

# THE SCHOOL AGE UPDATE

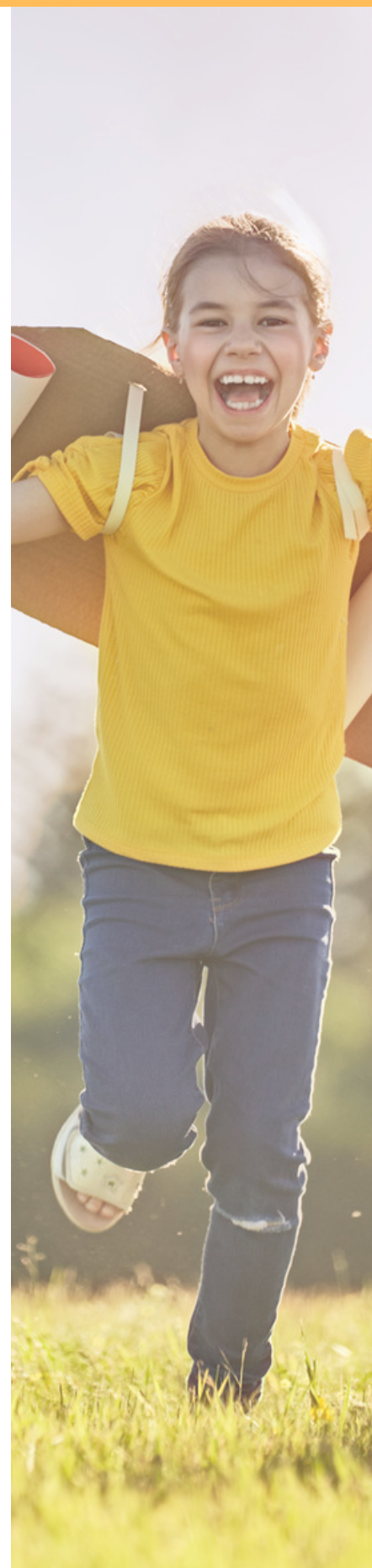
Summer 2019    NC School Age Program    DCDEE/SWCDC/CCR&R Council

Summer time is here! For many students in North Carolina, hot weather and thunderstorms mean the end of the school year and the start of summer camp. Current research from the American Camp Association states that over 14 million US students participate in some form of summer camp experience each year (*2013 ACA Camp Compensation and Benefits Report, 2013*). School age professionals must remember why the summer camp experience proves to be so important for students and their families.

From an educational perspective, summer camp programs reduce the effects of the "summer slump" for school age students. The National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) describes the summer slump as a gradual decrease of student academic performance due to time away from the classroom. The NSLA shows that time away from the classroom cause students to forget grade level content and start the next school year at a disadvantage. Students that attend summer camp programs are more likely to keep academics in focus and in daily use. Summer camp places students ahead of the learning curve and ensures that they are equipped to start the school year ready to master new ideas (NSLA, Scholastic Summer Learning Tip Sheet, 2019).

In addition to academic success, summer camp participation has dramatic social implications. The USDA 2015 Report on Food Insecurity states that nearly 25% of US children do not have access to regular meals. For many lower income students, school lunch represents the only stable and healthy meal of the day. As with school lunches, many summer camp programs provide students USDA approved meals and snacks aimed at combating hunger. This guaranteed meal sets students up for success, and reduces the stress associated with malnutrition.

For many students in North Carolina, summer camp not only means fun, but it represents stability. As leaders in the school age field, we must constantly recognize the social and academic service we provide to both students and their families. Every school age program provides an important link to the overall success of the next generation.





# COMBATING THE SUMMER SLUMP WITH LITERACY

While summer is often a carefree and joyous time, students from low income families can lose considerable academic gains made during the previous school year at a much higher rate than their peers. This decline is sometimes referred to as the Summer Slide, but it isn't a slide your students should line up for. Here's a few statistics to consider:



More than 80% of children from economically disadvantaged families lose reading skills over the summer (NC Early Childhood Foundation, *Summer Learning Toolkit*, 2019)



In 2017, only 39% of fourth graders scored at or above fourth grade reading achievement levels in North Carolina (Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Kids Count Data Book*, 2019)



During the 2012 – 2013 school year, only 80% of high school students in North Carolina graduated on time (Van Dyke, S., *Eight Ways You Can Bring Literacy Into Your Afterschool Program*)

## Why is this important?

Reading proficiency by the end of third grade is critical to a student's educational development. Beginning in third grade, students start to use literacy skills to make sense of the world around them. Literacy concepts like story plot, phonics, and theme development become key developmental ideals that must be mastered to grow academically. A 2012 study by the Annie E. Casey Foundation states that students who reach fourth grade without proper literacy skills are more likely to drop out of high school later in life (*Double Jeopardy: How Third Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Effect High School Graduation*, 2012).

