

Education: Stopping the Summer Slide for Delaware's Young Readers



Reading proficiently by the end of third grade is one of the strongest predictors of a child's future success. Yet only 26% of Delaware students entering fourth grade read at or above grade level. Children who miss this critical milestone are four times more likely to drop out of school, and the risk is even higher for children living in poverty.

Summer can widen that gap. Without access to learning opportunities, students can lose an average of two months of school-year reading gains, a phenomenon known as the "summer slide."

United Way of Delaware's Get Delaware Reading Summer initiative is changing that trajectory. Working with trusted community partners that operate summer camps and school-based programs, GDR Summer combines personalized, high-dosage reading tutoring with access to books, recreation, and safe, supportive places for children to spend their summer days.

In Summer 2025, the initiative reached more than 2,500 students at 50 sites across all three Delaware counties, working through 17 partner organizations. Independent evaluations have shown that GDR Summer has stopped the summer slide every year since its launch.

Together, we can help more children return to school ready to read, learn, and succeed.