

T/TAC BULLETIN

The Virginia Department of Education's Training & Technical Assistance Centers

An inside view

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Summer Suggestions

by T/TAC Staff

This issue of the *T/TAC Bulletin* is dedicated to summer learning, as summer is just around the corner! You'll find suggestions for activities your students can do over the summer, work educators can accomplish to make transitions easier for students and teachers alike, and suggestions for families to make summer break a learning rich experience, without adding stress or deleting enjoyment.

To begin, in the spirit of life-long learning we offer a book list. Teachers frequently provide students with summer reading lists. The following are recommendations from T/TAC staff for your summer reading. These aren't beach books, but we hope you find them interesting in their own rights. If you would like to have an electronic book discussion, feel free to email whomever recommended your title.

Mac chooses

Implementing Person-Centered Planning: Voices of Experience by John O'Brien and Connie Lyle O'Brien, Inclusion Press, Toronto, 2002.

Whether you're never had a chance to do much learning/reading about person-centered planning - or are already a committed believer/user -this one volume offers in-depth historical perspectives, analyses of current practices, and recommendations for the future in a very readable format by a wide variety of folks in the field.

Diann proposes

Freaks, Geeks and Asperger Syndrome: A User Guide to Adolescence by Luke Jackson, Tony Attwood Jessica Kingsley Pub; (October 2002)

Written by Luke Jackson a 13-year-old-boy with Asperger Syndrome. Luke draws upon personal experiences and stories to shed insight into the world of adolescence and Asperger Syndrome.

Lynn suggests

Strategies That Work: Teaching Comprehension to Enhance Understanding by Stephanie Harvey & Anne Goudvis Stenhouse Publishers, 2000.

This book is full of practical suggestions to help students think when they read and focuses on instruction that is responsive to kids' interests and learning needs.

Tammy advises

The Threads Of Reading / Strategies For Literacy Development by Karen Tankersley

This book highlights strategies for literacy development within the five key areas of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary instruction. The author encourages educators to consider "higher order thinking" as a sixth area under the threads of reading.

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Helen selects

Teaching Content To All; Evidence-Based Inclusive Practices in Middle and Secondary Schools by B. Keith Lenz and Donald D. Deshler Pearson Education, Inc, 2004

Because the challenge is so great to meet the needs of our diverse student population in accessing the general curriculum- we need support! This book covers how we can make connections for students by using researched based instructional routines and strategies, knowing policies and procedures and linking with other professionals. A "must read" for the summer!

Leslie recommends

The Boy Who Loved Windows: Opening The Heart And Mind Of A Child Threatened With Autism by Patricia Stacey Da Capo Press, 2003.

This book provides information on the newest brain research and toward an innovative understanding of autism. Valuable insights and methods for helping young children with autism to develop are provided.

Lora picks two titles

Teaching Communication Skills to Students with Severe Disabilities by June E. Downing, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2002

This book provides strategies for assessing communication skills of students with complex and multiple disabilities. Intervention strategies, peer interactions and school success are emphasized.

Books Are For Talking Too! by Jane L. Gebers, Pro-Ed, 1995

This book is a guide to the selection of quality literature that can address a variety of communication skills through various methods and activities.

Gillian gives

The Out of Sync Child has Fun: Activities for Kids with Sensory Integration Dysfunction by C. Kranowitz, 2003 Berkley Publishing Group.

More than 100 playful activities that are safe, sensory motor, appropriate, fun and easy to help develop and organize a child's brain and body. Activities are a great way to counteract sensory integration dysfunction. Activities work at home, at school, and out in the world.

Selina mentions

Promoting Meaningful Learning: Innovations in Education Early Childhood Professionals National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2000

This is a wonderful collection of teaching practices designed to illustrate the innovative variety of strategies that, in the words of the editors Nicola Yelland and Susan Grieshaber, "...create potent learning experiences for students and practicing professionals." Delve into a journey of reflection and rejuvenation then develop new active learning strategies embedded in a social and cultural context for the upcoming year.

Ben advocates

Classroom Instruction that Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement by Robert J. Marzano, Debra J. Pickering, Jane E. Pollock, ASCD, 2001

This book examines research findings and offers applicable instructional strategies, including extended classroom examples, models of successful instruction, "frames," rubrics, organizers, and charts to help teachers plan and implement the strategies. It would make a wonderful tool for all teachers and be especially powerful for beginning teachers.