As school age professionals we must recognize our role in fostering positive reading outcomes. Summer youth programs provide a stable and secure environment for students to develop their approach to reading and literacy proficiency. The consistency of summer learning help students combat the negative effects of the summer slump and reading regression. Here are 9 ways to mold your summer camp program into a springboard for student success.



# 9 Tips for Summer Literacy Success



## **Provide a variety of reading materials:**

Age appropriate books, comics, and magazines are great ways to engage youth interest.

## **Find fun places for students to read:**

Reading can happen outside of a set book area. Let students experience books outside on a bench or in the gym.

## **Take students to the library:**

Libraries are a wonderful resource for the summer! Some local libraries have reading incentive programs and mobile book libraries that can come to your facility.

## **Have students read when outside of the center:**

When on field trips or in the community, encourage students to read signs, billboards, or play word find games.

## **Set up a book club:**

Let students pick from a selection of age appropriate books and hold weekly book clubs to talk about what they have read.

## **Buddy reading:**

Invite older students to read to younger ones. This fosters community building and social responsibility.



## **MadLibs:**

MadLibs are great for building rhyming skills and word development. Find free templates online at [madlibs.com/printables](http://madlibs.com/printables). Students will enjoy competing and reading them out loud!

## **Summer pen pals:**

Create a summer pen pal program with other summer camps in the area. Students love getting mail!

## **Conduct a performance:**

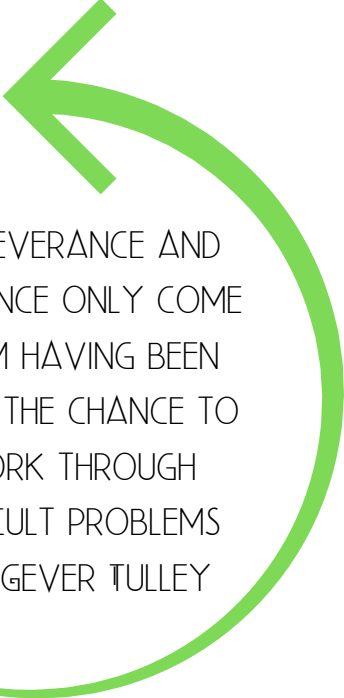
Have students create a screenplay and put on a show for parents and staff.

# Addressing Trauma and Challenging Behaviors: Part II

Part 1 of this section on challenging behaviors looked specifically at ACE scores and school age trauma. We examined the process of recognizing the warning signs of social-emotional distress and high ACE score development in school age students. We introduced the 10 triggers of ACE score development, and noted how they affected the actions and decisions of students exhibiting challenging behavior. In the next two sections we will break down each of these indicators and provide some tips on how to mold your school age program to best meet these issues.

## Divorce

Divorce happens. Relationships break apart, and children are often caught in the middle of domestic disputes. While students approach divorce in many ways, the stress associated with family instability encompasses all involved. Family psychiatrist, Dr. Carl Pickhardt states that divorce can heighten stress in students by eroding important emotional support systems needed during pre-adult years (Psychology Today, 2011). With this increased stress and diminished support, students dealing with trauma associated with divorce can express their emotions in a number of ways. Some students will become withdrawn and depressed, while others might showcase aggression and anger. Having an open relationship with students and their families is a great way to deal with this trauma. Allowing students to process this stress through dramatic play, art, and journal writing provide further mediums to encourage coping and trauma processing.



PERSEVERANCE AND  
RESILIENCE ONLY COME  
FROM HAVING BEEN  
GIVEN THE CHANCE TO  
WORK THROUGH  
DIFFICULT PROBLEMS  
-GEVER TULLEY

## Physical Neglect

Physical neglect represents a leading cause in the development of life long trauma. The North Carolina Judicial Branch states that physical neglect happens when "a child does not receive proper care, supervision, or discipline from the child's...caregiver" (NCJB, *Abuse, Neglect and Dependency*). Between June 2017 and June 2018, Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina reported over 199,000 abuse and neglect cases in the state (PCANC, *NC Child Abuse and Neglect Statistics*, 2018). Some warning signs of childhood physical neglect include a lack of cleanliness and hygiene, academic regression, and malnutrition. Some students who experience neglect develop the ability to adapt and care for themselves and their siblings. Since they are often young caregivers, these students might showcase an extreme protectiveness for their siblings and close peers. Providing students with a safe and stable environment is key to ensure that they succeed and flourish through the effects of physical neglect. These students must have access to a sufficient amount of food and nutrition. Offering seconds for snack or extra food options at lunch time will help students suffering from neglect receive the physical sustenance they need to excel at school.







