

Beating the Summer Slide

Olander School for Project Based Learning

Fort Collins, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Over the summer months, students' academic achievement declines by one month's worth of school year learning. Wanting to decrease this learning gap, Olander School for Project Based Learning created the Beating the Summer Slide package. The goal of this practice is to keep students learning during the long summer months, with clear goals based on learning software to maintain the scores that students achieve during the school year.

Olander buys site licenses for blended learning tools, providing each student his or her own accounts to use both at school and at home. At the beginning of the year staff dedicate the first parent meeting to show family members what software the school uses for students to learn. Parents and students congregate in the computer lab for children to demonstrate to their families how the online learning program works.

Because these blended learning tools are customized to each student, Olander staff can create an individualized packet that focuses in on any gaps in learning. The added benefit of blended learning tools is that they provide opportunities to use technology as well as skill builder packets that can be done to supplement the technology or in the absence of technology at home.

The ELD teacher and family liaison work together to create and distribute these packets to students and families. This past summer, they provided over 20 packets to Olander students. Before the students were out for summer, the school held a parent/student meeting and again demonstrated applications in the computer and how the students work with them as well as how to work through any technological issues they might have for accessing these resources at home.

Students who complete the summer packet receive a prize at the start of the following school year. Evaluators of the project have found that students who complete the blended learning packet in the summer are, in fact, more ready for the start of a new school-year than students who do not finish the assignment.

Olander staff do caution about a couple of challenges they encountered: "Some logistical challenges include access to school staff and support over the summer, the follow up on the materials when students return to school, and working to increase the participation rate and successful completion over the summer."