

Encouraging Summer Learning

Every June, students look forward to getting rid of their books and heading off to enjoy two months of carefree living. But studies have indicated that continuous learning over the summer months assists students in getting a better start for the next school year. How can you encourage students – and parents – to keep learning alive all summer while still letting them enjoy some free time? Here are some tips you can share with parents to encourage learning throughout the summer:

Math

- Offer an allowance to help children with their math. Let them keep track of how much they receive each week, how much they save and how much they spend. Open a bank account so they can watch their savings grow.
- Hold a yard sale or set up a lemonade stand. Let children set the prices and make change.
- Teach older students how to put together a budget. Let them keep track of expenses each week as well as revenues. Teach them how to tally and reconcile their accounts each month.
- Teach children how to compute gas mileage on a car trip.
- Purchase logic puzzle or crossword puzzle books.
- Buy jigsaw puzzles and complete them with your child. Older children can work on more challenging ones.
- If you have sports fans in your home, encourage them to collect information on player statistics and read about game results in the paper each day.
- Take advantage of car vacations to teach children about directions and distances. Take a map along, and have your child plot a course for the trip and follow along in the car as you go.

Geography/History

- If you'll be visiting another city while on vacation, pick up brochures about the city and learn about the history and culture of different places. Visit historical sites along the way and stop at museums and galleries that display the area's culture.
- Find opportunities to visit local zoos, science centers, museums and art galleries.

Writing

- To keep writing skills current, buy a notebook and have children record daily activities and thoughts during their vacation. Ask them to reflect on specific events that happened during the day.
- Encourage children to write to grandparents, relatives and pen pals weekly.

Reading

- Find out if your neighbourhood library offers summer programs. Visit once a week to sign out new books.
- As a family, pick a topic to follow for a few days. Learn as much as you can about the topic through television, internet, newspapers, and magazines.

- Encourage teens to hook up with a younger sibling, a neighbour or a family friend to help them read once a week.
- Assign children the task of writing a grocery list each week and take them to the grocery store. Make them find the items on the list by reading the signs in the aisles and the labels on products.
- Set aside 20 minutes every day for family reading (including parents).
- For younger children, practice the sounds of language by reading rhyming books. Teach your children rhymes, short poems and songs.
- When walking around the neighbourhood, have children read signs and notices.
- Re-read familiar books. Children need practice in reading comfortably and with expression using books they know.
- Buy your teen a new book, or encourage library trips and book swaps with friends.
- Order a monthly magazine or pick current ones up at the library.

Summer Jobs

- Teens can help in the community and learn responsibility and social values by volunteering locally (at the hospital, animal shelter, community centre, summer camp, daycare, nursing home, church). These are also great experiences to put on a resume.
- Teens learn responsibility, budgeting and accountability by either working for themselves or someone else during the summer. Some ideas for a summer business include yard work for neighbours (gardening, trimming shrubs and mowing lawns), babysitting or car washing.
- Teens can be house sitters, taking care of pets while neighbours are on vacation, collecting the mail and newspapers and watering plants.

In addition, consider child-friendly apps for tablets, computers and smartphones. There are many educational programs that aid learning by incorporating reading, puzzles, music and math. For older students, websites such as Khan Academy can help with math and science.

With contributions from the National School Public Relations Association, Family Education and Family Fun.