## Incarcerated Family Member

In 2018, over 129,000 people were incarcerated in North Carolina (NCDPS, *Prison Offender Population Statistics*, 2018). For many students in afterschool and summer care, family incarceration is a real life circumstance...a circumstance that produces trauma and challenging behaviors. Students dealing with family incarceration might showcase extreme aggression to authority. This aggression can take the form of physical violence, verbal threats, tantrums, and other disruptive behavior towards peers. These students might also display aggression towards authority figures like teachers and groups leaders. For these students to succeed, school age programs must remove the stigma associated with family incarceration. A good way to address this trauma is to stock literacy areas with age appropriate books dealing with incarceration. Books like *When Dad Was Away* and *Mama Loves Me From Far Away* are two influential works that can help students deal with the stress of incarceration in a respectful manner.



## Household Mental Illness and Substance Abuse

For many students, the stress of household mental illness and substance abuse go hand-in-hand. In 2017 The National Institute on Drug Abuse recorded 1,953 opioid related deaths in North Carolina (National Institute on Drug Abuse, *NC Opioid Summary*, 2019). This statistic does not include the countless deaths caused by other forms of addiction. The NIDA goes further with these statistics and highlights that a leading cause for substance abuse is for some form of mental or physical self medication (National Institute on Drug Abuse, *Comorbidity*, 2010). Students dealing with household substance abuse and mental illness might showcase different challenging behaviors. Anger and aggression is a common expression for students suffering with the neglect, violence, and parental disconnect associated from mental illness and substance abuse. For other students, extreme reclusiveness and suicidal thoughts might emerge from exposure to these factors. The National Institute of Health highlights that students witnessing substance abuse by parents are twice as likely of falling into the same patterns later in life (NIH, *Understanding the Diverse Needs of Children Whose Parents Abuse Substances*, 2012). Setting up group leaders as strong role models is one way to alleviate some of the trauma associated with domestic substance abuse and mental illness. Having positive group leaders provides students with an example of how to combat adversity and negative peer pressure. Also, bringing in outside visitors from police departments, local hospitals, and other therapy-centered resources help students separate themselves from the negative stigmas associated with mental illness. For information about some of these resources reach out to your local Department of Health and Human Services for local contact information.



## Reporting Abuse: Your Mandate

Remember that all school age providers are mandated reporters in the state of North Carolina. All suspected instances of child abuse or neglect must be reported. To file an anonymous report contact Child Protective Services at 919-855-4800 or online at [www.nc.gov/child-protection-services](http://www.nc.gov/child-protection-services). Reports can also be made to the DCDEE at [www.ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov](http://www.ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov).

# Making Cultural Diversity Personal: Part 2

The last issue of the *School Age Update* focused specifically on the topic of cultural diversity through the process of family integration. This process takes careful consideration and planning, and pushes the school age teacher to reflect inwardly on any personal bias that they bring into the classroom. This section will look specifically at implicit bias, and how educators can create a more culturally inclusive environment for students to flourish.

Educational psychologist Cheryl Staats defines implicit bias as "the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner" (Staats, *Understanding Implicit Bias*, 2015). Implicit bias does not assert an active prejudice or hatred against a specific type of people. Instead, it represents the internal stereotypes, fears, and misconceptions we associate with individuals different than us.

Some examples of implicit bias include:

- Picking one gender over another when selecting game groups or activity areas
- Refusing to let students play with certain materials because of gender
- Over-representing a specific race with wall posters
- Using perspective words of endearment like "princess", "tough guy", and "sweetie"

Implicit bias doesn't apply solely to gender, race, or culture. It encompasses a wide range of cultural presumptions that seek to place students into the teacher's personal cultural bubble. Holding students to these cultural requirements can cause classroom stress and tension.

## Stop and Reflect

Discovering personal implicit bias is not difficult. Like intentional teaching, it requires some effort to stop and reflect.

Proper reflection breaks down into three easy steps:

- 1 Step away and find a quiet place without distraction
- 2 Critically think about your cultural bubble and how it informs your understanding of gender, race, and other social categories
- 3 Think about how your personal cultural bubble is displayed and projected in the classroom, and ask yourself if these representations have any negative consequences

Stopping to reflect on personal implicit biases will help bring to light any internal judgments that might carry into the classroom. Since reflection is a personal process, no form of outside judgement or condemnation is attached. It is simply a practice that creates better teaching approaches.

