

Summer Learning

by Kate Reen, MSW

Summer...a word that brings to mind ice cream, picnics, swimming, and...learning? Likely, your child considers summer a welcome break from the classroom. Although school may not be in session, it is vital your child continues learning over the summer months.

Learning Lost

Research shows that children lose one to three months of learning during the summer break. This loss of learning not only requires teachers to spend extra time in the fall, re-teaching what children learned the year before, but according to a study by John Hopkins University, summer learning or the lack of it may play a role in a child's future academic success. This loss of learning affects all subjects, but appears to be most pronounced in Math, as children may not as readily have an opportunity to practice their math skills in the summer.

Learning Found

Parents can help children retain their learning from the school year and even increase their learning. A good place to start is by considering your child's academic strengths and weaknesses, your child's interests, and your summer schedule. You may want to focus your time and attention on academic subjects that are challenging for your child. Summer can be a good time to provide extra academic help for a child through summer school, tutoring, and academically focused summer camps and programs. Check with your local school district, recreation center, universities, and community based organizations for information.

Learning experiences that occur within a child's area of interest will be fun for your child and may be easier than you think to integrate into your normal summer activities. For example, taking a child that loves animals to the zoo. Ask them to read the name and description of each animal

you visit and then describe the animal to you. This is a fun outing for the child while keeping up their reading, comprehension, and verbal skills not to mention increasing their vocabulary.

Helping your child keep learning throughout the summer does not have to cost money. Libraries, museums, and nature centers often offer summer programs and activities.

Visiting your local library will provide an opportunity for your child to pick out books of interest to them. Recommended reading lists may be available at your local school, library, or on family friendly websites. While at the library, pick up a book for yourself to model the importance of reading for your child. Consider setting aside an age appropriate amount of time everyday for reading by your child or to your child.

A visit to the local park can provide your child with a chance for physical activity, which promotes healthy development, and a chance to explore nature and experience firsthand the content of their science class. Family friendly websites, such as www.familyeducation.com, also offer ideas for at-home science projects for children, such as the Backyard Volcano.

Parents use math, in some form, almost every day. For example, cooking requires fractions and grocery shopping requires addition, subtraction, and multiplication. Consider including your child in these activities and allowing them to do the math for you. You could also pick up an activity book that includes math problems and keep it in the car.

These are just a few ideas parents can use to help their child continue learning throughout the summer. Learning experiences come in all shapes and sizes. Be creative and make a plan to help your child keep learning this summer.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Parent Training Exercise

Why is it important for children to keep learning in the summer?

What interests does your child have that you can integrate into their summer learning?

What are five ways you plan to help your child keep learning this summer?