



Summer Brain Freeze

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When you think back to your summers as a child, you may fondly remember those carefree days when you didn't have to go to school and you could play outside for hours. Although unstructured play and downtime is so important for our children, fun learning and reading time should also be incorporated into those long summer days. Helping your children stay engaged throughout the summer will help set them up for success in the upcoming school year.

To succeed in school and life, children and young adults need ongoing opportunities to learn and practice essential skills. This is especially true during the summer months. Summer is a great time to participate in enriching experiences such as time with family, trips to museums, parks, and libraries.

All young people experience learning losses when they do not engage in educational activities during the summer (Downey et al, 2004). Most students lose about two months of grade level equivalency in mathematical computation skills over the summer months. (Cooper, 1996) and do not score as well on standardized tests as students who continue to learn during the summer. The effect is cumulative: each summer a student isn't learning adds up and can have a long-term impact on overall performance in school.

Kids are thinking and dreaming of things they are going to do this summer. Children need opportunities to connect learned knowledge to real life experiences. Keeping our children engaged in learning seems like such a daunting task. Having our children home with us, during school breaks, is an opportunity to develop a love of learning together in which they can discover learning is fun and can happen anytime and anywhere.

Consider activities such as: cooking with you; reading a recipe, mixing and stirring, cutting and chopping. At-home-theater night; your child writes a play that they then perform for you when you get home from work. Scrapbook; make a scrapbook of all the papers and projects that they brought home the previous school years. For more ideas, Education World has a list of 25 Activities to Keep Kids' Brains Active in summer. PTA's Parents' Guide to Student Success is also a great source, as well as, the Reading Rockets website.

It's impossible to overestimate the role that parents can play in their children's education. While a student moves from classroom to classroom, parents and families stay the same. That consistency is one reason why parents are so vital to their children's education. Research proves that the home-school partnership plays a critical role in student academic achievement. As Anne Henderson and Karen Mapp noted in "A New Wave of Evidence," when families are involved in their children's learning, children earn better grades, enroll in higher-level programs, have higher graduation rates and are more likely to enroll in postsecondary education.

And now, as you prepare for summer fun, thoughts of popsicles, frosties, floats, ice cream...all the things that can cause "Brain Freeze", you know that feeling when you've eaten something cold and delicious too fast. We want those brains unfrozen and maintain a constant temperature. I challenge you to read 10 books, complete summer packets, go to the library, visit a zoo, reduce the amount of video games and watching television alone, stay physically active, do board games and jigsaw puzzles, and play "I Spy" while traveling.

Stay academically fit and have a great summer!