



School Zone

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A monthly newsletter covering area schools



How to keep kids entertained, active and engaged this summer

Summer vacation often starts with high expectations. Children are excited about the prospect of fun days outdoors playing with friends, while parents anxiously await relaxing months without the responsibilities of school and extracurricular clubs. But once summer vacation arrives and the first few days have passed, parents often find that the litany of cheers and giggles transform into a chorus of "I'm bored."

Many parents pore over ideas that will keep their children busy throughout the summer. Many activities that come to mind tend to be expensive, so if cutting costs is a priority, parents might need to think outside the box to come up with entertaining ideas that won't break the bank.

Camp

Summer camp is a popular way for kids to spend their summers, but many camps are expensive. The American Camp Association has found that overnight camps can cost anywhere from \$325 to \$780 a week. Day camp fees may be \$100 to \$275 per week. Parents who send their children to camp for an entire season might pay anywhere from \$3,000 to \$9,000 for the seven- to nine-week program.

Parents looking for an alternative to costly camps should consider local programs that offer summer activities. Libraries, schools and

childcare centers may have programs that run the length of summer and are considerably less expensive than more formal camps. A YMCA or even a swim club may also put together activities. Parents whose children attend afterschool sporting classes, such as karate or soccer, may find that the organizations offer a camp or summer program.

Day Trips

If a parent is off for the summer, then day trips may be a possibility. Schedule a few day trips to different locations that the kids are excited to see. Newspapers routinely print "Go See It" or "Just Go" listings that highlight local events. The family can gather around the table and decide which outings would be interesting and then mark them on the calendar. Some parents purchase season passes to amusement parks and take the kids several times over the summer. In either case, bring snacks and lunch from home when possible to keep costs in check.

Kid Swap

Chances are many of your neighbors are also facing the same difficulties as they try to find ways for kids to spend their summer afternoons. Parents can get together and set up a schedule for entertaining the kids. For example, one parent is responsible for the whole lot one day, while the next day another parent takes a turn.

This gives parents the opportunity to take a break from parental responsibilities and enjoy some quiet time. And for the children, time spent in a pool, watching movies, playing video games, or riding bikes is often more enjoyable with friends in tow.

Fun Projects

Children often want to feel useful, and may enjoy the responsibility of some easy tasks in and around the house -- so long as the tasks are fun. Washing the car with a hose and a bucket of sudsy water is a fun way to cool off during the hot summer days and get a chore done. While parents should not expect a perfect job, they can rest assured that the kids will have at least an hour of fun in the sun and water.

Set aside a patch of the yard that children can turn into their own personal gardens. Encourage digging in this area and provide seeds or seedling plants as well as kid-sized gardening tools. Each day the kids can check on the progress of their gardens.

Some home-improvement and craft stores sponsor free learning activities for children. They can be held in the morning or afternoon and will teach interesting skills that can be put to use again at home.

Summer vacations are soon to arrive, and parents can be armed with a list of enjoyable -- yet inexpensive -- ways to keep kids busy.

For more ideas, see page C3

Keep up with Harrison Elementary's construction all summer long



South Lane School District has installed timelapse cameras at the site of the new Harrison Elementary School on Taylor Ave. To check in on the progress, follow the link and see the activities surrounding the construction. <http://www.workzonecam.com/projects/southlane/southlane/workzonecam>



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