

# The Parent Connection



A Newsletter from the Radford Parent Resource Center



## School's out! Or is it?

When that last bell rings in June, most kids dream of spending months away from the books and confine of school. But for students who struggle with learning, summer often means more classrooms, more teachers, more work, and sometimes a taste of success.

For parents it can be a tough call—is it better to give your children a break from academics, or will that set them back even more when September rolls around?

In a 2003 study that looked at research on summer learning loss, Harris Cooper, a psychology professor at Duke University, found that students' standardized test scores were lower in September than in the spring—on average students had lost the equivalent of one month of instruction. The findings were worse for math (a loss of about two months). And that's for children without learning disabilities.

IDEA regulations provide that a child should get summer services if the team determines that they're required to achieve a "free, appropriate education." But even if the school is willing, is it the best call for your child?

Ann Catcher wrestled with that very question 15 years ago. For her son, who has learning disabilities, tutoring and summer school felt like punishment. Since school was not exactly her son's

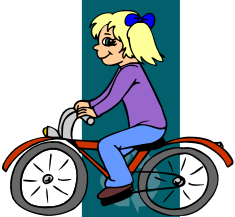
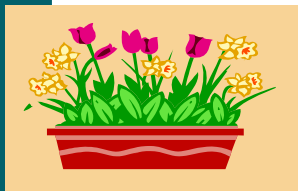
favorite place to be, did she want to subject him to that setting for those fun summer months?

"As a mom, I think it's really important for kids to have fun in the summer and not have the stress of the school year," she says. "But I found that he regressed over the summer."

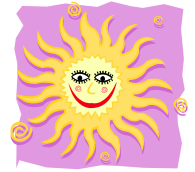
Lezley Holmes, a licensed educational psychologist in California, has seen that regression in the children she works with. Often it takes months before the kids have caught up with their current work. And that just sets them back even further. Summer programs can actually be a better place to learn, Holmes says, because they allow kids to focus more on one subject and to "chunk" learning into smaller parts of the day.

"Due to budget cuts and lack of resources, one of the few times that schools can help deliver intensive intervention is during summer school," Holmes says. Summer programs also mean smaller classes, more focused learning, and more hands-on experience, she adds. "The setting is often more relaxed, and there is more flexibility in how the kids learn the material," Holmes says. "Many parents feel that their children may need the break, but the fact is that they still end up with more than four weeks of downtime over the summer."

For the rest of this article, please go to [www.greatschools.org/LD/school-learning/](http://www.greatschools.org/LD/school-learning/).



# Early Childhood Experience



## Continue Your Preschooler's Learning During the Summer

Your preschooler doesn't need to sit at a desk to keep learning over the summer. A few simple and fun activities will keep her engaged and motivated. Then when preschool resumes in the fall, she'll be ready.

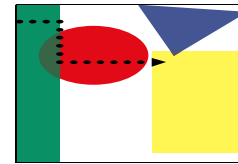
Continuing to read with your child is the absolute best thing you can do for summer learning. Here are a few other ideas to consider:

- **Practice personal information.** Does your child know her phone number and address? If not, help her come up with a rhyme or silly story to memorize them.

- **Be scrappy.** Help your child put together a scrapbook of summer memories. She can paste photos or draw pictures of summer experiences. Then help her "write" (according to her ability) about them underneath.
- **Get more from a trip to the store.** More knowledge, that is. Have your child help you look for the items you need. Read a word in a label and ask your child to point to the word and repeat it back to you. Show her the price and explain that this tells

customers how much money they will need to buy the item.

- **Search for shapes.** Knowing shapes is a skill your child will need throughout her school career. Look for objects shaped like circles, squares and triangles. If these are easy, go on to octagons (stop signs) or pentagons (with five sides--some houses have a basic pentagon shape).



## Elementary School Notes

### Boost Your Child's Independence, Responsibility Over the Summer


One of the best ways to help your child become more responsible is by helping her develop independence. Summer is a great time to help her learn how to do things for herself. Here are a few ideas:

- **Don't be afraid of unstructured time.** Today's families often think that children need to have a planned activity every minute of the day. But all those structured activities keep your child from making decisions for herself.

During the summer, try to see that your child has regular blocks of unstructured time. If she says she's bored, tell her you're sure she can figure out something to do. (And she will.)

- **Teach your child adult skills.** The summer months offer good opportunities to practice doing laundry or preparing a meal. The more adult skills your child learns, the more responsible she can be.

- **Back off this summer** if you've been doing too much for your child. First graders can make their own beds (maybe not perfectly). Second graders can fold laundry. Yes, they will take longer to do these tasks than you would. Let them practice over the summer.



### NEWS YOU CAN USE

- **May 31** - Schools closed: Memorial Day
- **June 11** - Last day of school for students or snow make up days. 2 hours early dismissal
- **July 5-July 22** - summer school for primary or elementary students at Belle Heth.