Summer Camps in your "Neck of the Woods"

by Diann Eaton

Summer camps are not a substitute for developing recreation and leisure opportunities in students' communities but offer a chance to meet new people and have new experiences in a different environment. Best of all, they might just provide a break from the humdrum summer routine at home with "mom" and "dad".

Currently in Virginia there are a variety of camps to choose from. Students and families can choose from traditional camps that offer the outdoor experience to camps that specialize in particular interest such as music, computers, horse back riding, arts and crafts or drama. Camps may offer overnight accommodations or just day programs and range in price and duration.

For details on summer camps available in Virginia visit the web site for the Partnership for People with Disabilities at Virginia Commonwealth University.

http://www.vcu.edu/partnership/resource_guides.htm

On this site you can download the 2004 Summer Camp Directory which lists over 39 summer camp options available throughout the Commonwealth. Each program listing includes contact information, locations served, age requirements, fees, and a program description.

For more information on what is available in your "neck of the woods", check with your local parks and recreation program and your local newspaper for details on summer camps and program options.



Grade to Grade Transition: Smoother and More Successful

by Mac McArthur-Fox

Thinking about ways to support the transition of students with IEPs from one grade level to the next? How about broadening support to include all students? That's what one small elementary school in southwest Virginia has done for the past three years.

Just prior to the end of the school year, each classroom teacher completes a "personal assessment" for each student. This simple four-quadrant format covers the following information:

- What works – makes the student feel good, happy or successful
- What doesn't work – makes the student feel bad, unhappy or unsuccessful
- Gifts and attributes – what people who know and care think about the student
- Barriers to acceptance – what gets in the way of people knowing and caring about the student

Special education and other specialists' input is included, as appropriate, for individual students. Note the wording of the four sections – none is a list of "what's wrong with this student", but each, instead, provides positively stated information about strengths or very specific support needs (e.g. under "what doesn't work" – "John has difficulty attending when he's seated near the classroom door or more than 10 feet away from the teacher"; or under "barriers to acceptance" – "Joan's awareness of personal space is improving, but she still tends to get very close to other students during unstructured activities").

Scheduling a time for sharing this information can be a little tricky, but teachers have found face to face communication greatly

enhances what is recorded on the forms. One option is to set-aside several hours during a teacher work day. Scheduling this time close to the end of the school year is preferable, since teacher memories (of both strengths and challenges) tend to fade quickly over the summer months! Opportunities need to be provided to give and get information – so each teacher will meet twice, as both a "sending" and a "receiving" teacher.

Without this sharing, teachers each year face the challenge of re-learning what works or doesn't work to help each student succeed both academically and socially. Teachers involved in this process have been very positive about the results, feeling that the time invested to pass on information about students has been invaluable in helping all students (and teachers!) get the year off to a great start.



T/TAC to T/TAC Transition

Ben Tickle is the new High-incidence coordinator at the T/TAC at Virginia Tech. Ben moves to VT from our partner T/TAC at Radford University. He will no longer be directly involved with the Transition Outcomes Priority Project. In his new position he will focus on learning strategies to support all students.

People First Language

excerpted from the
commentary
by Kathie Snow

Words are powerful. Old and inaccurate descriptors, and the inappropriate use of these descriptors, perpetuate negative stereotypes and reinforce an incredibly powerful attitudinal barrier. And this invisible, but potent, attitudinal barrier is the greatest obstacle facing individuals who have been labeled. When we describe people by their labels (medical diagnoses), we devalue and disrespect them as individuals. Would you want to be known primarily by your psoriasis, gynecological history, a balding pate, or any other condition?

Worse, labels are frequently used to define a person's potential and value! In the process, we crush people's hopes and dreams and relegate them to the margins of society. When we hear a person's label, we (mistakenly) think we know something important about him, and we give great weight to the label, using it to determine how / where a person will be educated, what type of job he will / won't have, where / how he'll live, and more.

People first language puts the person before the disability, and it describes what a person *has*, not what a person *is*.

In the words of George Orwell, "If thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought."

Consider putting person first language on your list of things to master this summer.



