

## **Use It or Lose It!**

### ***Summer Learning Loss...Too High a Price for Fun in the Sun***

**June 27, 2006 Teaneck, NJ** - Summer vacation is the greatest culprit for wreaking havoc on learning. Studies in the Journal of Educational Research reported the average student loses the equivalent of 2.6 months of grade level math over the summer break. "That's 22 percent of one school year," says Dr. Andrea Pastorok, education psychologist with Kumon Math and Reading Centers. "It's no wonder that North American students score lower on international math tests than students in other industrialized countries such as Japan, China, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic."

While periodic breaks from daily routines are reasonable, sustained absences are not. Imagine what would happen to the skills of a professional cellist who was scheduled to play in the Philharmonic in September, but never touched the cello during June, July, and August. All skills, whether they are musical, athletic, or educational, must be practiced on a regular basis.

"It is just as important for children to participate in learning activities that exercise their growing minds as it is to be involved in physical activities that keep their bodies healthy and strong," says Dr. Pastorok. "The old adage of *Use it or Lose it* is not only good advice for senior citizens; it's also pertinent for students!"

#### **How to Fight the Summer Brain Drain**

For many schoolchildren the price paid for fun in the sun is significant learning loss. In order to counteract this, parents need to provide opportunities for their children to continue to read and do math during the summer months. One way to prevent summer learning loss is to enroll in a supplemental education program and make math and reading practice a part of the daily summer routine. While students need to have fun during the summer, using their academic skills for even a short period of time each day will prevent them from the summer learning loss that plagues so many of their classmates.

Dr. Pastorok offers the following suggestions to help create a learning environment that is part of your child's summer routine:

- Read for pleasure during the summer – favorite authors, easy to read books, page turners, plays.
- Read books for the upcoming school year (ask your child's teacher for suggestions.)
- Write plays and stories and share them with friends and family.

- Visit the library weekly and make the acquaintance of the librarian, who has a wealth of information to share about books; most libraries have summer reading programs.
- Get activity books and do brain teasers, crossword puzzles or Suduko.
- Be creative with math, writing problems on big surfaces using finger paints or washable chalk.
- Be a role model for learning: let your child “catch” you reading; note how you use math throughout the day—in cooking, balancing the checkbook, figuring out gas mileage—and encourage your children to calculate along with you.
- Create projects: have your child help plan your vacation time, whether it be a day trip or a two-week holiday; research and read books about the destination; use resources, such as the library, the internet; figure out how much the trips would cost, including gas, entertainment, hotels, food and directions.

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