

# Developing Minds

Summer 2009

## Opportunities for Summer Learning Gains

Hooray, here comes summer vacation. No more homework. The family can sleep in late. Nothing to do for three months, right? Well, not exactly. Like a professional athlete or classical musician, students cannot afford to take too much time off. Skills that were learned, with months of hard work, may diminish during prolonged breaks. Teachers often spend four to eight weeks at the beginning of each school year re-teaching material that students have forgotten over the summer. In general, students who experience summer learning gains achieve higher scores on standardized tests than their peers who experience summer learning loss. So, now is the time to plan fun summer activities that will allow your child to make learning gains and be well prepared for the start of school in the fall.

Does this mean I need to enroll my child in summer school? No, not necessarily, there are countless ways to providing stimulating activities that allow a child to learn -- many of which require little or no advance preparation. Simply make a plan for some of the time you spend interacting with your child, and ensure that it includes creative projects that feature teachable moments.

Here are a number of ideas to help get your family started on a memorable summer break...

### Reading and Writing

Daily reading for students should continue during the summer. Find ways to make reading a treat:

- Read with your children every day and have them read aloud to you.
- Subscribe to some new magazines.
- Search the internet for more details after discussing current events with your child.
- Make weekly visits to libraries, and participate in summer reading programs.
- Remember to pack a book for each traveler on every trip you take.
- Have a special summer journal where your child can write whatever they please - stories, songs, wish-lists, daily notes, etc.

### Math and Science

- Do an experiment with your child once a week.
- Cooking provides an excellent opportunity to practice fractions and follow directions. So, bake cookies, mix smoothies and make ice cream.
- Take educational day trips to museums and nature parks where you can examine different types of rocks, animals, insects, and leaves. Bring a guide book and try to classify the things you investigate.
- Plant a garden to observe how seeds grow.
- Encourage children to watch educational television programs about science and nature, instead of Nickelodeon and Disney Channel-types of shows.
- Let your child practice using currency by paying with cash for their items occasionally -- and have them check their change.
- Organize a recycling project in your neighborhood.
- Ask your child to make time estimates, which will help develop their concept of time (e.g. How long till we get there? How long will breakfast take? How long will you be outside?).

## Child Development Chats

The Center for Developing Minds hosts an informal and interactive session each month where topics including child behavior, development concerns and parenting questions will be discussed. Periodically, a session will focus on a specific area of interest. **Free of charge.**

### **Overcoming Sleep Struggles: How to Get Children Their Rest**

12:30 – 1:30 pm  
Wednesday, May 13

### **Summer Reading: How to Help Your Children Love Books**

12:30 – 1:30 pm  
Tues., June 23

### **Being a Friend: How to Help Kids Foster Friendships**

12:30 – 1:30 pm  
Tues., September 29

## Lectures to Note

Upcoming presentations by CDM staff include:

### **"Attention and the Young Child"**

May 16, 8:15am-2:00pm  
Dr. Rojas to be a panelist at a Parents Helping Parents workshop.

Please see our website for the complete schedule, as well as more details on each of these events.

## Facebook

The Center for Developing Minds now is on Facebook.com. Become a "fan" and receive highlights on your wall about upcoming CDM events. The site is designed to be interactive. Participants may post questions or information on the discussion board for other CDM facebook users, which will evolve into a valuable resource for families and CDM clinical partners.



Pediatric expertise in child behavior, development & learning  
[www.devminds.com](http://www.devminds.com) 408.358.1853

## Summer Learning Gains

Continued from page 1.

### Social Studies

- Reading maps is a valuable skill to master, so let your child become the trip navigator. Your child can even make her own maps of your neighborhood, yard, or town.
- Learn state capitals, countries, and continents by playing games and taking virtual trips online.
- Travel experiences away from home should be accompanied by brief history and geography lessons along your way.

### Art, Music & Drama

- Keep on-hand basic art supplies – such as pencils, paints, pens, paper, playdough -- and make them easily accessible, allowing children to write, draw or create at any time.
- Encourage creative play time on your child's favorite musical instrument, or use summertime to try a new one.
- Turn off the television and turn on your stereo. Expose your child to a variety of music, from classical to modern.
- Have your child act in/direct/produce their own summer show or skit, complete with comedy, singing or dancing.

