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# HOW TO PREVENT SUMMER LEARNING LOSSES

As the school year comes to a close, it is only natural for children to look forward to the leisurely nature of the summer season. The arrival of beach trips, pool parties and sleepovers, however, doesn't mean that children should depart completely from their daily routine. Keeping particular elements of a child's day consistent throughout the summer months keeps the brain focused and helps prevent learning losses during the summer. In addition, this can potentially ease the anxiety that often accompanies transitioning into a new classroom or school come fall.

According to research conducted by the National Center for Summer Learning, which is based at the Johns Hopkins School of Education in Baltimore, Md., summer learning loss accounts for about two-thirds of the difference in the likelihood of a student pursuing a college preparatory path in high school. As these findings indicate, keeping children's brains challenged throughout the summer is crucial, since the lack of learning that occurs during these months has both short-term and long-term consequences.

Routine provides structure, which is often lacking during the summer months when children all too quickly become detached from the lessons they learned throughout the school year. Maintaining a schedule throughout the summer supports an environment that is less of a contrast to the classroom and provides a healthy balance between building skills, play and rest.

Families can incorporate the following habits into their child's day to encourage and maintain a routine throughout the summer season:

- **Early to bed, early to rise:** To the best extent possible, children should adhere to a regular bedtime each night and wake up at the same time each day. This will not only ensure proper rest, but will establish a sense of discipline as well.
- **Clean up and get dressed:** Upon waking up, it is important that children brush their teeth, get dressed and perform any other hygienic tasks that they normally would before a school day. Allowing kids to stay in pajamas or dirty clothes longer than necessary can result in lazy behavior.
- **Make eating an event:** Keeping a child on a consistent meal schedule is critical to maintaining a sharp body and mind. Establish specific times for breakfast, lunch and dinner, and sit with children at the table to encourage conversation while eating.
- **Take a rest:** If a child partakes in a scheduled naptime while at school, then he or she should be allotted time at home for regular rest as well. Make this time consistent, perhaps after lunch, and have the child rest in the same place every day.
- **Perform daily chores:** Asking a child to help around the house is an ideal way to get them involved in a daily routine. A morning chore and an afternoon chore can convey a sense of responsibility and supply a sense of rhythm to the day.

In addition to providing consistency, routines can present children with security and comfort as they adjust to the changes that come along with their new summer schedules. The purpose is not to create rigidity, but to provide a flexible structure that establishes a sense of purpose kids need to grow and mature.

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