

NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 18, 2007

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Free Online Educational Materials Available to Parents and Caregivers to Keep Children Learning Throughout the Summer

NEW YORK – Parents and caregivers looking for educational activities to keep their children learning throughout the summer now have a free online source for dozens of educational games and materials that will keep children entertained and engaged.

The materials, developed by some of the nation's leading education and literacy organizations, contain age-appropriate reading and writing activities, and use a variety of other resources, including children's television shows and hit songs, to creatively connect with children.

The materials can be accessed free of charge through a special Summer Activities section on the Thinkfinity.org home page.

And, since summer learning isn't just for kids, parents can sharpen their own teaching skills and learn effective techniques to improve literacy and develop a love of reading throughout the family through free online courses at the Thinkfinity Literacy Network, formerly known as the Verizon Literacy Network.

Thinkfinity.org is the Verizon Foundation's signature educational and literacy program and online portal to more than 55,000 educational resources, including standards-based, grade-specific, K-12 lesson plans and other materials that can be used in the classroom, in literacy programs, after-school programs or at home. Content for Thinkfinity.org is provided in partnership with many of the nation's leading educational organizations.

Among the resources available to parents, caregivers, tutors, librarians and others in the Thinkfinity.org summer activities section are:

- **Create Trading Cards for Summer Books** (Designed for children aged 8 to 11). Using the International Reading Association's ReadWriteThink.org's online Character Trading Cards tool, children answer a series of questions to create unique, personalized trading cards of their favorite characters. The cards can then be used in games, such as guessing who created the card; or one child can describe a few of the character's traits and have others try to guess the identity. http://www.readwritethink.org/beyondtheclassroom/summer/grades3_5/TradingCards/
- **Top Ten Songs** (Designed for 14-to-18-year-olds). Music fans can create a "wiki" -- a Web site that allows visitors to add, remove or edit content -- containing background on their favorite songs, such as the songwriter, lyrics and maps or pictures that reflect the message of the song. Users can then share the "wiki" with friends who can create their own or add to the original. The exercise will help teens become more familiar with technology while also writing about and sharing music that interests them. http://www.readwritethink.org/beyondtheclassroom/summer/grades9_12/SongLyrics/
- **Write Summer Alphabet Books** (Designed for children aged 4 to 8). Using ReadWriteThink.org's online Alphabet Organizer tool, children can create summer-themed alphabet books. In their books, children choose summer words to go with each letter of the alphabet and also draw pictures for the pages.

http://www.readwritethink.org/beyondtheclassroom/summer/gradesK_2/AlphabetBooks/

- **Selecting and Sharing Books With Young Children, Part I.** This 45-minute online course, developed by the National Center for Family Literacy, will teach parents about the characteristics to look for in quality children's books and six methods for choosing books for children from birth to 8 years old.

<http://literacynetwork.verizon.org/Free-Online-Courses.21.0.html>

Also on the site, parents will find helpful tipsheets that include step-by-step instructions on how to most effectively use the online interactive tools.

“The content of these highly engaging summer activities demonstrates how teachers and parents can partner in helping children achieve high standards in reading and writing,” said Linda Gambrell, president of the International Reading Association.

Sharon Roth, the National Council of Teachers of English's director of professional development, said, “These summer activities can help bridge in- and out-of-school learning. This program helps students retain and sharpen literacy skills during the months they are out of the classroom. Children and teens can learn all year long, building the skills for life-long learning.”

Thinkfinity.org includes the program formerly known as Verizon MarcoPolo and the former Verizon Literacy Network.

Content for Thinkfinity.org is provided through a partnership between the Verizon Foundation and 11 of the nation's leading organizations in the fields of education and literacy: the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the International Reading Association, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, National Center for Family Literacy, National Council on Economic Education, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Council of Teachers of English, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics,

National Geographic Society, ProLiteracy Worldwide and the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History.

“Through Thinkfinity.org, parents have access to engaging, age-appropriate educational resources to ensure that their children can continue to build the vocabulary, comprehension and writing skills needed to ensure their success in the future,” said Verizon Foundation President Patrick Gaston. “In our fast-paced world, learning must never stop. We must reach beyond the classroom with tools such as Thinkfinity.org to give our children best opportunity to be the innovators of tomorrow.”

The Verizon Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Verizon Communications, is committed to improving literacy and K-12 education; fostering awareness and prevention of domestic violence; and promoting the use of technology in health-care delivery. In 2006, the foundation awarded more than \$69 million in grants to nonprofit agencies in the United States and abroad. The foundation also matched charitable donations from Verizon employees and retirees, resulting in \$29 million in combined contributions. Under the foundation's Verizon Volunteer initiative, one of the nation's largest employee-volunteer programs, company employees and retirees have also contributed nearly 3 million hours of community service since Verizon's inception in 2000.

For more information on the foundation, visit www.verizon.com/foundation.

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