### Organization

The academic expectation is that organizational skills increase automatically as children grow. For some children, organizational skills need to be continually trained and a three month gap over the summer is disastrous. During the summer, continue to teach planning and organized thinking skills.

- Maintain household practices. Although sleep times may change during school vacations, try to continue sleep routines. A consistent bedtime schedule should be enforced. Eat regular meals at predictable times. Impose a structure on your days.
- Encourage your child to pack for trips. With a little structure, children as young as five can help pack for themselves. You can provide a checklist to assist with this activity if your child needs guidance.
- Limit programmed activities that do not encourage creativity or thinking, such as television and computer games.
- Allow your child to conquer boredom. Help your child brainstorm activities that they like, then make a list of these that you can refer your child to when he or she claims to be bored.

### Social Skills

Be sure to use the extra available daytime hours during the summer to have friends over to play. Help the children with some structure to the playdate, if necessary, but mostly let them guide their time together. Learning how to be an effective leader, how to share, and when to compromise with peers, all take practice.

Regardless of whether or not children participate in formal summer school programs, summer vacation is an ideal time for parents to continue their year-round effort to help their children learn and grow. Working together with communities and schools, parents can ensure that no child ever takes a vacation from learning.

## Welcome New CDM Staff

**Lisa Kalmanash, MA**  
Educational Specialist

Lisa is the reading specialist at the Center for Developing Minds. Using multisensory strategies, Lisa combines proven techniques to create individualized instruction plans for students who struggle with independent reading.

Lisa has more than 15 years of teaching experience in special education at elementary and middle schools. In addition to working at the Center for Developing Minds, Lisa is a resource specialist in the Santa Clara Unified School District, where she assesses and offers instruction to students with learning disabilities.

For more biographical information about CDM staff, visit [www.devmonds.com](http://www.devmonds.com).

## FACILITATED/INTEGRATED PLAYGROUP FOR PRESCHOOLERS WITH AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER



The CDM now offers a group designed for young children, ages 3-5, with high-functioning Autism, Asperger's Syndrome and PDD. Children with ASDs have difficulties in the areas of communication, socialization, imagination and creativity. This early-intervention playgroup will address those areas by providing:

- Facilitated play that is designed to increase creativity, flexibility in thinking and language skills.
- Peer interaction opportunities, including initiating and maintaining conversations, answering questions and turn-taking.
- Increased awareness and understanding of verbal and non-verbal communication among playmates.

The playgroup will be held on Tuesday mornings, from July 7 through August 11, at the Center for Developing Minds. It will be a fun-filled, animal-themed, developmentally appropriate group with play-based activities. The 75-minute playgroup will include structured and facilitated playtime, music and movement, art opportunities and snack time. Additionally, parent education will be provided, with a weekly parent consultation at the end of each playgroup and weekly written summaries of your child's progress.

Course fee is \$600 for the six sessions. Additionally, each prospective group member and their parent will attend a 30-minute screening appointment, in order to ensure group compatibility and provide an opportunity for parents to ask questions regarding the group. The fee for this screening is \$30.

**Instructors:** AnaMaria Guevara, LCSW  
Leina Ramos, LCSW

## Upcoming Classes at the CDM

### SKILLS FOR SCHOOL

Specialized training course for kids with social-skill, organizational and attention difficulties

Monday - Thursdays, 2:00 - 3:30pm

Meeting dates: Session 1: June 22, 23, 24, 25  
Session 2: June 29, 30, July 1, 2

Parent orientation: Wednesday, June 17, 8:00-9:00 am  
Open to students in grades 2-4

Instructors: Cassandra Harms, Child & Adolescent Therapist  
Teri Jetter, Occupational Therapist

This unique, multi-disciplinary class – held at “FUZE, Fit for a Kid” – combines psychotherapy and occupational therapy to help kids gain information through their bodies, in order to fully absorb teachings to the brain. The course provides a holistic approach to attention differences by teaching concepts in both a kinesthetic and a cognitive manner.

This program will specifically address:

- Strategies for your child to self-regulate their bodies,
- Hands-on techniques on how to be a good friend and how to manage bullies,
- Methods to help with transitions,
- Organizational systems that will strengthen your child’s time-management skills, planning, memory and spatial organization.

Parents will receive a progress report via e-mail at the end of the session with an overview of the group, and when appropriate, suggestions to use at home to strengthen the skills learned. Please note: the deadline for enrolling in “Skills for School” is June 15.

