



FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Family **FACTS** on Education

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Turn Summer Daze into Learning Days



How to Make the Most of Summer

Studies have shown that all students are likely to lose some of their learning gains during the summer. For the average student, this loss amounts to at least a month's worth of learning. Parents can help keep their kids sharp in the summer. But how?

In summer, time seems to stretch out, giving us a chance to have some fun with our kids. It's also a great time for all kinds of learning! Parents can help their kids keep learning alive. But how? The key to avoiding summer learning loss is to continue learning through the summer. The key to learning through the summer is to make learning FUN!

Here are some suggestions based on studies that have discovered powerful ways for children to hold on to what they have learned during the school year and to even gain more skills and knowledge during the summer. These research findings can help point the way:

- The number of books read during the summer is consistently related to academic gains.
- Children in every income group who read six or more books over the summer are likely to gain more in reading skills than children who don't.
- Children read more when they see other people reading. Parents can be models by letting their children see them reading for pleasure.

Seize the Moment

When your children express an interest, encourage them to talk about it and to explore it further. Follow their passions. Find out what amuses, excites, and inspires them. Pick activities around their interests. Summer outings may present opportunities for your child to learn about history, biography, and nature. Seize those teachable moments to encourage your child to listen, read, take a picture, add to a postcard collection—even to write in a journal! Check your local department of parks and recreation for upcoming events.

Did you know...?

- The term “summer learning loss” was coined as early as 1906 to describe the undoing of school-year learning that happens in the summer.
- During the school year, all children learn basic skills at nearly the same rate.
- Summer learning loss affects nearly all young people. But losses are greater for children of families with lower income.
- Nearly all the differences in achievement happen because of unequal access to summer learning opportunities.
- Children who go to the library and take books home, go to museums, concerts and field trips, and take lessons such as swimming or gymnastics are most likely to avoid summer loss and make learning gains.

(Source: John Hopkins University Center for Summer Learning, www.summerlearning.org.)

Talk and listen

Every summer day brings opportunities to talk with and listen to your children. In fact, did you know that just talking and listening are important to children's success in life? Listening is really a child's first experience with language and the beginning of literacy. Talk about everything. Use big words even when children are very young. Encourage your child to talk by listening.

Read! Read! Read!

Instead of losing reading skills, children who read during the summer actually gain skills. Reading aloud to young children is the most important way to get them started on the road to being a successful reader. Read to and with your child as often as possible. Read in the language of the home or whatever language you are comfortable using. Keep books, magazines, and newspapers in the home and be a reading role model. Visit your local library often. Take books home. Perhaps join a summertime reading program or attend storytime sessions. Libraries also rent movies and CDs. A child who is a reluctant reader might be more interested in reading a book once he has seen the movie. Comic books are also a great way to get kids to read and build their vocabulary. With access to the Web, libraries can give older kids a great way to pursue an interest.

Studies have found that kids gain reading skills when they read any format they want, including comic books and teen romances. In fact, these reading gains were even better than those gained from direct reading instruction.

Encourage math and science

Talk about math and science during everyday activities. Cooking, gardening, sewing, using a calculator, playing board games, estimating distances and amounts, and recognizing

Free or low-cost museum passes!

Massachusetts libraries are great summer resources.

- They give out free or low-cost passes to museums, the zoo, and other places of interest.
- Many sponsor reading or other learning programs.
- Many have suggested reading lists for kids of different ages.

Call your local branch for details.

patterns in design and music are all great ways to strengthen math and science skills. Keep events on a family-size calendar to help reinforce learning about time and scheduling.

Encourage writing

People who read more write better. The more people write, the better they get at writing. Find ways to build writing into everyday activities. You might encourage our child to:

- Keep a summer scrapbook. Fill it with postcards, ticket stubs, photos. Your child can write the captions and read them as you look over the book.
- Help write a grocery list.
- Start a journal. It can be about what happened during the day or week, or about a topic your child is interested in and finding out about.

Be a positive role model

Let your child see you enjoy reading and learning. Your joy of learning is catching! Keep learning alive during the summer so that your children will return to school refreshed, energized, and ready to start the new school year.



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