

## **Strategies to Avoid the Summer Slump: Keep your Kids Learning, Active, and Engaged**

To most kids, the idea of summer is fun and exhilarating. Summer is the only time of the year where children get to spend a lot of time outside of school to do the things they love and enjoy. For many children, summer means spending more time playing outdoors, hanging out with friends, engaging in sports, going on vacation and doing every fun activity there is. Unfortunately, while children spend most of their time playing, there is a good chance of them suffering from “summer learning loss” or what educators termed as “summer academic slide”. This simply means that the children’s preoccupation with play and other summer activities may cause them to lose their academic learnings during the many weeks they spend outside of school. Many parents have expressed concerns about their children suffering from learning loss within the few weeks of being away from school. The good thing is that there are many practical ways to avoid the summer slump and keep the kids engaged, active and at the same time, learning all throughout the summer break.

In preventing summer learning loss among children, it is important for parents to acknowledge the importance of striking the right balance between play and learning. Studies show that “play” has an essential role in developing the social, physical, emotional and cognitive aspects of children. Hence, parents must not view it as a hindrance to the full learning development of their children; instead, they must see it as an effective tool to engage their children fully in the learning process. The right parental mindset should be focused on incorporating play into the learning development process of children. Adopting a balanced view on the concepts of play and learning is also important so that the kids are not only kept productive and engaged throughout summer but are also given sufficient time to relax and

unwind. The following are some strategies that can be applied to keep the kids engaged, active and learning during summer season:

- **Engage children in summer reading sessions.** Avoiding the summer slump entails involving children to enjoyable academic activities such as reading. Based on studies, setting aside a specific time or session per day will enhance the cognitive skills of children. It has been proven that reading non-academic materials not only helps stimulate the minds of children but also enables them to enjoy and relax.
- **Encourage children to attend music lessons.** Studies show that music education helps cultivate the fine motor skills and improves the memory, retention and recall of children. Music also enhances the creativity of children which is key to developing their academic competencies and self-esteem as individuals. Most importantly, learning and engaging in music-related activities helps children enjoy and have fun. As stated by the renowned author Don MacMannis, *“There may be no more powerful method of learning than through music, and no more important lessons for children than those that focus on character, social and emotional skills.”*
- **Keep children engaged in sports.** It is important to encourage children to keep playing sports during summer as their active participation in physical activities provides many practical learning opportunities for them. Playing sports helps develop the emotional maturity, confidence, and self-esteem of children and at the same time, shapes their character as they are able to apply important values such as fair play, team work, honesty and camaraderie. Aside from these benefits, keeping children engaged in sports can also improve their cognitive abilities. Findings from new studies reveal that sports has a

positive effect on improving the academic performance of children as it boosts their self-confidence inside and outside school.

- **Involve children in drama or theatre activities.** Studies show that drama and theatre activities contribute to the cognitive development of children. Dramatic plays enable children to be transported to a different time and place where they can have fun. In addition, theatre activities enable children to investigate play concepts and designs as well as study exciting roles which challenge their intellectual and creative competencies. Children involved in dramatic plays are also able to practice their reasoning skills as they immerse in a specific role that requires solving problems or facing a life dilemma.

All of these are practical and fun strategies that can keep children from being unproductive during summer. Engaging children in summer reading sessions, encouraging them to attend music lessons and keeping them engaged in sports, drama or theatre are only some of the most enjoyable activities that kids can participate in during summer. Indeed, avoiding the summer slump and keeping the kids learning, active, and engaged can be done in countless possible ways. Nevertheless, what's most important is maintaining the right balance between learning and leisurely activities. It is equally necessary for parents to ensure that their kids have sufficient time to relax, see their friends and spend quality time with their family. Balance is key in making sure that nothing will take the fun out of the children's summer experiences and it is the responsibility of parents to make sure that their children will only engage in activities that they truly love and enjoy.