My Summer Vacation: Remnant Books

by Leslie S. Daniel

A remnant book provides a way for a person who is not yet writing and may just be beginning to use augmentative or alternative communication to tell people about past events. Remnants or scraps from activities are saved and inserted into a photo album, scrapbook, or other book. The remnant should be something that is meaningful to the child and that s/he is able to associate with the place it came from (examples are a ketchup packet from a fast food restaurant, or felt left over from an art activity). The child can use remnants to answer questions such as, "Where did you go this weekend?" or to initiate a topic of conversation.

Children with visual impairments will benefit from textures in books. For these students make sure remnants are physically accessible (not in a photo sleeve) and durable to touch. For example, gluing sand on a sandpaper background, will ensure that "sand" is there for a longer time, or outlining 2-dimensional maps with Elmer's glue will provide a touch graphic. Each remnant should feel differently from any other remnant so that significance is not lost.

It's easy

Put the remnant in the book with the child. Help the child label with the date. With the child's permission, write a cue about the remnant for a communication partner e.g. "Ask me a yes/no question about *Hidalgo*." Encourage the child to choose between potential remnants and to vocalize as you work together.

Conversation starter

Keep the book available to the child so that s/he can initiate interactions by simply opening the book and pointing to remnants.

When the child does indicate a topic, have a conversation about the place or activity the remnant represents. At other times, get the book out and go through it with the child to talk about what s/he has been doing. This is similar to reading a story together, but it's the child's story.

Summer remnant book

Before the end of school create a blank scrapbook for students in which they can store summer remnants. Use materials that the student can handle when making the blank book. Some students will be able to use notebooks, others might need larger construction paper books, and still others might need page protectors, or laminated paper. Take into account whether page fluffers are needed (fluffers are items that raise the edges of pages so a student can more easily turn them). Consider labeling pages with hints such as "Eating Out", or "Wet and Wild", if it would be helpful to the student and family. Labels can be photos or line drawing in addition to words. Include a few Ziploc bags for items that are not easily glued or stapled such as a scoop of sand from the beach.

Decide how often you might like the child to "write" over the summer e.g. each day or week of vacation. Provide the family with a short letter introducing remnant books, and some ideas to get them started. For example, the student might like to include shells, pebbles, or mulch to remember a special outing. Postcards, concert programs, or movie ticket stubs, are usual souvenirs. A Popsicle stick, empty popcorn bag, or take-out menu might indicate a special treat.

Have fun! Anything goes with remnant books.

Mark your Calendars! Access for All: Supporting Students with Moderate to Significant Disabilities

Third Annual Institute
June 28-29, 2004
Lynchburg, VA

Sponsored by:

The VA Department of Education, the Training and Technical Assistance Centers across Virginia and Together We Can: Virginia's Deaf-Blind Project

About the institute:

This institute is about access for all children. IDEA '97 special education regulations require that all students must have access to the general curriculum. In Virginia the general curriculum is steered by the Standards of Learning (SOL).

Who should attend:

This institute is designed for families and professional members of educational teams. Ideas and strategies will be presented that will help students with moderate to significant disabilities access the general education curriculum.

Registration

Look for registration information coming, or visit the secure server at <https://www.conted.vt.edu/>

A Picnic Basket Full of Alternative & Augmentative Communication Ideas

by Lora Kingma

Summer is fast approaching and speech-language pathologists again ask the age-old question, "What should I give parents for summer speech-language activities?" We have lots of exercises for students in traditional speech-language therapy. We have loads of "r" sheets, everyday language stimulation ideas, oral motor tasks, and conversational activities for improving expression. But what do we provide for our students who use augmentative communication devices? After all, they need continued work using their devices during the summer.

Remember

First and most importantly, remember these equations:

Daily, rigid teaching sessions with
time consuming activities and
unnatural assignments
+ disruptions to the family routine
= FAILURE!

Fun, natural, practical activities
+ a good fit into family lifestyle
= SUCCESS!

Choose exercises that the family can do at home, at the grocery store, on vacation and at grandma's house. Below is a list of favorites for you to share with families to encourage use of the AAC device:

Read and tell stories

Program the device so your child can read favorite books aloud to others or participate in telling family stories.

Talk a lot

Highlight words on the device; use them while you are talking; point the words/pictures out to your child while you are using them so s/he can see/learn the meanings. Have siblings and fam-

ily members communicate with your child while s/he is using the device. If needed use topic cards or remnant books (see p. 4 of this *Bulletin*) to establish a topic of conversation.

