

Program keeps children reading

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Learning doesn't sleep during the summer months.

That's the motto behind a new summer literacy program of the Salem-Keizer Coalition for Equality.

The goal of the program is to reinforce learning and reading by local English Language Learners throughout the summer vacation, with the help of their parents.

"We've learned that kids forget a lot of what they learn in school during the summer because they're parents aren't helping with their children's academics, so the kids typically spend most of their time playing computer games, watching TV, or just sitting around the house," said Megan Cogswell, the program's outreach coordinator.

"We believe the summer months are an opportunity for parents and their kids to work together, learning and having fun," Cogswell said. "When parents are involved and understand where their children should be academically, they're able to provide support to the children at home."

Such involvement helps foster academic success at home, she added.

Parents who want their children to participate in the program are required to attend program sessions throughout the course of the program.

Those who participate are taught the importance of engaging in learning alongside their children at home and to provide learning opportunities for children outside of the home.

As part of the literacy program's learning process, parent facilitators receive professional development and experience working with adults and children to foster learning and family involvement.



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Immigrant parents and their children attend the last day of the Salem-Keizer Coalition for Equality's Summer Literacy Program on July 28.

The program

The Salem-Keizer Coalition for Equality's Summer Literacy Program aims to:

- Reinforce learning and reading strategies used in the Salem-Keizer School District for students recommended by classroom teachers
- Foster learning at home
- Grow cultural awareness
- Foster meaningful parent/teacher interactions
- Develop leadership skills for parent facilitators

The point is to teach the parents how to be positive resources for their children, and to commit themselves to a strong academic relationship with their children.

"If kids don't see their parents as authorities, leaders and knowledgeable people involved in their education, they feel they can't go to their parents for help, so kids stop caring about their education and drop out of school or join gangs," said Aurora Cedillo, a Salem-Keizer teacher and the program's training coordinator.

Two groups of parents and their children in grades preschool through fifth grade attend two-hour, twice weekly, sessions for four weeks.

During the first two weeks of the session, parents work with an instructor (a trained ELL teacher) while children are in activities.

For the second half of the session, parents practice what they learned by working together with their children.

The inaugural program ended on July 28.

At least 50 immigrant families participated in educational activities aimed at reinforcing academic objectives.

Maria Perez and her two children were among those who participated in the program.

"I did it because I want to learn how to help my children," Perez said. "I want to learn more so I can help my children to read, write and do math."

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