in the mailbox.

00:14:04;26 - 00:14:15;18

F1: So we again with the Title 1 schools are all a Title 1 schools do a summer mailbox books program. We've been doing this for 11 years.

00:14:15;21 - 00:15:41;21

F5: Students and may select books that they want mailed to them over the summer and these are books that they get to keep forever. These are books that their teachers around the level of which they're reading. But it is with student choice as two topics. So they actually we have book vendors that come in and students get to book shop and they select between nine and 12 books depending on their age. And that's because the older kids don't go through books quite as quickly as the kindergarten first graders. And these books then get mailed to them three times over the summer when they come and they'll find them in their in their mailbox along with a postcard from their teacher. So we've we've gotten terrific feedback from this and especially the kids really do like to get the postcard that goes with it from their teacher to check in and see how they're liking their books. I was at Summerskill the other day and a little girl came running up to me and she said I got my books I got my books and she had the envelope and she was showing me all of her books and she said I remembered when I picked these out. I didn't know if I was ever going to get this set. So she had gotten her her July set and then they get another set in August. So we have about 800 kids in the elementary Title 1 schools that do receive these books and again that's by teacher recommendation an administrative recommendation.

00:15:41;21 - 00:15:51;15

M2: You mentioned that these are books. Q What resources come from how do we get those books that we can try to get them into kids to keep in their own personal liberties.

00:15:52;22 - 00:16:33;07

F5: Well those are funded through Title 1 funds. But we do have books swaps in almost all of the elementary schools now so that kids when they have read books time and time again and are ready to trade them for something else typically in the fall or mid year there is some type of book swap within the school where kids can bring a book and take a book. And we have this in most of the elementary schools now which is a great way to filter books that kids love through. But once it's been sitting on your shelf for too long and you're no longer looking at it give it into the hands of somebody else and you probably know better than me.

00:16:33;07 - 00:16:46;11

F6: But it seems like when I was at Global Village the other day I saw a sign that some schools actually host and opened up their library during the summer and a librarian will come in and they will the students will be able to have time in their own school library.

00:16:46;11 - 00:16:54;15

M4: And I was just my son goes right. We have Waiguru bright kids can come here the history times for dance that goes through schools.

00:16:54;17 - 00:17:19;21

F1: Right. So most of the elementary schools have some opportunity for library checkout whether it be through the trolley taking them to the public library or somewhere within the community Baird elementary school actually has a library check out within their largest apartment building that pools into Baret elementary so they have a story time within that apartment building.

00:17:19;22 - 00:17:33;25

F5: So each of the schools have it on their website whether what day of the week they have either open hours in their own individual library whether it's out in the community and even the public library is finding creative ways to provide story times.

00:17:33;29 - 00:17:51;19

F1: The Columbia Pike library even does a story time and check out at one of the giant food grocery stores weekly. So they're really trying to bring these mobile libraries into the community so that kids can participate in book check out a story time.

00:17:52;01 - 00:18:14;21

M2: All over our community it was fun for the kids and we drove drawing these pictures and a couple of the kids has a blast with their parents on this rolling over their borders. So what are some of the things if kids aren't involved in some school or some news programs document for parents to make sure that their kids are getting some sort of work through this.

00:18:15;14 - 00:18:49;22

F7: I think that reading is one of the most important gifts that any parent can give their entire life was very fortunate to be brought up in how we're reading and trips to the library are important to my daily existence and to this day I live to read. And so I think that that's really important because it builds literacy it builds background knowledge it builds vocabulary and all those things are are very successful so that is one thing that to me I think is really important and I think that you've heard today that a lot of the programs that we have really pushed literacy.

00:18:49;22 - 00:20:03;20

F1: And so that is one thing that I would think that would be of primary importance and I have to agree with Kathy from the former reading teacher perspective and additionally if you see that your child is showing interest in something instead of giving them the answer to it allow them to take part in and writing a research question and then so sometimes you'll have a student who says I don't know what I want to read. I don't know what I don't know what I want to learn about. But all of a sudden you have this moment as a parent where your child is asking you a question about something and that's that to me is that aha opportunity to say let's take out a piece of paper write that down because that's something we could go to the library do some research on and you could figure that out. So I think providing any opportunity where your child is showing some interest and allow them to dig deeper and the public library has has so many resources now and additionally if you do have a device in your home working with your student to do some research together is a nice opportunity for them to do some additional learning where they are almost tricked into doing learning. You know to have some other time to learn because they don't even know they're doing it.