Play games requiring communication

Program the device so your child can take turns while communicating during a game of "Go Fish," "Simon Says" or "I Spy."

Watch your child

See what s/he's interested in, or focuses on then talk about it and include it in play with key words/games programmed on his/her device.

Respond

Respond to your child whenever s/he uses his/her device; use words used in activities that have already been introduced - expand the vocabulary once words are familiar to him/her.

Use routines

Using your child's regular routines encourages more attention on communication as opposed to the action as an avenue for communicating. Perhaps you regularly play peek-a-boo and can program a device to indicate turn-taking. At mealtimes make sure a device is available so your child can participate in the family chatter. At bath time have laminated picture overlays so the child can start and stop games, shampooing, etc. Program the device so that your son or daughter can direct his or her bedtime routine.

Back to school

When your student comes back in the fall, be aware of and follow up in the classroom with what the child has learned at home. Many

family members are willing to spend a great deal of time working with their child. There may be cases in which they know much more about their child's AAC than the classroom teacher or SLP.

¶This is particularly true when the child begins school and has a new teacher and assistant. In the fall, teachers and support staff should acknowledge the experience and expertise of the family, and design interventions for the classroom based at least partly on what has been done at home during the summer. Unfortunately, a lot of backtracking occurs when a new teacher does not continue with an AAC plan already in place but, instead, starts a new and different communication program.

Websites

Here are some websites for speech/language therapy ideas that may be helpful. Have a fun sunny season!

- <http://aacintervention.com/>
- <http://speakingofspeech.com/>
- <http://aac.unl.edu/yaack/>
- <http://www.esmerel.org/misc/speech.htm>



"The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug."

Mark Twain

Bits and Bytes: The 3 R's of Summertime - Recharge, Review, and Research

by Glenna Gustafson

Summertime is the perfect time for you to reflect on the past school year and begin planning for the upcoming one. While you are recharging your body and spirit, don't forget to take some time to recharge your mind. Summertime is the perfect time to learn more about assistive technology and augmentative communication.

Recharge

Start your summer by attending an event that promises to fulfill the 3R's of summertime! Make plans to attend the T/TAC Technology Conference: *AT and Aug Com Making Connections 2004* at the Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center, June 24 & 25. You will have the opportunity to reconnect with old friends while making new ones. This conference is for everyone—teachers, parents, speech pathologists, OTs, PTs, and instructional assistants—anyone that is interested in learning more about the role of AT and Aug Com in assisting all students to succeed.

The keynote speaker, Caroline Musselwhite, will provide a variety of useful strategies you can easily integrate into your curricula. There will be breakout sessions focusing on augmentative communication, the use of environmental controls, hands on make and take sessions and early childhood education sessions. Five sessions will be offered in a computer lab to provide you with hands-on experiences using a variety of software tools. In addition you can learn about new AT tools on the market from our largest group of vendors ever.

This year's conference will be a great way to begin your summer! You can register online at: <https://www.conted.vt.edu/ssl/augcom/>

It's always good to see your friends and co-workers outside of the school setting. Have a picnic or potluck with members of your AT team or group of collaborating teachers. Topics for discussion might include:

- New strategies that were learned at the *Making Connections Conference*
- Evaluation of current AT resources, processes and procedures
- Utilization of AT tools to create accessible instructional and assessment materials
- Planning for team meetings for the upcoming year

Review

Use those rainy summer afternoons to review assistive technology software. Many programs offer free demonstration downloads online. You can also borrow software from T/TAC. (Participants attending the *Making Connections Conference* will receive a variety of free demo disks.)

Download software tools or request demos from:

Inspiration/Kidspiration – <http://inspiration.com>

Clicker 4, request a software demo disk: <http://www.cricksoft.com/us/products/clicker/request.asp>

Buildability Player and Stories - <http://www.donjohnston.com/downloads/downloads.htm>

Don Johnston Software, request free 30 day trial - <http://www.donjohnston.com/catalog/leaderguarfrm.htm>

Help Read – <http://www.helpread.com>

RJ Cooper <http://rjcooper.com/site-map/index.html>

Kurzweil - <http://www.kurzweiledu.com/downloads.asp>

Read

Find free books and articles to download at:

Teaching Every Student in the Digital Age: Universal design for learning – <http://www.cast.org/teachingeverystudent/ideas/tes/>

