The Courtyard Chronicle

June 2011

Summer Camp: Sound Mind, Safe Body

Why Year-Round Learning Is Essential to Continued Progress

Celebrate National Safety Month – Every Month

How to Share Summer's Fun with Your Child

Put Our Fall Open House on Your Calendar

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Save Skills with Summer Camp

Help Your Child Hold on to What They've Learned

Spring has finally made it to my neighborhood. And while parents are busy getting out the tricycles and patio furniture, they are also contemplating the perennial question of what to do with the kids when the school year ends. It might well be that the best answer is to enroll them in a summer program. A century ago, even young children were needed at home to help with farm chores during the summer. But few of us still grow crops and we now know a long summer break at home isn't best for children's learning. Extensive research consistently finds it isn't just that children don't usually keep acquiring new information and skills when they're not in school, they actually forget some of what they already know.

This research really isn't surprising. We all tend to forget things we don't practice and use regularly. It's why our tennis game and our understanding of photosynthesis fade over time. And while we can certainly relearn both these things, the time it takes keeps us from moving forward more quickly. Young children are even more likely to experience a summer learning slide since many of the skills that they are learning haven't yet become deeply embedded and automatic. This is true of academic skills, such as naming letters and counting, but is also the case for the softer, social skills that children are learning in their early years.

Learning to play nicely with others is one of the most important goals of preschool. And although some children seem to learn to do this naturally, many need ongoing opportunities to practice the sharing, interacting and cooperating, sometimes as leader and sometimes as follower, that are hallmarks of group play. These social skills, which are often learned with the same kind of teacher-guided practice as more academic skills, need to become consistent and automatic when children are young. By the time they are 7 or 8 years old, it is much more difficult for them to learn social skills. So, summer programs become an important place to continue the social development of young children.

There is one more important reason to consider a summer program for young children. They, as well as many adults, generally function best with a consistent, predictable daily routine. When I visit my young grandchildren, for example, I make sure I don't sit in their seats at the kitchen table or ask them to get dressed before breakfast when they are used to eating in their pajamas. They are happiest and feel most secure when things happen in the way they are used to.

For many toddlers and preschoolers, it takes some time to establish a pattern of getting to school, comfortably separating from parents, participating in school routines and reconnecting with family at pickup time. Once this pattern is established, it is usually preferable to maintain it than change it for a few months before starting it up again in fall.

Both research and what we know of young children suggest that a summer program may well be the best option for your child. Look for one that combines familiar routines and learning with fun and expanded outdoor activities, now that warmer weather has arrived. But, as important as this recommendation may be, don't forget the special memories of summer you probably have from your own childhood. Summer provides a great opportunity to visit with family, explore new locations on vacation, enjoy extra time with a parent on a reduced work schedule or just kick back and relax. Be sure to take a little time to help your children create their own wonderful summer memories.

Dr. Joan Firestone
Dr. Firestone is a leading educational expert on brain development, early care and education, and emerging literacy. Check out more insightful articles from Dr. Joan on our blog: http://learningcaregroup.com/author/drfirestone/

New this Summer — Enjoy Our School Readiness Program for School-Agers!*

It's not too late to register your school-ager for our new school readiness program. This special curriculum helps your child prepare for the new school year. Teachers provide daily 20 minute learning experiences to keep minds sharp throughout the summer to help avoid those seasonal learning losses! Ask your Director for more information today!

*Available at participating locations only.

Keep Them Safe and Strong this Summer

Dear Families,

We listened when our parents said they would like Summer sessions to last for one to two weeks. We also involved our families by letting you help pick those sessions. The result is an amazing Summer program waiting for your child.

Children ages six weeks to five years will enjoy our outstanding child care program and standard educational lesson plans. They will also get introduced to the Summer camp school-age program through special activities and visitors. Plus, Kindergartners will love our new school-readiness program.

School-age children (ages 6–13) will experience daily activities and amazing field trips. Not only will kids engage in activities, but they will also continue to enjoy math, science and literacy experiences throughout the day and week. Choices for Summer sessions include:

Art Session — From art that the children create on their own to special projects led by our staff, this session will open up the world of artistic expression.

Sport Session — From learning the skills of a sport to benefiting from the exercise involved in team play, children will participate in numerous physical activities.

Nature Session — We will explore the natural world we live in — from plants and trees to the oceans and the sky above.

Music Session — During this session, children will move to music and explore their singing voice and instrumental talents.