## Intermediate School Tips

**Establish, Maintain Positive Family Connections This summer!**



Soon your child will have an extended break from the regular routine. With school out for the summer, she will likely spend more time at home.

This is an opportunity for the two of you to spend some quality time together. Here are some ideas:

- **Increase the number** of family meals. With a looser schedule, your child should be more available not just to eat with you, but also to assist you.
- **Get active.** If summer days are too hot for exercising outside, take advantage of the long, warm, summer evenings. If you both like a sport, such as tennis, play together. Or just walk and enjoy each other's company--as well as the conversation that happens more naturally at these times.
- **Celebrate the weekend.** Summer weekends are precious and few. Never let them go to waste. Have your child make a (reasonable) list of what she'd like to do together.
- **Make memories.** Take photos to record your summer with your child. Spend an evening together placing them in an album or making a scrapbook.

## High School Hints

**Remind Your Teen That School Isn't Out for the Summer Yet!**



Although summer break is fast approaching, it's not here just yet. Class is still in session--and your teen still needs to show up to school ready-to-learn, every day. To make sure your teen stays engaged during the last weeks of school:

- **Keep her bedtime steady.** The sun may be out later, but that doesn't mean your teen should be. Sticking to the same bedtime routine she's had all year will ensure she wakes up feeling well-rested.
- **Keep her fed.** Breakfast is still the most important meal of the day--that morning meal gets your teen's brain going. Have quick breakfast items on hand, like fruit, yogurt, trail mix or whole-grain bagels.
- **Keep informed.** Talk to your teen about school so she knows you still think it's important. Be sure that she reads assignments and completes homework.
- **Keep her moving.** Encourage regular exercise--studies have shown it relieves stress, improves memory and helps teens feel happier.
- **Keep her supplied.** She needs to show up to class ready to work. A student who doesn't have a pencil or paper isn't prepared. See if she needs to restock these important supplies.
- **Keep her interested.** Remind your teen to focus on what she's learning, not just on passing the class. If she doesn't understand something, tell her to ask questions. Teachers love to help--it's why they are teachers. As a bonus she'll actually learn what she needs to know.

## BONUS ARTICLE

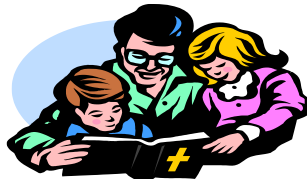
### Teach Your Preschooler About Family Heritage and Traditions

It is important for your child to know about her own family's background and traditions that often enrich our lives. It also makes us appreciate who we are and what we have. Share your family's heritage with your child.

Also take time to point out and show your child that others may have different backgrounds and traditions. These give your child new perspectives.

To expand your child's world:

- **Show your child photos** and keepsakes from your family's past. Children especially love to see photos of their parents and grandparents as children.
- **Try cooking a dish** that represents your family's background. Have your child help. Children are more likely to try new foods if they have helped to prepare them.
- **Read your child a book** about a child of another culture or country. Talk about the book with your child. Point out similarities: "She likes to play with balls, too." Talk about differences: "She speaks a different language than we do."
- **Encourage your child** to make friends with children from many cultures.
- **Take advantage** of some cultural opportunities in your community. These may include local museums, festivals at cultural centers or houses of worship or performances. Many of these are free.



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### The ABCs of Parenting

**A**sk your child about the school day.  
**B**egin your child's day with a nourishing breakfast.

**C**ongratulate your child for doing well.

**D**iscuss homework with your child.

**E**ncourage your child to read.

**F**ind a quiet place for your child to study.

**G**ive your child responsibility.

**H**ug your child to build self worth.

**I**nclude your child in making simple family decisions.

**J**oin a library with your child.

**K**eep your child on a schedule that includes exercise and sleep.

**L**imit TV viewing by selecting programs with your child.

**M**ake the time you spend with your child special.

**N**otice and discuss changes in your child's behavior.

**O**ffer to help your child organize school papers.

**P**rovide your child with good role models.

**Q**uestion the activities your child shares with friends.

**R**espect your child's right to have opinions different from yours.

**S**hare an interest or hobby with your child.

**T**ake time to listen to your child.

**U**rge your child to say "NO!" to unwanted touching.

**V**isit places of interest with your child.

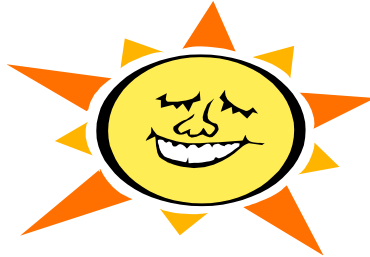
**W**ork with your child to set up rules of behavior.

**X**erox (copy) and save records or articles that benefit your child.

**Y**ield results by encouraging your child to do better.

**Z**oom through these ABCs again and again!

# HAVE A "SUN" SATIONAL SUMMER!



"The best inheritance a parent can give his children is a few minutes of his time each day."  
--Orlando A. Battista

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