PACER - <http://www.pacer.org/stc>

Sitting by the pool or lying in hammock under a tree is a great time to catch up on your reading. Consider requesting one of these titles from the T/TAC library:

What Every Teacher Should Know About AT by Dave L. Edyburn

Technology for Literacy Teaching and Learning by William J. Valmont

Resources

Start a collection of premade activities, templates, and graphics that you can use in the coming school year:

AT in Orange County Public Schools - <http://www.ese.ocps.net/ATTeam.htm#exchange>

Project Participate - <http://projectparticipate.org/high-tech.asp>

SET-BC Downloadable Resources - <http://www.setbc.org/res/files/default.html>

Widgit Books and Worksheets for Writing with Symbols - <http://www.widgit.com/resources/activityindex.htm>

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Reading is a Priority

by Tammy Craft, Leslie Daniel, and Selina Flores

Early Childhood Thematic Units
- <http://www.sbcss.k12.ca.us/sbcss/specialeducation/ecthematic/pcsware.html>

Refresh

On those days when it's just too hot to be outside, consider refreshing your AT knowledge by visiting one of these sites:

The Assistive Technology Training Online Project - <http://atto.buffalo.edu>

The Alliance for Technology Access - <http://www.ataccess.org>

AT Network - <http://www.atnet.org/index.html>

ICT Training Resources - <http://www.inclusive.net/resources/resources.shtml>

ATOMS - <http://www.atoms.uwm.edu>

National Center for Technology Innovation - <http://nationaltechcenter.org>

National Assistive Technology Research Institute - <http://natri.uky.edu>

Recharge

Whatever you plan on doing this summer, take the time to review and research, but most importantly recharge for the upcoming school year!



"Becoming a reader is facilitated by opportunities, artifacts, encouragement, practice, and expectations."

Unknown

Summer vacation is not an excuse to take a break from learning; instead it is the perfect time to have fun gaining knowledge about particular interests. In particular it is vital that children sustain and practice reading skills and read for enjoyment whenever they have a break from school. Studies show that most students experience a loss of reading skills over the summer months, but children who continue to read actually gain skills. Families can make reading a priority, but remember that children need free time for summer fun reading.

Reading builds visualization, thinking and language abilities. Reading is more than picking up a book or magazine, especially for very young children. Pre-readiness skills involve language (rhymes, phonics, and phonemic awareness), comprehension (letter recognition, vocabulary and fluency), and writing skills. The following tips will help keep your child's motivation high:

- Read aloud with your child every day.
- Let your child choose what to read, and don't worry about popular fiction; "beach books" aren't just for grown ups!
- Get books on tape from the library for long car trips, to support pleasure reading, for students with particular disabilities, or as an alternative to watching reruns on TV.
- Ask your child to plan a meal around a favorite book and write a grocery list of necessary supplies.
- Have your child read the supermarket or department stores sale flyers to find pictures and/or coupons for meal supplies or her favorite foods.
- Ease summer separation from a favorite friend by encouraging them to become pen pals.
- Exchange notes with your child instead of words at different times during the day. For example leave a love note in the bathroom for first thing in the morning, put a note on dinner plates, or tuck a note under the pillow for bedtime.
- Play board games e.g. Candy Land, Scrabble Junior, Life, and Monopoly. Play the old road trip games that kept us all going as kids for example the ABC game—find the letters of the alphabet in order on road signs or license plates.

"Parents and families are the first and most important teachers.

If families teach a love of learning, it can make all the difference in the world to our children."

Richard W. Riley
U.S. Secretary of Education

The Dog Days of Summer can be fun and beneficial, “naturally”!

By Helen Barrier

Summer should be packed with fun in the sun but not without learning! With the pressure of learning all year long students deserve a break but not without the expectation of sustaining reading, writing and math skills. Some careful planning can help everyone have a good time and not fall behind. Here are 6 hints to help parents, students and teachers benefit from the summer break, “naturally!”

#1 Plan it!

Identify the skills or areas you and your child want to target and decide how they best fit into your schedule naturally. Discuss this with your child’s teacher at the end of the year conference. Using these skills daily often falls into place with cooking and measuring, reading before bedtime, writing postcards on vacation or “playing school” for an hour during the day. Trips to the museum, library, sporting events or a day at the lake can be great times for using these skills (critical thinking, math, writing, reading and problem-solving) “naturally.”

#2 Make choices!

