

Helping Your Child Catch Up Or Get Ahead in the Summer

Exploring the Opportunities

When the school year comes to an end, the summer ahead offers a vast menu of opportunities. That period of time when school is not in formal session may be the open door your child needs to catch up with peers or to get ahead with some specific project, or it may be the period of time that is needed for your child to explore some new avenues of

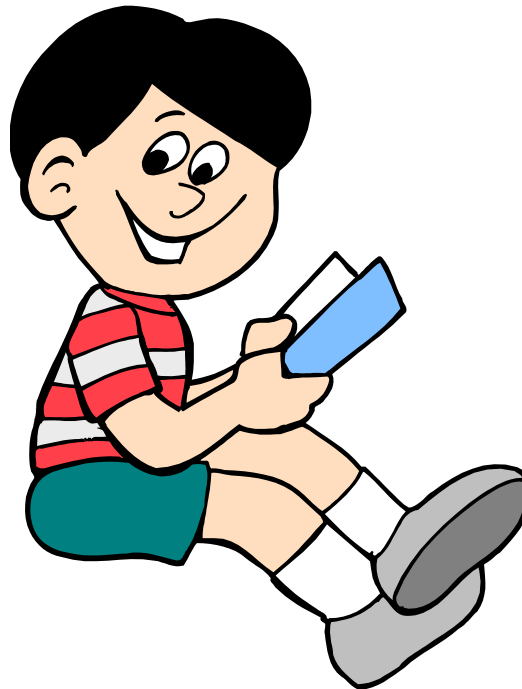
achievement. It definitely is not a time to put learning in dry dock or shift mental growth into neutral. It is a time for freedom of choice of the learning opportunities which suit individual needs and interests. It is a time to move forward, catch up, get ahead, and venture into the unexplored.

Helping a child take advantage of the opportunities of summer requires some effort and planning. An appropriate place to begin is talking with the child's teacher: Find out about the areas in which the child

may need to do some catching up or some maintenance. Perhaps there are skills that need strengthening through summer practice. Ask about areas in which the child has shown specific interest which can form the basis for summer projects. Inquire about the availability of materials from school for use at home during the summer. And,

above all ask about summer classes either in the school or from a community organization. Find out if your school offers summer classes for credit or for enrichment. No doubt your school will also have information about community programs offered by agencies other than the school. Ask if the school library is to be open during the

summer months or contact the public library about summer programs. Gather as much information as you can from the staff at school.



With information in hand, you are now ready to plan summer activities with your child. Listen to what your child expresses about choices, interests, and needs for the coming weeks.

Don't be discouraged when your child tells you that nothing is interesting – that everything is boring. Make it clear that doing nothing is not an option, and then move into what the available choices are. Be prepared to negotiate, to bargain, and to offer mature and wise counsel about realistic choices so that there will be a variety of growth opportunities for your child.

The summer plans that you make with your child should include activities which provide for academic

catch-up and maintenance. Your child may attend a class or receive instruction from a qualified tutor if these experiences meet his or her needs. Though this may be a high priority goal, it should be accompanied by other activities which will provide some balance. Along with academics, you should plan activities which address any social or emotional needs seen in your child. Summer is a great time for your

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child to make new friends in a day camp or summer recreational activity. Summer sports programs, arts and crafts programs, library programs and other learning experiences are available through community agencies and churches. The summer months afford an opportunity for your child to take on increased responsibility at home in the family. This part of your plan needs to include specific guidelines and a built-in system for monitoring and rewarding success.

The summer months are unsurpassed as a time to explore new activities and projects. It is a time when children can engage in music lessons, art projects, and science study; or they can work with parents or a mentor on building collections. Research the opportunities for these kinds of enrichment experience so that new adventures can be a part of your child's summer plan.

Confer with teachers, gather information, and make a plan with your child. Then monitor, encourage, and participate with your child in those planned activities so that the young person in your household will experience the growth that is possible during the summer months.

Contact your school about helping your child catch up or get ahead during the summer. We look forward to working with you as you plan for the summer.