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FOR FAMILIES

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Sneaking in learning during the summer

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❖ **INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES** is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Adapted by Judy McDaniel, communications consultant, from an article published on Schoolfamily.com.

This summer, you might want to sneak learning opportunities into everyday life so your children will be more than ready when school starts. Here are some ideas suggested by teachers.

- ❖ Plan a party. Give your children a budget, and let them pick the theme and the menu. They can send out the invitations, make the decorations, and prepare some or all of the food. Children will learn to work together, and they'll use math skills to stick to the budget.
- ❖ Work on jigsaw puzzles as a family. Puzzles help children with spatial awareness. Start with a small puzzle and work up to a larger one with 500 or more pieces. Take a photo of the family with the finished puzzle. Then take the puzzle apart and trade it with another puzzle enthusiast.
- ❖ Make up silly stories to build language-arts skills. Start with a commercial book of Mad Libs, those funny fill-in-the-blanks stories, then make your own for vocabulary-building and storytelling skills. Have kids type the stories on the computer and draw the illustrations. By the end of summer, you'll have a whole book.
- ❖ Give your children a tape recorder. They can record themselves reading stories, telling about adventures they have had, or making up their own stories. At night or in the car, listen to your children's recordings. Type their stories on the computer and have them illustrate them.
- ❖ Play "restaurant" at home using takeout menus and play money. Have children place orders and tally up the bill. Encourage children to make their own menus on the computer, using creative vocabulary. Try to create some of their adventurous dishes in the kitchen.
- ❖ Enlist children's help with laundry. They can count socks by twos, organize clothes by color, count shoes, and reorganize the closets and dresser drawers.
- ❖ Paint. Use finger paint—find recipes online to make your own or use commercial watercolor or tempera paint. Find a scenic spot outside or set up a still life to build observational skills. Talk with your children about their paintings. Which colors did they choose and why?
- ❖ Make a scrapbook. Gather photos, mementos, and notes and compile them into a summer memory book. Each child can make his or her own scrapbook, and each will reflect a different point of view.

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- ❖ Practice grammar and vocabulary with word magnets. Buy magnetic tape and write words with a marker. Using a cookie sheet, have your children arrange the words to make a sentence. Make it challenging by asking for a four-word sentence, then a five-word sentence and longer. For older children, request specific types of sentences: declarative, interrogative, or exclamatory.
- ❖ Have a math or vocabulary question of the day. Write out a daily math problem or vocabulary word, and have your children write the definition or the answer by dinner time. Assign each child a different color marker. Keep a log of vocabulary words so you can start reviewing toward the end of the summer.
- ❖ For a fun summer filled with learning experiences undetectable to the average child, think like a teacher. If your kids love making forts when it rains, encourage them to calculate the area. If they love to play board games, enlist them to create a new board game using vocabulary words. If your children need to work on math skills, challenge them to invent a secret code and write notes back and forth in code all summer. With a little creativity, you can find a way to slip a little math and language arts into just about any activity.
- ❖ Here's a final idea for summer learning. Have each child write a thank-you note to his or her last year's teacher. Also, have them write introduction letters to their new teachers, telling about their family, likes and dislikes, favorite activities, favorite books, activities during the summer, etc. They can present the letters to their teachers when school starts.