We all enjoy the freedom of choosing what we want to do- especially in the summer when we’re not in the pre-scheduled school day. Whenever possible, give a variety of possibilities and allow children to self-select what they want to do and in what order. Contracts including rewards and responsibilities are a great way to build this into your schedule “naturally.”

#3 Read!

Reading opens the doors to learning! It helps with visualization, critical thinking, attention and language skills to name a few. Allow children to pick their own books with a few recommended books

from school. Going to the library to choose books on tape, videos as a reward after they read, software and magazines can take the focus off of “books” but still keep them reading. Road trips are great time to load up the car with books and satisfy everyone’s need to make time fly. Make reading fun by reading aloud at the park, on the front porch or at the beach. Take turns reading aloud to each other and silently- asking questions and discussing along the way. Help your child start a Book Club with friends- getting through those required summer readings might not seem so bad when shared with friends. Turn off the TV and set a good example with everyone reading his or her book at “natural” times each day.

#4 Write!

Writing is laborious for some but is essential for all students to succeed. Writing postcards, letters and e-mails are natural ways for students to build these skills. Encourage keeping a journal or scrapbook with pictures, drawings, keepsakes and short stories throughout the summer. They become living history for your family as well as a source of comfort when the fall schedule picks up again. Using the web to look up vacation spots, clipping graphics, planning the agenda and writing about them is motivating, “naturally”.

#5 Arithmetic!

With more time and less schedule in the summer, meals can be casual and full of choices. Have your children plan menus, shop for the ingredients, compare prices and take part in the cooking. Reading menus and recipes, measuring ingredients, cooking and preparing meals are fabulous opportunities to practice a multitude of math

skills. Software programs can reinforce basic facts without ever completing another worksheet!

#6 Have Fun!

Most importantly, summer doesn’t focus on SOL’s! Especially for students who are frustrated with academics, summer is a time to reinforce and keep skills sharpened for the following school year- but not without the underlying philosophy of having fun. Children can grow, mature, develop, learn and have fun “naturally” all summer long!

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Summer Tips for Parents and Students by D. Fleishman, www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/parenting/summertips.html

Summer Reading and Learning for Children www.ala.org/ala/alsc/alresources/summerreading/tipsresources/html



“The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative.”

John Dewey

Stronger Bodies = Stronger Minds

by Gillian Rai

Regular exercise is good for the body and good for the brain. The benefits to the brain and body are clear and simple:

- More blood flow and oxygen
- Improved short-term memory
- Higher levels of creativity
- Improved body awareness and efficient use of the body
- Mood/emotion stabilizer - gets those “good” chemicals to come out and play
- Changes arousal levels – calming/alerting
- Improves attention/focus
- It's organizing
- It's FUN!

Play outdoors or indoors,

- Climb trees, dance, kick a ball, swim, bike, or hike
- Use music and movement everyday
- Go to the park—swing, climb, jump, run
- Play left/right games—“Itsy Bitsy Spider”, “Where is Thumbkin?” “Pat a cake”
- Visit your local YMCA and check out the programs and activities.

Do your chores

Heavy work is calming, relaxing and organizing.

- Wash the car or water the garden
- Digging in the dirt is great for fine and gross motor muscles—pull weeds, hoe the rows, or rake
- Vacuum, dust, hang laundry outside.

Drink lots of Water

Brains need to be properly hydrated to function and be alert, be sure to drink plenty of water every day.

Watch soda consumption—caffeine is dehydrating and is even more so during the hot summer.

Laugh

Laughter increases white blood cells and boosts the immune system. According to research, laughter/having fun boosts the immune system for 3 days (the day of the fun and the next two) Laughing changes the chemical balance of the blood. This is good for increasing memory and alertness and decreasing stress.

The power of touch

The oldest and one of the primary sensory systems for “taking in” information/sensation and processing our world is touch. We all need it and crave it, but often lack it. Get both hands involved, create opportunities for exploration via touch:

- Pet animals
- Bake, cook or garden
- Craft gifts with different textures
- Hug and massage.

The Nose Knows

The nose sends information directly to the brain. Scents boost the ability to learn, create and think, improve attention and trigger memories. Do be aware that both good and bad memories are triggered, so be careful. Peppermint, basil, lemon, and cinnamon are linked to mental alertness. Lavender, chamomile, and orange are relaxing and calming. Some children may be sensitive to certain smells; never force the experience. Add scents to childhood by making or buying scented play dough or markers, rubbing on some lotion, or creating smelly pots by dipping cotton balls in herbal extracts. Going on nature walks offers other olfactory sensations.

