



PERSONAL LEARNING NETWORKS FOR TEENS

9 simple strategies for summer growth

BY SR. PATRICIA M. MCCORMACK, IHM

IF I HAD KNOWN DURING MY MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARS what I know now — or more precisely, what I *wish* I knew now — I would have sought a variety of experiences, embraced differences, and exerted enthusiasm for topics that did not have particular appeal at the time. Everything you encounter can contribute to a mindset for lifelong learning. For instance, many middle-school students view algebra or geometry as an unnecessary torture. Not every student earns an A in the subject. But everyone can learn logical thinking or organizational skills that apply to many future life tasks.

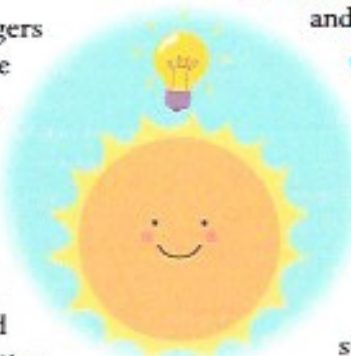
Take advantage of opportunities to dabble in areas outside your comfort zone, either through hands-on experiences or vicariously through media. Explore opera. Did you know that six times a year, the New York Metropolitan Opera transmits a live performance in HD to movie theaters? Seek opportunities to work with animals, walk nature trails, view a planetarium show, tour museums, or study trees, birds, and botany. Be resourceful. Exposure to such things is often free. Check the weekend section of your newspaper, check out free museum passes from the library, or do an internet search of cultural events in your area.

Many teachers use summer vacation to develop Personal Learning Networks. PLNs are opportunities

to learn from the ideas, questions, reflections, and references of other teachers worldwide. These interactions are not limited to online interactions, although that aspect does give spice to life!


Similarly, teenagers can benefit from the PLN concept. Expand it from being a summertime tool to becoming an all-seasons mindset. Approach all connections, practices, and subjects as opportunities that can activate brain cells. Connect with past knowledge, contribute to future insights, improve your life, expand your horizons, and see things in a different light. Seek new connections that stretch you.

- Watch a TV episode from National Geographic, Planet Earth, Animal Planet, Discovery Channel, or TLC.
- Explore religious life via the internet. Helpful websites include CloisteredLife.com, CMSWR.org, and VocationNetwork.org.



- Volunteer at a veterinary practice, day-care facility, or a public library that offers “read along” sessions.
- Serve as a teacher’s aide in a parish summer religious education program or vacation Bible school.

- Hang out with the saints. Read a modern saint’s biography. YouTube, Formed.org (Augustine Institute), WordOnFire.org, and Netflix offer films about saints. Your parish religious education office may offer additional materials or subscribe to these resources.

- Commit to a regular time of Eucharistic adoration. 

Start your PLN today

NAME A TOPIC that interests you but about which you know little. What are three ways you could learn more about it?

COMPARE TOPICS with others. Form a PLN with two or three peers. Plan to investigate one topic together.

9 (mostly free) WAYS TO STRETCH YOUR KNOWLEDGE THIS SUMMER

- Browse a news magazine, an alphabetical section of a dictionary, or an encyclopedia.
- Read an entire series of books.
- Read a biography.

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IMAGE: GIAMPORRONE/SHUTTERSTOCK