00:20:03;30 - 00:21:15;25

F6: And I do believe the world is a classroom particularly for social science. But the world is the classroom. And I think even something as simple as you're driving to Arlington and we're going to pass 12 lights I want you to figure out the percentage of lights that we're going to drive. There we're going to be stopped at things like that here in about the Folklife Festival I'm taking students to children down to that. I know my specialist is just wonderful about oh my kids one here they did this and you know a lot of these things like encampments and activities that you know we just live in an area that's ripe with

opportunities. And you know I know that parents are busy and they have very busy lives and I know that parents do the best they can and just kind of looking around and seeing what's out there that can provide opportunities for learning experiences. And even you know right in your backyard things I think of do you know habitats in their backyard and things like that there's just a lot of creative things. You know what we're trying to do is we talk about engagements really tapping into the Internet really pretty much a natural curiosity that students have to be that educators do.

00:21:16;06 - 00:21:56;24

F1: Absolutely right. And if you're really looking for ideas for your elementary child online there are many calendars that you can find for summer learning. And I've seen many where it'll give you an idea for each day of the month over the summer help your child writer grocery list cook a recipe together we'll just have a number of different ideas if you are sitting at home blank and thinking what can I do with my child today that would make a difference in their day. These calendars are great and they're really easy to locate online.

00:21:56;24 - 00:22:10;19

M3: These are also some of those too for kids just having a little bit of downtime like not focusing on just sitting down. Just walk outside.

00:22:10;20 - 00:22:38;19

F3: I totally agree that everybody not just children should have time to just be because there's a lot to be said for a reflective times and there's a lot to be said for just having plain old fun. And I can remember my nephew one time when I was reading to him and I was like and what do you think screens like. Can you just read the book to make it so we know that students do need that opportunity to just be in and just enjoy you know the time off.

00:22:38;30 - 00:23:03;17

F8: You know I know that they get opportunities to sleep late. Sometimes you just want to put on music and sit around and listen to it or you know. I absolutely believe that it's not every moment doesn't have to be a learning experience. But we definitely need to give students opportunities because I would say in our society today most people don't have enough time of just downtime where you're not doing anything and I think it's important for everybody.

00:23:03;21 - 00:23:40;26

F5: And I agree just some time to reboot have time with friends have time with family. Those are really important and just on my street the other day there are a bunch of kids catching fireflies and I and I thought wow I don't see this very often anymore that you see a bunch of kids outside with jars trying to catch fireflies. Of course releasing them. But it was just the interaction of the kids and just time that they were spending together and away from devices and out nature it was it's refreshing to see those times and give kids a chance just to be kids right.

00:23:40;26 - 00:23:49;25

M2: Anything else you want to a bonus to appreciate the time sitting down and talking about about this and what parents can do what's available to their kids.

00:23:49;26 - 00:24:24;11

F8: Now I you know I don't really have anything to add other than I think that summer is a great opportunity for people to kind of relax and you can still do some of those things but still remember that the purpose is to kind of have a down time in the summer and have a relax so that you can be ready for. Because as we know when things get geared up in the fall things get busy and so you want to provide that opportunity and that hopefully the experiences that we are providing for our students and schools are engaging them not stressing them just something else to add.

00:24:24;11 - 00:25:13;06

F5: If you and your family are getting ready to take a trip the public library has something in place of the old version of a book on tape. They have these little clay back. It's the book with a device very small device that actually has the book already prerecorded and all the child needs to do is plug a headset in and put a Devilly battery in and it takes the place of an old tape recorded book. So those are I think those are a great alternative to putting a movie on in the car or on a plane. And there are hundreds of them in the public library so you can check out a bunch take them with you. And it's something else. Outside of watching a movie in the car. Or. Reading of. Advised. Traveler. About.

00:25:13;22 - 00:25:31;04

M5: This road trip up to Massachusetts and that's going where we're at thank you both for taking time to join us. And anybody who has anything you want to add any questions about future podcasts. Just send an e-mail to apsnews@apsva.us or tweet us at @apsvirginia.