



TENNESSEE  
COMMISSION ON  
**CHILDREN &  
YOUTH**

# THE ADVOCATE

## May is the Perfect Month to Stock Up on Summer Books!

### scholastic summer

*The Advocate*



Welcome to our May newsletter, where we discuss research topics related to education as well as how children and youth adjust to being out of school.

We will take a look at how reading positively impacts young brains and how parents can encourage safe, stable environments with their young ones being out of the classroom. Join us for a scholastic summer!

### Legislative Updates

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### Research Articles



## **Cognitive Precursors of Reading: A Cross-Linguistic Perspective**

The evidence reviewed in this paper confirms that graphic symbol knowledge, explicit understanding of phonological and morphological units and naming speed are concurrently and longitudinally associated with reading in all orthographies investigated. Most children develop graph knowledge and an understanding of the linguistic units that they represent in the context of learning to read, and not necessarily beforehand. Thus, the relations between these cognitive precursors and reading are interactive and reciprocal: In order to crack the code of their orthography, children need to acquire incremental knowledge of graphs and how they are mapping onto relevant linguistic units. The reading experience in turn triggers further developments in these precursor constructs.

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## **The Effect of School Summer Holidays on Inequalities in Children and Young People's Mental Health and Cognitive Ability**

We found inequalities in mental health and cognitive ability according to maternal education, and some evidence of worsening mental health and mental health inequalities across school summer holidays. We found little evidence of widening inequalities in verbal cognitive ability. Widespread school closures during the COVID-19 restrictions have prompted concerns that prolonged closures may widen health and educational inequalities. Management of school closures should focus on preventing or mitigating inequalities that may arise from differences in the support for mental health and learning provided during closures by schools serving more or less disadvantaged children.

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## **The Effects of Summertime Experiences on Children's Development**

For children and youth in grades K–12 in the United States, “summertime” is the period between successive academic calendar years that typically occupies the majority of the months of June through August. It is an important time period for all community members, since the summertime experiences of children (grades K–5) and youth or adolescents (grades 5–12) have both direct and indirect effects on others in their roles as parents, siblings, caretakers, providers of goods and services, or community residents. This yearly interval presents opportunities and challenges for children and youth as well as for the agents (e.g., parents, teachers, summer counselors and program directors, police) and sectors (e.g., government, commercial, nonprofit) that design, develop, deliver, or fund components of summertime experiences.

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## **The Long-Term Impact of Parental Mental Health on Children's Distress Trajectories in Adulthood**

Early life is a crucial period of biological, emotional, and mental development. The plasticity of this period makes individuals extremely vulnerable to the impact of stressors and has therefore been referred to as a sensitive period. Parental mental health problems may act as a stressor for children during a sensitive period because parents are central to the lives of their children and provide an essential source of social control, self-esteem, and belonging. Mothers and fathers with mental health problems may display impaired parenting behaviors such as harshness or disengagement from the children's needs. These behaviors, in turn, can lead to a range of deleterious emotions for children including, but not limited to, insecurity and distress.

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## **Mental Health Resources**

[TN Partners for Health](#)

[TDMHSAS Mental Health Services](#)

[988 Hotline](#)

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## **Families Are Still Recovering From Employment, Income Losses Since the Pandemic Hit**

The share of U.S. children with at least one unemployed parent doubled in 2020, the year of the COVID-19 outbreak, from 4% in 2019 to 8%—equivalent to about 5.85 million kids. In

# data center

KIDS COUNT

Nevada and Hawaii, this figure reached highs of 15% and 14%, respectively, in 2020. The U.S. percentage began to recover in 2021, declining to 6%, according to the latest data from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. These data describe children with unemployed parents who had been actively looking for work in the past month and were currently available for work. For kids in single-parent families, it means that the resident parent was unemployed, and for children in two-parent families, it means that either or both parents were unemployed.

## **Being Prepared for Natural Disasters and Severe Weather**

Tennessee can experience a wide range of weather-related threats and events. Most recently, Tennesseans in several parts of the state have been impacted by severe storms which included flash floods and deadly tornados. Tennessee's severe weather season typically peaks in March, April and May. When severe weather hits it's important to have a family plan ready. TEMA has put together a [step by step guide](#) to help get you started making a plan for your family.



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## **Calendar of Events**

**Friday, May 5** - ETCCY: Is This Going to Happen at My School? How to Talk to Kids About School Shootings, 9AM - noon EST (6700 Jubilee Center Way, Knoxville, TN) [Register here.](#)

**Tuesday, May 9** - TCCY: Councils Committee Meeting, 1PM CST via Teams

**Wednesday, May 10** - Resilient Tennessee Collaborative: Summit, 8:30AM - 4PM (333 Murfreesboro Pike, Nashville, TN)

**Friday, May 12** - TCCY: Youth Justice Committee Meeting, 10AM CST via Teams

**Friday, May 12** - TCCY: Budget and Data Meeting, 1PM CST via Teams

**Monday, May 29** - Memorial Day/State Holiday: **All State Offices Closed**



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