



June 2010

School's Out, But Learning's "In"

To succeed in school and life, children need ongoing opportunities to learn and practice essential skills. This is especially true during the summer months, when children can lose one to three months' of learning. "Summer loss" is significant because teachers must typically spend four to eight weeks at the beginning of each school year reviewing and reteaching material that students have forgotten.

The good news is that parents can engage children during the summer to help them retain skills — and even gain new ones!

1. Conduct a Science Experiment

Experimentation is an exciting way to teach your children about the world around them. You can do anything from making your own play dough to creating a mini volcano in the backyard. (Both are easy projects you can find on the internet.)

2. Practice Estimation Skills Around the House

There are a lot of simple things that will help your children work on their estimation skills. For example, how long will it take to drive somewhere? How much money is needed to buy ingredients for a favorite meal, dessert, etc. at the grocery store? How many suitcases will the family need to pack for vacation?

3. Go to the Library

Sign your children up for the local summer reading program at the library. Regularly check out new books. As your children read each book, ask questions like "Who is the main character?" "What do you like about this story?" "How do you think it will end?" "What was your favorite part?"

4. Play Board Games

Playing board games as a family (or during a play date) encourages attention, persistence, and social skills like turn taking and being a good sport.

5. Spend Time Outdoors

Explore area parks and trails for walks or bicycle rides. Take time before the outing to gather information and ask children about the plants and wildlife they will encounter.

6. Take Them Out to the Ball Game

Plan a family outing to a baseball game. Teach your children the importance of statistics such as RBIs and ERA.

7. Let the Kids Cook

Talk to your younger children about how to measure ingredients, the planning involved in cooking, etc. Let them pour, stir, etc. Older children can take more responsibility in food preparation (but should still be supervised). Ask questions as you go, such as how many pints are in a quart, how to divide ingredients, etc.

8. Read the Comics

Read comics from books or newspapers with your child. Older children can read comic books on their own. Your children will enjoy reading something fun and different.

9. Plant a Garden

Whether it's in the backyard or a few pots on the porch, growing fruits and vegetables is fun and educational. Talk about what plants need to be hardy, how long different kind of plants need to grow, etc. The best part is that you get to eat the end product!

10. Have Your Own Puppet Theater

Children can either create their own story or act out one of their favorites. This is a great activity because it combines art and literacy.