

Beating Breaktime Boredom

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With the holidays upon us students and staff will get a well-deserved break from the classroom, but this doesn't mean children need to stop learning. Here are a few tips to keep your child's mind sharp and challenged during their break, and it might just prevent cabin fever as well.

Use the winter break to strengthen your child's vocabulary. This is a perfect time to start a word wall. Discuss unfamiliar words or have your child look up new words, and then write the word and definition on 3×5 cards. They could then tape the cards to their wall or a dresser. Use the words in a sentence or have them write a story based on the words. This exercise will reinforce reading comprehension and writing skills. There are also some great word games out there that will help your child with spelling and build their vocabulary. I know one that my son loves playing with his grandma is Boggle. You could have a competition with your child to see who can read the most books over the break. Have your child read to you daily from the newspaper, a magazine, or excerpts from their favorite book, and let your child see you reading.

Give your child an opportunity to appreciate the arts by attending free events like concerts or plays during the holidays, or stop by a local museum. Do puzzles or games of strategy. Jigsaw, Sudoku and many other types of puzzles require the same thought process and tenacity needed to solve difficult math problems. There are many games that promote problem solving and probability. There are card games such as cribbage and rummy (have your child keep the score), and other games such as Yahtzee.

You can also work together in creating cool science projects. You can find many by doing an online search for "cool science projects for kids". It can get a little messy, but my kids like to work together to make slime.

Mix it up with some toys and activities to keep your children active. A hula hoop can be an active inside toy that doesn't require much space. Search **energy busting indoor games** and it will take you to a site called www.whatmomslove.com and there you will find many indoor fun activities for kids. Check the rec center website, www.norwalkrec.com for student/family time to give your child opportunities to be active even when it is cold outside. Hopefully we will get a white Christmas, so the kids can actually get outside to build a snowman or go sledding.

At any rate, I know I will be doing all I can over this holiday break to keep my children active and mentally challenged while limiting their screen time. After all, smartphones, computers, and video games can be a fun release, but our kids need to disconnect from those devices. Additionally, it is okay for a child to be "bored". Thomas Kersting authored a great book titled "Disconnected", in it he makes the analogy of boredom to the brain being like lifting weights to the muscles. We build our mental capacities when we are alone with our thoughts, exploring and figuring out what to do. Kids today often don't get a chance to experience this process because there is always an electronic device around to distract them from their boredom.