

Gateway Grandparents/Kinship Network is a collaboration of organizations & agencies in the St. Louis Metro Area working to enhance the lives of grandparents and relative caregivers and the children in their care.

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- Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition
- Legal Services of Eastern Missouri
- Let's Start Caregivers Group, St. Vincent de Paul Church
- Mid-East Area Agency on Aging (MEAAA)
- Missouri Department of Social Services, Children's Division
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# Kincare Connections

*A newsletter for grandparents and other relatives in a parenting role*

## Summer Break Can Mean a Break in Learning

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*Reprinted with permission from **Connect with Kids**. For resources on teen and adolescent issues visit [www.connectwithkids.com](http://www.connectwithkids.com)*

Summer vacation. While our kids love the break, it also creates a break in learning. Studies report that, on average, students lose about 2.6 months of grade level equivalency in math computation alone.



But, not all kids will fall behind when they go to school next fall. For the Lucero boys, learning is year-round. When the school year ends, their father uses next year's text to teach them math lessons at home. "And he'd give us like maybe three-page tests on those, with like maybe 75 questions," says Orlando, 16.

And during the summer, their mother gives them assigned reading and asks them to give written or oral book reports. "It can be a hassle sometimes, but during school, it pays off on tests and everything," 14-year-old Vidal says.

These boys won't fall behind this summer, but many of their classmates and other students around the country will. According to a study from Johns Hopkins University, many kids forget some of what they've learned, and by the end of summer, they lose, "over two and one-half months of grade-level equivalency in mathematics," says Fran Chamberlain, director of an after-school program called KidzLit.

"Teachers are spending easily up to six weeks trying to review what had happened in previous years," says David Payne, a former principal. Payne, now the CEO of an after-school program called the Extreme Learning Center, says reading skills also lag. He tells parents to actually go to school and talk to their children's teacher before the end of classes. Ask the teacher what skills could your children benefit from practicing this summer, and find out what books they might read now that could keep them sharp and help them prepare for next year.

He also says that the key is to make learning fun, especially during the summer. The Lucero boys, for example, write out math problems on the dining room table ... with shaving cream! Their father, Frank Lucero, came up with that idea. "I'll take a look at the books, I'll read through the

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chapters, pick out the particular problems and actually spend some time in analyzing how am I going to make this fun for the boys?

What are we going to do this time? How do I keep it different?" he says.

This summer, the boys will have time for basketball and skateboarding, but only when the homework is done. Come fall, Orlando and Vidal will be ready. "Everyone's asking me, like, how do you do this, how do you do that? Like on the bus. And they practically have to relearn it all over again," Vidal says.

### What Parents Need To Know

As a parent, it is important for you to help your child retain the knowledge he or she has learned each year. Whether homework is assigned during the school year or as a "summer bridge" between grades, you can help your child get it done. In fact, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) says parents can help their children academically, even if homework is not assigned. The AFT describes home as "a child's first school." The organization recommends spending a little time each day on reading, writing and math activities.

Parents can use some vacation time to help kids keep their math and reading skills sharp. Consider these strategies:

- Have your child do math problems at his/her level a couple of times a week. Workbooks and online resources can be a guide.
- Help your child realize how

math is used every day. Have kids help in the kitchen and double or halve a recipe, or grocery shop together and calculate expenses.

- Playing family games is a great way to practice math skills. Some fun family games include Mancala, Chess, Mastermind, Othello, Monopoly, Cards (500 Rummy, Spades, Pinochle), Cribbage and Racko.
- Organize a book club for kids. It's a great way to foster a love of reading and get kids talking about books. Depending on their age, kids can organize their own or have their parents join in.
- Plant a garden. Kids who tend a garden will learn about dirt, seeds and seedlings, where food comes from and more. Plus it's good exercise.
- Get theatrical. Gather a group of kids together to perform a play. They can write their own script, act out a story they have read or memorize a play. Family and friends make a great, supportive audience!