The Joy of Eating

Oral motor skills improve with practice. Foods that are spicy, chewy, crunchy, tart, sour, hot or cold encourage children to use their mouths, lips, tongue and teeth, and enhance the ability to chew and swallow. You can build in a variety of sensory and learning experiences while cooking with kids:

- Make letter pretzels
- Cut gelatin shapes
- String cereal bracelets and necklaces for sequencing, counting, and identifying colors.

Remember:

- Be safe – create a safe sensory environment and sensory experiences
- Engage professionals as needed –investigate sensory deficits
- Never force! Guide and respect the child at all times.

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Early Childhood Corner: Summertime Reading Fun

by Tammy Craft and Selina Flores

Summertime is just around the corner and before you know it the laughter may die down only to be replaced with comments like "I'm bored" or "There's nothing to do!" Here are a few ideas to have the best summer possible by incorporating reading and summertime fun.

Establish a routine:

While many families enjoy more flexibility with routines and schedules during the summer, we suggest that children have a daily routine that includes reading. Try setting aside 20 minutes each day to include reading—after lunch, dinner, or bath time or before bedtime are often favorites. Other ideas include:

- Take 2 books to the swimming pool each day to read at pool breaks and during lunch.
- Set a reading goal for your child, and reward the family with an outing involving your child's favorite interest.
- Establish a reading playtime where friends can meet once a week for reading time followed by playtime.
- Encourage families and friends to bring two favorite books to share with others.
- Keep reading material in every room of the house, and let your child see you reading.
- Read from books, children's magazines, newspapers, recipes, cereal boxes, menus, greeting cards, and comic books.
- Have your child read the supermarket or department stores sale flyers to find pictures and/or coupons for her favorite foods, the family's Saturday night supper, or to plan a meal around a favorite book.

- Show your child how to check local sale flyers for a special toy, see how much it costs, and compare prices. When entering stores, stop and read the flyers posted at the entrance.
- Check food labels when shopping. Questions such as "how big is a serving?" "how many servings in this package?" "How many packages will we need?" presents a simple and fun problem solving activity.

Discuss

Find out what really interests your child—animals, basketball, or cartoons. Take a minute to discuss books with your child. For toddlers, look at or point to favorite pictures. With preschoolers, begin talking about the character(s) in the book e.g. "How 'bout that mouse!" or "I love chocolate chip cookies, how 'bout you?" Pre-kinder/kindergarteners can make predictions, "What do you think is going to happen next?" The idea here is to make connections, and make reading more interesting. Remember this is not a test, just a conversation about what you are reading.

Plan a reading adventure:

Children love to be involved in planning activities and outings. Have your child make a list of favorite places to read. This list can be taped to the bookshelf or closet door as a quick reminder. Some ideas include, "Today let's read... on a blanket in the yard; in the closet with flashlights; at a favorite restaurant while having lunch; in the bathtub with pillows and stuffed animals; or with friends at the park.

- Read a favorite recipe, shop for the ingredients, and have fun cooking together.

- Act out fun adventures from books such as mystery scavenger hunts, or camping (even if it's in the back yard, or just sleeping in a tent in their room).
- Help your child create their own adventure book. Take photos, of an adventure and have your child tell their own story while you write their words on each page of a homemade book. This will be one book your child will be sure to read over and over again.
- Older children could write a play based on a favorite book. Family and friends could make up the cast. Assist the producers creating invitations and programs. The production will be their grand finale attended by all.

Crafts

Provide a craft area where your child can make books, and then help your child become the author/illustrator.

Encourage your child to start a family newsletter. A simple one-page newsletter can be filled with candid pictures, news stories, birthdays, upcoming events, and reviews of movies or books. Keep a notebook or voice recorder handy to remember all those terrific ideas.

Avoid the rush and have your child make their own cards for upcoming holidays or celebrations: e.g. birthdays, anniversaries, Mother's, Father's, or Grandparent's Day, Thanksgiving, Valentine's Day, or Get Well cards.

Check out the local library

Sign up for summer reading fun at your local library! Young children from preschool through elementary, enjoy searching the library shelves for book titles or book cov-

ers that interest them. It is always important for children to select books themselves, and to learn how to properly handle and care for books. Talk about interests, family entertainment and hobbies before a trip to the library, then search for book titles that highlight those interests.