Animal Session — You and your child may have a pet or been to a zoo, but how much does your child really know about the animals of earth? This camp will reveal the mysteries of the animal kingdom.

Cooking Session — Children will use teamwork and planning skills as they take on this session's food-related long-term project.

Drama Session — In this session, they will write plays, act out scenes from the classics and end the summer with our annual talent show.

Along with creating a talent show, some of our suggested activities for the Summer include visits to: a local arts and crafts fair, a health restaurant/store, and others. So how do we plan on doing all these fun activities and still have a safe Summer? Well, here's some of the wisdom we will be using:

Reducing The Risk Of Being Stung

1. Wear light-colored, smooth-finished clothing.
2. Avoid perfumed soaps, shampoos, and deodorants.
3. Avoid bananas and banana-scented toiletries.
4. Wear clean clothing and bathe daily. Sweat angers bees.
5. Avoid flowering plants.
6. Keep areas clean. Social wasps thrive in places where humans discard food.
7. If a single stinging insect is flying around, remain still or lie face down on the ground.
8. If attacked by several stinging insects at the same time, run to get away from them. Bees release a chemical when they sting. This alerts other bees.

What to Do If A Person Is Stung?

1. Have someone stay with the victim to be sure that the victim does not have an allergic reaction.
2. Wash the site with soap and water.
3. Remove the stinger by using 4" X 4" gauze, or a business card wiped over the area. Never use tweezers, nor squeeze the stinger.
4. Apply ice to reduce swelling.
5. Do not scratch the sting.

Preventing Heat Stress

1. Know signs/symptoms of heat-related illnesses, such as headaches, mental confusion, weakness, vomiting and others
2. Block out direct sun or other heat sources
3. Use cooling fans/air-conditioning
4. Rest regularly
5. Drink lots of water-about 1 cup every 15 minutes
6. Wear lightweight, light colored, loose-fitting clothes
7. Avoid caffeinated drinks

You've made an important decision to invest in your child's development, and we take the responsibility you place in us very seriously. Thank you for sharing your child with us. It is truly a privilege to have our family be a part of your family.

Sincerely,
The Education Team

If you would like to respond to anything you read, have parenting questions or child development topics that you'd like to see explored in future issues of the monthly newsletter, please e-mail us at educationteam@learningcaregroup.com. We would love to hear from you.

A Warm-up for Summer Fun

Get out and take advantage of all that this season has to offer you and your child! Here are a few ideas to jumpstart your shared Summer fun:

- Share some family photos with your child. Invite them to write a note to a family member.
- Take your child to get a library card. Create a personalized bookmark and pick out a summer time reading list of books together.
- Cut pieces of various textured paper into squares and paste them in a quilt pattern with your child.
- Prepare a meal with your child.
- Sit outside under a tree. Have your child tell you a favorite story. Retell them the story as you heard it. Take turns doing this.
- Cut the ends off the fingers of old gloves. Draw faces on the fingers with felt tip markers, and glue on yarn for hair. You now have finger puppets. Make up a fun story.
- Create a fun game with your child. Have a scavenger or treasure hunt, design a board game or make up a play or skit.
- Find community service activities that can include you and your child.
- Plant some seeds. Weed and water your garden. Look for cool bugs.
- Play some music and dance together.

It's Not too Soon to Think About Fall

Even though Summer is just beginning, it's the perfect time to plan ahead for Fall care. That's why we're planning a great, informative event in anticipation of the sun setting on the Summer.

Stop by your school on

Thursday, August 4th from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.

to get a sneak peek of all the fantastic things we have in store for your child!

You'll be able to explore children's spaces, interact with teachers, socialize with other families, experience enrichment programs and, most importantly, share a hands-on experience with your child using the curriculum.

With Us, It's Always Safety First

Every June, the National Safety Council (NSC) encourages citizens and organizations to get involved and participate in National Safety Month. Each week carries a theme that brings attention to critical safety issues. Check out their website at http://www.nsc.org/nsc_events/Nat_Safe_Month/ to discover ways to promote safety this June. Then use this checklist of features we offer as you look at other programs.

- Fun, safe environment
- School readiness
- Staff trained in CPR/First Aid
- Ongoing teacher training
- Year-round safety practices
- Background checks required for staff
- Strict safety and security policies
- Age-appropriate practices/guidelines
- Skill specific learning areas
- Daily small/large group activities

NATIONAL SAFETY MONTH 2011