

JUNE 2010

Kindred *Spirits*

Don't Let Kids Backslide Academically Make Summer Learning Fun

Experiment this summer!

Experimenting is when kids test an idea to see if it's true. They try different solutions to see if one works.

An easy example is to combine paints to get different colors: yellow and blue make green; white and red make pink. Then add black paint. What happens? Kids can learn a great deal by trial and error.

A hot day in the sun with some finger paints makes this experimental activity fun as well as educational.

It's summertime and most of us think of fun, sun, swimming and play. But three months of summer vacation can mean a time of academic back sliding for children. With a little thought and imagination, you can incorporate learning into summertime fun.

According to Lisa Wallace, MU Extension human development specialist, "You can help your grandchildren continue to learn while playing by giving them open-ended materials and plenty of time to play."

You can guide their play by asking questions and making suggestions. Let them figure things out by themselves and avoid the temptation to take over and make them play "your way."

Build on your grandchildren's natural tendencies for observation. Take a walk and look closely at things like bugs, leaves, concrete, sidewalks, plants, the sky and even litter. Talk about shapes and colors. Ask 'what if' questions like, "What if there were no bugs or birds?" and "What if it was hot here all the time and we never had rain?"

Ask your grandchildren to estimate or guess. Get a large mixing bowl and a measuring cup.

Ask how many cups it will take to fill the bowl. Then go outside and fill it with water. Or, go to the sandbox with a shovel and bucket and count how many shovels it takes to fill the bucket. This helps children with mathematic skills also.

Classification is the process of grouping things together and identifying relationships and categories. Your grandchildren, like other kids, will create their own classification systems. They'll sort and order in categories that mean something to them. A fun time to work with classification is on a rainy summer day when you are indoors. Have your grandchildren gather their stuffed animals and then have them sort them into categories. Your grandchildren will be able to sort them by color, size, type, etc. You can also do that with playing cards, blocks or canned food items in the pantry.

Don't forget about reading this summer. Not only do you want to continue the bedtime rituals, but extra reading is important to continue the habit of learning. Whether you are reading to them or they are reading to you, the togetherness and actual reading both benefit your grandchildren.

Published in partnership with the Family Friends Program, Children's Mercy Hospitals and Clinics.

MU Extension contributors: Dr. Carole Bozworth, Dr. Nina Chen, Saralee Bury Jamieson, Kris Jenkins, Lynda Johnson, Glenda Kinder, Susan Mills-Gray, Diana Milne and Lisa Wallace.

Choose Water for Summer

Make smarter beverage choices

As the weather heats up, our thirst grows as well. "Regrettably, over the past 30 years, beverage choices have shifted to include more sweetened drinks and less water," according to Glenda Kinder, MU Extension nutrition and health education specialist. Consumption of sugar-added beverages has increased 70% per person since 1970. That's an increase from 7.8 ounces to 13.2 ounces each day. (Source: American Heart Association)

The health impacts of this increased sugar consumption have

created a sense of urgency that we need to provide our children with healthier alternatives on a regular basis. Increased sugar consumption has been linked to obesity, higher than normal triglyceride levels, lower than normal levels of HDL or 'good' cholesterol, high blood pressure and high glucose levels in the blood.

The Beverage Guidance Panel, an expert panel of health professionals, developed guidelines that will help us make smarter beverage choices. They recommend that half of our beverage needs should be met with water. Serving water chilled and/or with lemon or lime slices can be helpful for those who complain of water's taste.

For children, 100% juice is another healthy beverage choice. However, because juice is naturally high in sugar, it too should be limited. The American Pediatric Association recommends limiting juice to 4 - 6 ounces or less for children under 6 years and to 8 - 12 ounces for children ages 7 to 18 years.

So when the weather heats up, keep cool, refreshing water at hand and drink often! Soda can be a "sometime" beverage or a special treat. When you buy the smaller can-size sodas, you make another smart beverage buy for your grandchildren. Help them learn to drink healthy.

University of Missouri Extension

Bates County

1 N. Delaware, Butler, MO 64730
660.679.4167

Cass County

302 S. Main St., Harrisonville, MO 64701
816.380.8460

Clay County

1901 NE 48th St., Kansas City, MO 64118
816.407.3490

Henry County

100 W. Franklin, Rm 16, Clinton, MO 64735
660.885.5556

Jackson County

1106 W. Main St.
Blue Springs, MO 64015
816.252.5051
2700 E. 18th St., Suite 240
Kansas City, MO 64127
816.482.5850

Lafayette County

14 E. 19th St., Suite 102
Higginsville, MO 64037
660.584.3658

St. Clair County

655 2nd St., Osceola, MO 64776
417.646.2419

extension.missouri.edu

equal opportunity/ADA institution

Encourage Summer-time Reading

Summer break will be here soon—have you started planning activities for your grandchildren once school is out? "No matter what the age of your grandchildren, be sure to include reading in their summer schedule," reminds Diana Milne, MU Extension human development specialist. Children can lose one to three months of learning every summer and then they have to work even harder in the fall to catch up.

Educators tell us that children who spend time reading and who develop a love for reading typically do well in all their subjects at school. "If you have younger grandchildren who are not yet reading, read to them daily," adds Milne.

Contact your public library to find out about summer "Story Hours" for the younger children and "Book Clubs" for older kids. Remember to be a good role model. Let grandchildren see you read; keep books, magazines and newspapers available in the home; take them to the library on a regular basis and treat them to occasional trips to the bookstore.