

Defence against the summer slide

what to talk to your teacher about now



Most teachers begin their school year expecting to reteach a certain amount of material from the end of the previous year. Spirits run high in the last weeks of school, teachers are writing reports, the sun is shining and, on the whole, no one really has their head in the game. Throw in a play, a concert, a party or two and it makes sense that September is dedicated to settling in your new class and re-establishing the baseline from which you hope to teach.

One of the notable differences in children who learn differently is memory – both storage and retrieval. For some children, getting the information processed through the sensory system can require a great deal of time; this can degrade the information, making storage tricky. Help for children who process differently, or store and retrieve differently, will include a great deal of repetition of material. Some kids need this because repetition acts as a ballast to new material awaiting filing.

Children who learn differently can be terribly affected by six to eight weeks off tuition. On the one hand, they work the hardest and truly need (and deserve) a break. On the other hand, without some engagement with whatever material they find most difficult to retain, they won't raise their head from the parapet until October. Playing catch up is an awful place to be and while I get that it doesn't feel loving to force your child to study over the holidays, I would argue that it is even more unloving to set them up for a game of catch up in the first term.



Teach a reluctant child to play poker and blackjack and I promise they will be happy to do maths.

Here are my suggestions for the parent who wants to support their child without chaining them to summer school:

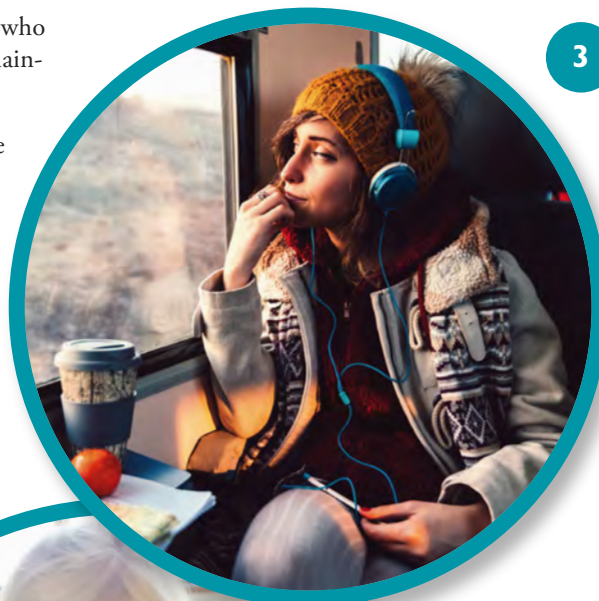
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Speak with your teacher before school finishes. Ask what the two areas your child most needs to practise over the summer.

2

Get on your learning support teacher's hat. We make everything possible into a game and use the Internet to support us.

3



4

Take a new look at the games you play. Top Trumps is really a maths game of higher and lower. I just searched for maths with a deck of cards and found resources for dice games, e-books and ideas for shopping trips. 'I spy' helps word retrieval. Use chalk to make a Twister board with letters and call out words. Use senteacher.org to make word searches – in fact, download word searches to support skimming and scanning skills. Download dot-to-dots to support handwriting. Teach a reluctant child to play poker and blackjack and I promise they will be happy to do maths.

Invest in audiobooks. There are plenty of free audiobooks and listening to language is still an important activity in the absence of a book (but just this once). For a child who struggles to decode, pick an age-appropriate book other children are reading and let your child have the pleasure of a rich story. For children in need of vocabulary development, audio books help novel words rest in context.

If you need more ideas and suggestions for games and activities there are so many resources on the Internet, you will come to see how dependent teachers can be upon its storehouse of activities. If you're still stuck, send me a note and I'll suggest something for you myself. Your teacher may have suggestions too if you ask. Now, go have fun.

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Julianne Miller is a special educational needs consultant and lecturer. You can read more about her work at: juliannemiller.co.uk

