Helping Children Learn
Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Board

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School may have a break, but learning happens all year long

You probably already know that continuing to read with your child is your first priority for summer learning. Try a few other simple activities, too, to keep him engaged and motivated. Then, when school begins, your child will be ready.

Here are a few learning ideas to consider:

• **Search for shapes.** Knowing shapes is a skill your child will need throughout his school career. Look for objects shaped like circles, squares and triangles. If these are easy, go on to octagons (stop signs) or pentagons (the black shapes on many soccer balls).

• **Practice personal information.** Does your child know his phone number and address? If not, come up with a rhyme or silly story to help him memorize them.

• **Get more from a trip to the store.** More knowledge, that is. Have your child help you look for the items you need. Read the word on the label and ask him to point to the word and repeat it back to you. Show him the price and explain that this tells us how much money we will need to buy the item.

• **Be scrappy.** Help your child put together a scrapbook of summer memories. He can paste in photos or draw pictures, and then “write” (according to his ability) about them underneath. You can write a caption underneath his “writing” to further explain the illustration.

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Spark a love of reading this summer

In kindergarten, your child will begin to learn to read. You can help create a good foundation this summer by teaching your child to love books. You can:

• **Play silly games** that reinforce what your child already knows about reading. Turn the book upside down and pretend to read, for example. Your child will have fun correcting you!

• **Expand her vocabulary.** Introduce new words and practice using familiar ones. Make a point of using new words when you talk together.

• **Promote word recognition.** Teach your child short, common words, such as the, stop and dog. Point out words that rhyme. “Look, Jenny. Cat and hat. That’s a rhyme! Can you think of another rhyme?”

No matter what reading activities you do with your child, avoid making reading seem like work. The most important thing you can do is to make reading fun.

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Track summer screen time

Your child may have more free time when school’s out for the summer, but that doesn’t mean her good TV-watching habits should be “on vacation,” too! Keep in mind the American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines: No more than one to two hours of quality programming per day, and no TV at all for children younger than two years.

Arranging items in order builds math & science skills

Learning to put things in a certain order—or sequencing—is a necessary skill to learn before children can do math problems in school. To teach sequencing:

• **Sort blocks by size.** Pick blocks of varying sizes and show your child how to line them up from the smallest to the largest. Then mix them up and ask him to try.

• **Cook together.** Read the steps of a recipe out loud. Let your child help you in some way with each step of the recipe. Talk about why it’s so important to complete the steps in order.

Bring the beach home!

Playing with water and sand is a great source of pleasure for most children—and you don’t have to trek all the way to the beach to try it out! A small tub of water and another of sand make wonderful learning laboratories, too. Putting different objects in the water teaches about sinking and floating. Working with sand helps fine motor skills and sharpens your child’s love of creating. Just be sure to watch your child closely at all times whenever she is near any amount of water.

Source: “Literacy Activities for Ages 4-8,” ReadWriteThink.

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Kids become respectful over time as they start to realize that it feels good to be asked politely, thanked and treated nicely. A recent study shows that talking with your child about people’s thoughts and feelings makes a difference. For example, “That little boy is crying. Why do you think he’s upset?” Or “Joe is smiling. How do you think he feels?” Discussions about feelings have long-term benefits. Talking with your preschooler now will benefit him in elementary school, when good social skills will help him get along with classmates and teachers.

Don’t forget to pack some learning into travel plans

If you’re planning a trip this summer, plan to strengthen your child’s literacy and thinking skills, too. When getting ready for the trip, you can:

• Find books in the library about your destination.
• Make up a story about the trip. Imagine what you will do and see.
• Think about what the weather requires you to pack. A bathing suit? A sweater?

Are you expanding your child’s world?

It’s wonderful for preschoolers to enjoy familiar places and activities. But they also need new experiences to teach them about the world. Answer these questions yes or no to see if your child has exciting learning adventures:

___1. Do you try new things as a family, such as interesting foods and sports?

___2. Do you visit new places with your child, such as museums and parks?

___3. Do you go to the library often so your child can check out new books?

___4. Do you plan opportunities for your child to meet and play with new friends?

___5. Do you ask your child what he’d like to try, such as baking or finger painting?

How did you do? Each yes answer means you’re teaching your child about the world. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.