

Summer Learning & Enrichment

TIPS FOR SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

Summer is a time for sun and fun, but children's learning is too important to take a vacation! Many school-aged children lose up to 3 months of grade-level equivalency in math and reading skills over the summer months.¹ This phenomenon is known as the summer slide. As a summertime child care provider, you can help school-age children and their families make the most of the summer months and avoid the summer slide. Here are some things to think about as you plan for summer.



BEFORE SUMMER:

Get to know your families! Talk to parents/ caregivers about:

- **What they are looking for** in summertime child care programming. What experiences do they hope their child will have?
- **Their child's special skills and interests.** Any ideas from their child's teacher about summer activities? Any concerns that you can help to address?
- **Any aspects of their cultural or linguistic background** they would like you to know. Think of ways to honor families' cultural heritage and traditions in your programming, and strive to be inclusive of children of different backgrounds and abilities.

- **Their child having a library card.** If not, consider helping them obtain one.
- **Needing assistance with accessing healthy meals and snacks** during the summer. Does their child need transportation to and from your program? If needed, help families obtain transportation vouchers and share information about summer meal programs.

Create a plan for the summer months:

- **What do you hope to accomplish** with the children you'll be serving? Write down goals related to academic learning, social and emotional development, and other areas of skill building. Seek input

from children and families about what they hope to get out of your summertime programming, and include with your own goals.

- **If you are a year-round provider,** think about what you will do during the summer months that's different from the school year. How will you make use of the longer full-day program time? Think of ways to engage in more extended hands-on learning activities, such as inquiry-based projects.
- **Create a list of activities** in support of your goals to inspire you and the children you serve. Determine which resources, materials or supports you will need to carry out those activities. Identify professional development and training opportunities that can help you deepen your understanding of how to support children's learning and development in different areas.



BEFORE SUMMER:

Continued

- **Collect information on fun, family-friendly summer activities** and events in your community. Share this information with families on an ongoing basis so they know when something is coming up.
- **Collaborate with family child care networks, libraries, museums,** and other organizations in your community. Work with these partners to generate ideas for enriching summer activities and opportunities. Identify ways to share resources to help you achieve your summer goals.
- **The summer months are a great opportunity** to build activities around special themes! Is it an Olympics year? If so, consider a one- or two-week theme related to the Olympics. Other popular summer program themes include space, superheroes, or the ocean. Weave the theme throughout as much of the day as possible—books, games, activities, and even snacks. This helps the theme come to life! Themes make summer child care feel special and different from school-year routines and activities.
- **Plan a project** that children can work on over the summer—something that will showcase what they learn, which topics they explore, and what they accomplish. Sharing a product or performance allows children an opportunity to reflect and celebrate.



DURING THE SUMMER MONTHS:

Build a relationship with parents, caregivers, and children:

- **Share news about your activities and themes** with families on a weekly basis—via email, a handout, or online through a parent communication portal. Also invite parents/caregivers to share noteworthy accomplishments or events that their child experiences (e.g., finishing a book on their reading list, jumping off the diving board for the first time, or visiting the zoo together as a family). Find a way to recognize these special occasions at your program.
- **Explore ways to share pictures with families.** Photos can help parents feel connected to what their children are doing and spark conversations about their day.
- **Have children pick one thing about the day** to discuss with their families. Make this part of a pre-pickup routine or another time when children come together before heading home.
- **Find ways to celebrate children's reading successes.** For example, let children place a special sticker next to the name of each book they read on their book list, and recognize milestones such as a child completing the final book from their summer reading list.
- **Consider organizing a family potluck or picnic dinner** so families can meet other parents/caregivers and see what the children have been working on. Help children organize games or put on a performance for their families.



**DURING THE
SUMMER MONTHS:**
Continued

**Engage children
in activities to
help prevent the
summer slide:**

- **Find ways to engage children** in activities related to the skills and interests their parents/caregivers and teachers identified. Summer is a wonderful time to give children opportunities to expand on what they learned during the school year and to explore new ideas.
- **Help children put together a list of books** they'd like to read from your program's collection. Consider a field trip to the library to help children choose additional books to add to their reading list. Post children's reading lists where they can see them and celebrate the completion of each book.



- **Engage children in activities and games that promote math learning**, as it is one of the areas most affected by the summer slide. Board games and card games are fun ways to help children strengthen and retain math skills. Many games are suitable for children of multiple ages.



- **Create reading routines** so children have a built-in opportunity to read every day. Remember that all forms of reading count: whether you read to the child, the child reads silently, or the child reads aloud to other children. Daily reading is one of the best ways to help children retain language, vocabulary, and reading comprehension skills over the summer.
- **When it comes to screen time**—TV, video games, and other devices—use sparingly and consider what parents would find appropriate. If you do include screen time as part of your programming, integrate simple uses of technology in hands-on projects or focus on age-appropriate interactive games and apps that have educational value. There are many games and apps that help build literacy; science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skills; and problem-solving skills. Some even promote physical activity.

PLAN CULTURAL AWARENESS ACTIVITIES

Exploring cultural stories and traditions is a great way for children and families—as well as your staff—to learn more about each other and to make a connection between your program and the community you serve. Take a field trip to a local historical site, invite a community elder to come speak or explore the origins of various foods, music or other cultural traditions. The goal should be to celebrate diversity and make all feel included.

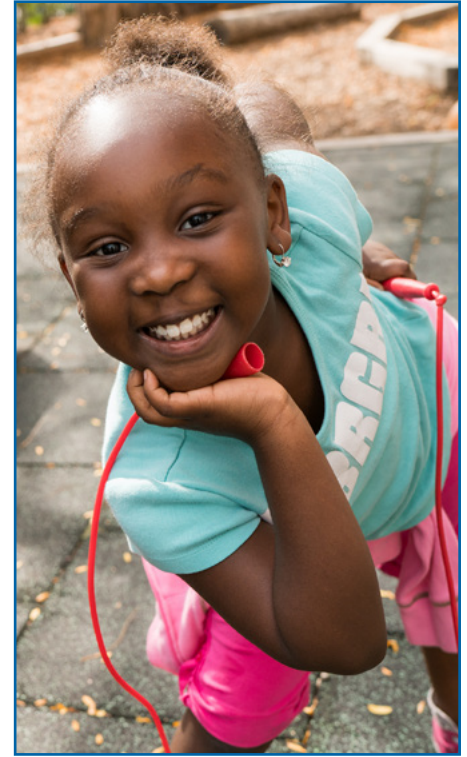
DURING THE SUMMER MONTHS: *Continued*

Keep children healthy and active during the summer months:

- **Start a small garden** and involve children in growing and caring for the plants. This is a great way to connect them to nutritious food sources and to promote conversations about healthy eating.



- **Get outside!** Encourage children to make use of safe outdoor play areas. Lead children in cooperative games and other activities that get them moving and working together as a team. Create opportunities for water play with water tables, sprinklers, and other ways to cool off. Don't forget sunscreen and make sure there is plenty of water available to keep children hydrated!



You can help children have a fun, healthy, and enriching summer!



AT THE END OF SUMMER:

- **Hold an end-of-summer celebration** event with families. Use this chance to give parents/caregivers a sense of what their children experienced over the summer, and how it will help them start the new school year ready for success.
- **Make a plan to connect with the children and families** from your summer program during the school year. Sending children a postcard during the winter is a great way to keep in touch—plus they will love receiving mail!



¹ National Summer Learning Association. (2014). Doesn't every child deserve a memorable summer?
Retrieved from <https://www.summerlearning.org/knowledge-center/doesnt-every-child-deserve-memorable-summer/>