

Optimizing Summer Learning

by *Dahlia Miller*

News & Announcements

Summer Programs

This summer, besides on-going academic tutoring, STR will be offering a variety of unique one-on-one tutoring options. Summer tutoring can enhance students' understanding of academics and build interest and experience as well.

Consider how learning chess strategies might help with the logical thinking required for math and calculus, or how calligraphy could improve hand-writing and pattern recognition.

Contact us directly to learn more.

Kayaking Daycamps

STR & Pacifica Paddle Sports are teaming up to offer kayak daycamps. The programs will run selected weeks in July and August, Monday through Friday, 9am-3pm (ages 12-14 and 15-18). The focus will be on exploring the outdoors, learning to kayak and building confidence through experience.

Contact us for more information.

STR in the Community

In May, STR spoke to the peer tutors at Reynolds Secondary School and a grade 6 class at Cedar Hill Middle School.

If you are interested in hosting a talk by Smart Tutor Referrals, please contact us. *30 - 45 minute talks for peer tutors are offered free of charge as a community service.*

Newsletter

"The Smart Connection" will return in September with more topics to support students, parents and educators.

We all know that it's important to rest and rejuvenate in the summer. Since learning happens 12 months of the year, our children benefit from seeing that it is given a priority during the summer months. Learning isn't just done in school; it's part of life. Let's explore a few ways to make summer learning fun and look at a few reasons why it's so important to do so.

Some students find that they can get a better handle on subjects and move ahead with them in the summer when they aren't as busy. Studies show that regular review of notes can help the brain to develop stronger links to previously learned information. As the brain is challenged, it stretches to form new connections. Basically that means that with summer review, in September your child can start running from a jog rather than a dead stop. So he'll be better able to take in new information rather than focusing on remembering and trying to understand what was learned in the previous school year – he won't be playing 'catch-up' in the fall.

Summer (and other breaks from school) can be the perfect time to bolster your child's sense of confidence in learning. There is a greater degree of flexibility since you aren't strapped to a school schedule. Because there isn't the pressure of assignments to keep up with, learning can be done for interest's sake and a greater degree of competency with newly learned skills can be fostered. Summer is a time when interests can be explored (and linked to academics at the same time).

Building your children's sense of confidence in learning isn't only the

school's responsibility, and it can be easy if they are given some direction and allowed to explore the world around them. Imagine, for example, discussing and researching the length and height of waves you're likely to encounter before going kayaking with your family. This is math and physics and family fun all rolled into one. Perhaps you would find an interesting website with information about waves and wave dynamics that your child might return to out of interest on another day.

Learning needs to feel natural and fun, not like a burden. Young people naturally want to learn about life and the world around them. If you can build enjoyment of learning without pressure, then your kids will likely be willing to devote more time to it. They'll feel that it's enjoyable and that they are successful. If you show them that their efforts are recognized and supported, then they'll feel good about it.

Keep in mind that the last thing you want to do is stack feelings of guilt onto learning. You don't need to give yourself or your kids a hard time if you aren't putting an hour into completing math workbooks everyday like the family next door, for example, or if you aren't getting out to "educational" family fieldtrips at least once per week in the summer. If you let your children feel that they aren't doing enough, they may feel a sense of futility linked to education and learning in general. If your schedule is too packed to focus on academics in the summer, you can always hire a professional tutor to come in several times per month. In fact,

About Us

Our Mission Is:

- ▶ To provide top quality, flexible learning support and service to students and parents through:

***In-home private tutoring**
matched specifically to
each student's needs.*

***Stimulating workshops**
building skills in a practical
and creative way.*

- ▶ To enhance students' skills and increase learning confidence through one-on-one support that is truly individualized, recognizing each student's unique abilities.
- ▶ To improve the quality of life, in individuals and communities through education.

Our tutors are certified teachers and professionals. They are carefully screened and chosen specially to match the needs and learning styles of each student.

We support families in education.

For more information and resources, visit us on-line at:

www.SmartTutorReferrals.com

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there are many ways learning can be introduced into your daily life without much extra effort on your part.

Here are a few suggestions of ways that you can offer your children opportunities for growth and development in the summer.

- ▶ Notice your child's responsiveness; when does s/he learn best? Focus "academic" discussions during that time of the day.

- ▶ Get into games – there is an abundance of stimulating games that your child may enjoy (especially if the whole family happens to be into them): crosswords, Sudoku, chess, memory games, role-plays and charades, and board games with a learning component.

- ▶ Improvisation can be lots of fun. Brainstorm settings, characters and situations together and then act them out (for example grandma in a playground with Sponge-Bob buying an ice cream cone together). You'll most likely find yourselves laughing together while exploring and practicing a variety of social skills.

- ▶ Ask your kids to cook (recipes involve math especially when they need to be doubled or halved). Shopping for ingredients gives extra practice in estimation of costs, price comparison (i.e. algebra) and money management as well.

- ▶ Suggest that your kids build things (bird feeders, go carts, etc.) – this is especially great if they work from plans or create their own plans. Planning, measuring, being creative, and the hands-on of actual building are great confidence builders as well as offering experience and practice in hand-eye co-ordination.

- ▶ Read a series of books with your kids. You could role-play, or at least discuss, what you think the ending

may be. Also, discussions about the characters, their conflicts and the writer's intent build skills for literature analysis.

- ▶ Attend readings. Local authors and out-of-town authors often present their work in book store or library readings. This is a wonderful way to look into a written work from the author's perspective.

- ▶ Libraries offer free summer reading clubs and rewards for kids who read a certain number of books over the summer.

- ▶ Buy or borrow magazines, books, books on tape and videos that might interest your child. Books on experiments and crafts that can be done at home are great fun. Recent videos about science and nature are very entertaining and educational.

- ▶ Get creative with what you have at home – the bathroom scale, scrapbook supplies, a magnifying glass, food colouring – encourage your kids to come up with activities with 3 or 4 randomly selected items.

- ▶ Watch trends together – weather charts, stock markets, plant growth, animal tracks in your backyard, etc.

- ▶ Plan family activities and field trips where you are all learning. Perhaps you could try a new sport together or attend a free outdoor presentation offered by a park naturalist in the neighbourhood.

There are several good books on thinking games and suggestions for parents on encouraging a love of reading, math, science and nature at the local library.

"The important thing is not so much that every child should be taught, as that every child should be given the wish to learn."

John Lubbock, 1900's British Statesman

Thank you for your continued support of Smart Tutor Referrals and our vision of supporting families in learning.

Best wishes for a fun and safe summer.