### Resources

- National Center for Summer Learning at Johns Hopkins University - <http://www.summerlearning.org/>
- [Coolmath4kids.com](http://Coolmath4kids.com)
- [Coolmath.com](http://Coolmath.com)
- Summer Reading Resources from Family Education - <http://school.familyeducation.com/summer/reading/36091.html>

## Get "Back on Track" to Financial Freedom

**Daryl Luster**

*Client Service Specialist*

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# Keeping Safe During Thunderstorms

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Here are some ways to keep safe when there is a thunderstorm:

- **If the weather appears threatening**, listen to your local news, check online, or turn on a NOAA weather radio to find out what the weather reports say.
- **Look for signs of a storm** such as dark skies, lots of wind, and lightening.
- **Cancel or postpone outdoor events** when there are warnings of thunderstorms. Be aware that people can be struck by lightening in a stormy area even if it is not raining at the time.
- **If there is a severe thunderstorm warning**, find shelter in a building or vehicle with the windows closed. Mobile homes are not a safe place to be if there are high winds.
- **If you hear thunder, go indoors!** The National Weather Service recommends staying inside for at least thirty minutes after thunder ends.
- **Avoid electrical equipment**, including computers and telephones, during a thunderstorm. Use battery powered radios.
- **Shut windows** and close outside doors. Stay away from windows.
- **Do not take a bath**, shower, or use water during an electrical storm.

*Reprinted with permission from: The Penn State Better Kid Care Program <<http://betterkidcare.psu.edu/>>, Penn State University, Claudia C. Mincemoyer, Ph.D., Program Director.*



## Top 5 - Did You Know?

...that Father Tolton Child Care Center and Southside Child Care Center sell fresh fruits and vegetables every Friday, 9 a.m.-noon.

...that you can file Property Tax Credit (Circuit Breaker) back to three years ago if you own a home that is under \$30,000 and if you rent under \$27,500

...that effective now, an adult child can remain on parents' health insurance plans until age 26

...that effective now (and until September to comply), private pay health insurance must remove lifetime cost limitations

...that Panera Bread Company has launched a non-profit store St. Louis Bread Company Cares in Clayton, Missouri. There are no prices on the menu and their motto is, "Take what you need, leave your fair share." In other words, order what you need and pay what you can.

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Parents and professionals can call ParentLink's toll-free WarmLine to access nutrition information, parenting information and receive problem solving support. The WarmLine is available in English and Spanish and answered Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m. by a family support specialist.

**Need information? Don't know where to go?  
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**Relatives As Parents/Grandparents Information Warm-Line**

- ▶ **St. Louis area: 314-961-8000, ext. 242**  
**Answered by:** Cardinal Ritter Senior Services  
**Sponsors:** Cardinal Ritter Senior Services  
 Legal Services of Eastern Missouri



Get answers to questions on custody, guardianship, adoption issues, public benefits, legal services, support with groups and other community services. When you call, be prepared to leave a message and contact number. Within 2 days, you'll receive a follow-up call.  
*This service is not for emergencies.*

**Kincare Connections** is written and published by Gateway Grandparents/Kinship Network for grandparents and other relatives in a parenting role in the St. Louis Metropolitan Area. Contributing writers are staff members of member organizations of the Network. **Articles may be reprinted for educational purposes. Please credit as follows:** Author, Organization, *Kincare Connections*. Kincare Connections is available in print or on the web. **To subscribe**, contact Elizabeth Reinsch, Human Development Specialist, 121 S. Meramec, Suite 501, St. Louis, MO 63105, Ph: (314) 615-7605, Email: [reinsche@missouri.edu](mailto:reinsche@missouri.edu)

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## St. Louis Metro Area Support Groups

### St. Louis City

**Carver House Grandparents Group**  
Contact: Brenda Manon 314-652-8485

**Keepers of the Flame**  
Contact: Kathleen Mc Aleenan, 314-961-8000 ext. 302

**Let's Start Caregivers Group**  
 (Grandparents raising kids of incarcerated or chemically dependent parents)  
Contact: Cynthia Stevenson-Johnson, 314-241-2342

**Proud Grandparents**  
Contact: Kathleen Mc Aleenan, 314-961-8000 ext. 302

### St. Louis County

**Kimble Cares Relatives As Parents Program & The Boyhood Initiative of Missouri**  
Contact: Huey Hawkins, Jr., 314-882-6840 or  
 Ericka Webb 314-882-6830

### Greater St. Louis Metro Area & Neighboring Counties

**Children's Home Society of Missouri**  
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**Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition**  
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