

REPORT to PARENTS

Keep Kids Learning During the Summer

By forgetting about learning during the lazy days of summer, you're actually harming your child's education. Children lose a shocking amount of what they've already learned if they're allowed to "veg out" during the summer. That means that the kids who put forth just a little bit of effort are going to be way ahead come fall. You owe it to them-and to their futures-to incorporate learning activities into their summers.

- **You've got to have "the talk."**

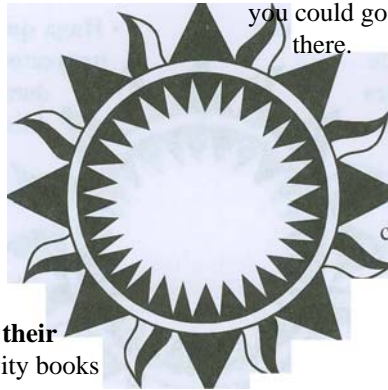
Before the last school bell rings for the year, sit down with your children and let them know that reading and learning activities will be an important part of their summer. Assure them that they'll still have lots of time for play and relaxation.

- **Find activity books to exercise their minds.** There is a huge variety of activity books available, usually catered to specific age groups. Give your children their own activity book, and let them work at their own pace to finish it. (Set a "due by" date to keep them on track.) Crossword puzzles, math activity books, and number puzzles all keep children's brains in motion.

- **Set a reading time every day.** Set aside a certain time every day where everyone turns off the computer, TV, music, and video games, and spends 15 minutes or more reading. (As busy as parents are, it's important that you participate as well, even if you just read the newspaper.)

- **Get great recommendations on books for your child.** Check out the American Library Association's lists on Summer Reading and Learning for Children at www.ala.org/ala/alsc/alscresources/summerreading/recsummerreading/recommendedreading.htm. Be sure to sign your kids up for library summer book clubs, too!

- **Be "international."** Set aside one or two nights during the summer to have an international evening. Together, find recipes from a different nation and put together a special meal. Learn a few basic words in that country's language and find a children's book or an encyclopedia article that gives information on what life is like in that country. Get out a world map or a globe and show them where the country is and talk about what you'd want to visit if you could go there.



- **Incorporate "thinking" into traveling.** If your family is able to take a vacation during the summer, include stops at a few places that sneak in learning, along with fun. Zoos, children's museums, and historic sites are educational as well as entertaining. For bonus learning, have your children help you plot out the trip using maps or an atlas. Older children can tally up the miles, keep track of expenses, or figure out gas mileage.

- **Participate in sports/exercise.** With hours of free time every day, there's always time to build in some physical activity. Even if your child can't participate in a local sports league or community based team, there are plenty of ways to get exercise-from jumping rope to family walks.

There are wonderful resources available through schools, libraries, and on the Internet to help families keep their children's brains "alive" during the dog days of summer. Even though it takes a little bit of effort on your part, the payoff, in terms of their education, is beyond measure.