Going to the library will help your child maintain or improve his or her reading level over the summer. Know your child's reading level by talking to his or her teacher. Your librarian can provide a booklist of titles to support your child's reading level.

Book lists

- Browse through bookstores with your child and take the time to sit down and read a page or chapter from an interesting title.
- *KidsRead*" www.kidsreads.com/ provides newest titles, reading lists, biographical information, games, and author interviews.
- *Children's Choices* www.reading.org/choices/ is a list containing brief reviews of popular book titles, along with children recommendations.
- Random House offers a friendly Website for teachers, parents and children at www.randomhouse.com/kids/

Keep it simple

To be successful with summer reading, remember to make it fun and keep it simple. Remember to ask your child what he/she would like to read "just for learning" and "just for fun." Don't go overboard with too many planned activities; try to keep to your routine. Activities, books, and field trips can be expensive so use your local library often. Remember, your child will benefit most from quality time with you, an interesting story, and a quiet familiar area to enjoy the reading experience.

Have a great summer and happy reading!



T/TAC staff directory

Virginia Tech

Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
112 Lane Hall, Mail Stop 0254
Blacksburg, VA 24061
Toll free (800) 848-2714 Locally (540) 231-5167
TDD (540) 231-3315 FAX (540) 231-5672

Patricia Bickley, Ph.D.,
Project Director
bickley@vt.edu

Helen Barrier, M.Ed., High-incidence
Disabilities Coordinator
hbarrier@vt.edu

Tammy Craft, M.S.,
Early Childhood Coordinator
tcraft1@vt.edu

Leslie S. Daniel, M.S.,
Severe Disabilities Lead Coordinator
lsd@vt.edu

Diann Eaton, M.S.,
Severe Disabilities Coordinator
dweaton@vt.edu

Selina Flores, M.Ed.,
Early Childhood Coordinator
selinaf@vt.edu

Glenna Gustafson, M.Ed.,
Technology Coordinator
gsgustaf@vt.edu

Lora Kingma, M.S., CCC-SLP,
Communication Coordinator
lkingma@vt.edu

Gillian Rai, OTR, Severe Disabilities
Technology Coordinator
grai@vt.edu

Richard Snider, Ph.D.,
Technology Coordinator
rsnider@vt.edu

Ben Tickle, M.S., High-incidence
Disabilities Coordinator
btickle@vt.edu

Support Staff

Beverly Parkins, Secretary
parkinsb@vt.edu

Elva Douthat, Fiscal Assistant
elva@vt.edu

Raj Medapati, Database Manager
rmedapat@vt.edu

Amy Rogers, Graduate Assistant
gradasst@tac1.elps.vt.edu

Leslie Sloss, Graduate Assistant
gradasst@tac1.elps.vt.edu

Radford University

Department of Special Education
Box 7006, Radford, VA 24142
Toll free (877) 544-1918 Locally (540) 831-5333
FAX (540) 831-5124

Alice Anderson, Ed.D., Co-Director
amanders@radford.edu

Kenna M. Colley, Ed.D., Co-Director
kcolley@radford.edu

Rachel Janney, Ph.D., Co-Director
rjanney@radford.edu

Lynn Graves, M.S.,
Elementary Project Coordinator
lgraves2@radford.edu

Lisa Holland, M.S.,
Secondary Project Coordinator
lholland@radford.edu

L. Mac McArthur-Fox, M.Ed.,
Project Coordinator
lmcarthu@radford.edu

Dale Matusевич, M.S.,
State Coordinator for the Transition
Outcomes Priority Project
dmatussev@radford.edu

Support Staff

Katie Reed, Secretary
kreed@radford.edu

Shelly Walker, Graduate Assistant
swalker@radford.edu



Training and Technical Assistance Center (T/TAC)
112 Lane Hall
Mail Stop 0254
Blacksburg, VA 24060

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U.S. Postage
PAID
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Mission

The mission of Virginia's Training and Technical Assistance Centers is to improve educational opportunities and contribute to the success of children and youth with disabilities (birth–22 years). The Centers provide quality training and technical assistance in response to local, regional, and state needs. T/TAC services increase the capacity of schools, school personnel, service providers, and families to meet the needs of children and youth.

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