

6 Keys to a Teacher's Successful Summer Vacation

- **Relax!** – Enjoy the quiet solitude and take a few deep breaths; another year is over!
- **Reflect on the Year** – Take out your lesson plan book, grade book and calendar to jog your memory, and spend some time writing down your thoughts on the year. What was awesome? What didn't quite work? What was the high point of the year? What was the biggest drain on your energy? Don't try to solve any problems for next year, just write your thoughts as they come. When you've finished, put your reflections in a safe place so you can find them later.
- **Release tension** – Chances are you've got tightness in your jaw, shoulder blades or back from all the conflicts you've had to deal with this year: needy students, demanding parents (I'm one myself), disagreements with colleagues. Find some way to release all that built-up tension. Physical activity is great for this. Go for a bike ride, a jog or a swim. Laughter is also one of the best releases. Watch a movie that will make you laugh out loud. Spend some time on Youtube laughing at goofy college students.
- **Replenish your energy** – Get some sleep! Eat a real breakfast now that you don't have to rush off to school in the morning; enjoy your lunch instead of scarfing it down before going to recess duty. Read that novel that's been sitting on your bookshelf all year.
- **Read professional books** – When you feel ready (probably in July sometime), find some new books in your field and learn something new about teaching. Great new books are being published all the time. Use the web to research new teaching ideas and lesson plans.
- **Revise units and lessons** – After you've had some time to digest the books and websites you've read, look over your units and lessons from last year and pick one or two to improve on. Use your reflections from the end of the year to help with this. I type all of my lessons in the computer so that I can edit them over the summer. Each year I get rid of what bombed (there's always something) and I make sure to repeat what worked well.

Follow these 6 R's and you'll be surprised at how refreshed and ready you'll feel when school begins again next year. You deserve it and so do your students.