Assessing implicit bias will help mold the classroom into a more inviting and culturally responsive environment. If students are better represented then they are more apt to learn. Also, this process will open lesson plans and curriculum to a broader range of new learning experiences.

For more resources about cultural diversity in the school age environment, contact Jonathan Williams, Statewide School Age Program Coordinator at [williams.jon@swcdcinc.org](mailto:williams.jon@swcdcinc.org)



# Activity Corner

Summer offers ample opportunities to extend indoor program activities outdoors. Along with the health benefits associated with being outside, shifting classroom activities to outdoor playscapes provides students with new environments to practice learning goals. This process does not have to be difficult, it just takes a little time and some basic planning. Below is one easy way to make outdoor activities flourish this season.

## PVC Forts

Bringing blocks and construction materials outdoors is a great way to expand this activity center. Outdoor areas offer new ways to use construction materials and larger manipulative materials. PVC pipe is a great medium for construction because it's cheap, multi-use, and easily stored.

For this activity, provide students with 12-16 larger pieces of 2 inch PVC and 20 PVC connectors. A simple trip to the hardware store or to a Habitat Home Reuse facility will show that these materials are very cost effective. Give students free reign to explore these materials and construct a fort with the PVC. Providing a wide range of different PVC connectors will allow students to create a fort with different angles and pitches. After the fort is constructed, drape the frame with some cheap drop cloth for some enclosure. Just make sure that all supervision requirements can still be met. Have the students decorate the cloth with paint, markers, or any art mediums available. The end result is a structure that can be used in multiple ways.

If PVC is not available, bamboo or even an assortment of large cardboard boxes provide great alternatives.

## Learning Goals Developed

Along with meeting SACERS requirements for blocks and construction, this activity is a great way for students to develop strong gross motor skills like lifting, balancing, and coordination. The group aspect of this activity also helps with social development and communication skills.

Academically, this activity uses a wide range of science, math, and art concepts. Providing students with tools like art mediums, tape measures, and a balancing plane will help develop these skills even further.

## Materials Needed

- Larger PVC tubes
- PVC connectors
- Drop cloth
- Paint
- Markers
- Tape (optional)



# Professional Development

## August

### SACERS-U

August 1st - August 8th  
Time: 9:00 am - 10:30 am  
Cost: \$25  
.5 CEU

### BSAC

August 15th - August 22nd  
Time: 9:00 am - 10:30 am  
Cost: \$25  
.5 CEU

## September

### SACERS-U

September 10th - September 17th  
Time: 10:00 am - 11:30 am  
Cost: \$25  
.5 CEU

School Age Behavior Strategies:  
September 12th - September 19th  
Time: 10:00 am - 11:30 am  
Cost: Free  
.5 CEU

The NC School Age Program is the go-to source for quality school age professional development. This quarter we are offering a wide range of different CEU trainings to meet the needs of school age professionals across the state. Our online format allows participants to receive high quality, DCDEE approved instruction from the comfort of their personal computer.

To register for an online training, please visit [swcdcinc.org](http://swcdcinc.org) and click on the Training Registration tab at the top right of the page to find the desired course. For assistance registering for a course, feel free to contact Erin Marley at [marley.erin@swcdcinc.org](mailto:marley.erin@swcdcinc.org).

## Stay Ahead of the Game with BSAC and SACERS-U

Having an informed staff is key to running a high quality school age program. The NC School Age Program provides group leaders and program coordinators of all expertise levels with instructor-led online BSAC and SACERS-U courses. These courses are scheduled throughout the year at times convenient to school age work hours. Larger programs needing specialized training times and dates can contact the School Age Program for scheduling.

Our BSAC course provides new school age employees with a solid introduction to afterschool and summer care concepts. Participants who complete the course will be awarded the DCDEE approved BSAC certificate needed for school age employment.

**SACERS-U**, is geared toward programs preparing for STAR licensure and STAR licensure renewal. The course covers the details of the SACERS-U tool, and offers techniques on how to maximize your program's overall SACERS-U score.

For more information on these courses or to schedule a course, contact Erin Marley at [marley.erin@swcdcinc.org](mailto:marley.erin@swcdcinc.org).





## **North Carolina School Age Program**

**Jonathan Williams**

**Statewide School Age Program Coordinator**

**Phone: 828.450.9218**

**Email: [williams.jon@swcdcinc.org](mailto:williams.jon@swcdcinc.org)**

**Erin Marley**

**Statewide School Age Program PD Coordinator**

**Phone: 828.354.0116**

**Email: [marley.erin@swcdcinc.org](mailto:marley.erin@swcdcinc.org)**