### Anger Management Support Group for Teens

Adolescents are prone to fluctuations in their emotions, but some teens fall into a pattern of enraged, disruptive behavior. During this program, students will be taught cognitive approaches to using their logical brain, instead of their emotional side. The group will use role-playing exercises to learn new social, behavioral and conflict-resolution skills for better management of their anger. By working within a group, and reflecting on the skills of the other members, students will develop more self-control by gaining insight into their own strengths and weaknesses.

The fall group will meet on Thursdays at 4:00-5:00 pm, from September 10 through October 29. The group is open to students in grades 5-8. Course fee is \$475 for the eight class sessions and the parent introductory session to be held on September 9 at 6:00 pm.

*Unless specified elsewhere, all classes are held at the CDM. Class sizes are limited to provide participants with personal attention. To register, or for more information regarding these classes, please contact 408-358-1853.*

### NEURO-SIBS SUPPORT GROUP: WHAT ABOUT THE TYPICAL BROTHERS AND SISTERS?

Instructors: AnaMaria Guevara, LCSW & Leina Ramos, LCSW

Siblings of children with special needs, especially those of ASD children, are impacted in many ways. They get less attention and time from parents, fewer financial resources are available for them, and they are often asked to accommodate their “special” sibling. Sibs often feel lonely, resentful, angry, sad, confused and frustrated.

CDM is now offering a support group for siblings of children with special needs. This group will provide the following for your child:

- Safe and confidential therapeutic environment to share his/her experience with other peers,
- Opportunity to explore his/her feelings,
- Information about diagnosis to help them better understand their sibling and to build empathy,
- Tools for interaction with their siblings to build their sense of competence in their interactions with their sibs,
- Guided exercises to explore alternatives to problematic situations at home.

The six-week, summer session will meet on Tuesdays from 1:30-2:30pm, July 7 through August 11. The group is designed for children ages 7-10. The course fee is \$500.

### LET'S GET ORGANIZED

Support Group for Kids Who Struggle to Stay Organized in their Life

Open to students in grades 5-8  
Thursdays, 5:00-6:00pm



### Building Blocks of Organization

Open to students in grades 3-4  
Tuesdays, 3:30-4:30pm

Meeting dates: October 13, 20, 27, Nov. 3, 10, 17

Parent orientation: Monday, October 12, 6:00-7:00 pm

Instructor: Cassandra Harms, Child and Adolescent Therapist

Organization problems are common among students whose performance in school is disappointing. Even the most motivated of these children may find it hard to change their patterns of disorganization. These fun and encouraging groups will help students build new skills essential for good organization, while improving self-esteem in a supportive environment among students that struggle with similar issues.

Both of these groups will focus on your child’s skills in attending, planning, time management, performance anxiety and memory.

As a part of the sessions, the participants will collaboratively plan an “End of Group, Beginning of Success” party as a concrete and enjoyable way to utilize their new organization skills.



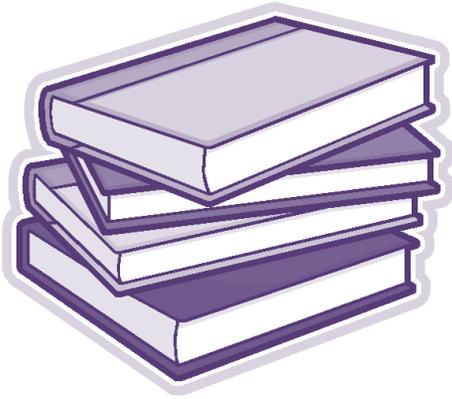
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**NEW**

## Center for Developing Minds Reading Specialist

### Use *This* Summer to Jump-start Your Child's Reading Skills

The staff at the Center for Developing Minds now includes a reading specialist, Lisa Kalmanash, who can properly assess your child's reading abilities and create an individualized instruction plan designed to provide results. The sessions in the CDM reading clinic will develop independent readers who can use a variety of strategies to read grade-level text. The specialist will review your child's knowledge of sound/symbol relationships, determine their knowledge of the regular rules and patterns in the English language, and analyze the current techniques that the child is using when reading. Once this appraisal is complete, the specialist will utilize multisensory strategies to develop a personalized action plan for your student.



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