

SCHOOL'S OUT...NOW WHAT?

Embracing Reality & Navigating Your Summer with Purpose

This Summer will look different..It's OK

- **Breathe and relax expectations**

This is for you parents. It is ok for kids to have to figure things out. This is not the time for you to think you have to be that perfect parent. Please realize that you, as a parent, are going to learn and grow from this experience and your going to be better, so be kind to yourself.

- **Enjoy the freedom in knowing it is not all up to you**

Give your child voice and choice, let them be bored, and let them work on their problem-solving skills. Consider conducting family meetings, set expectations for each family member, and figure out how you are going to help each other out. Let your children in on this discussion and they will amaze you.

- **Lots of good things can come out of it**

It's going to be different. Embrace this current reality and give your family and yourself a lot of grace.

Benefits of having a “different” summer

- **Down time**

We've been experiencing “downtime” over the past couple of months. During this time, it's interesting that researchers are discovering that children, especially those who have a stable and safe home environment, are experiencing lots of benefits as a result. Families are bonding and connecting more, parents and kids are less hurried and feeling a little more relaxed. Children are spending more time playing outdoors, which helps with physical and emotional health. They're sleeping more (no alarm clocks). Also, our brains have more time and space to create and invent new ideas.

- **OK to be bored**

Now that teachers are no longer providing projects and assignments for our kids daily, there will be more free time in your child's day. It probably

won't be long until you hear those dreaded words, "I'm bored!". Boredom can feel like a problem that we, as parents, need to solve for them. Don't be quick to "rescue" kids from that uncomfortable feeling, instead help THEM be problem-solvers. Ask them, "What could you do to not feel bored? How can you solve this problem?" Give them time and space to figure it out...they will!

- **Be a '70's kid**

It was a simpler time growing up in the 1970s, where children were not as "scheduled" and their days filled with sports, music lessons, camps, etc. Kids were left to their own devices to entertain themselves and fill their days with activity. It wasn't mom and dad's responsibility, it was theirs! When we hand over the reins (age-appropriately) to our kiddos, it lets them know we have confidence in them. It reinforces that we trust they are capable of being creative, inventive, and that it's ok to take some risks - it's how we learn and grow.

- **Develop everyday skills**

Basic housekeeping or outdoor maintenance skills appear to be lost arts. But I've heard from other parents and "experts," that not teaching those skills is actually doing our kids a disservice. So, this summer, think about those skills you want your children to have when they're grown. Don't do for your child what they can do for themselves. It can start in preschool by picking up toys and making their beds. As they grow older, they can sort clothes and walk through the entire laundry process. Teenagers can make up grocery lists, plan meals, cut grass, etc. Chores help children feel like they're contributing to the family and develop a sense of accomplishment and pride. It's also quality time spent together!

Set goals - Start with the end in mind

- **Set goals for Mind, Body, and Soul**

When we set goals, we want to create more balance in our lives. It's essential to set goals for our mind, body, and soul. As we present the different activities, remember as parents and kids, we're seeking to create balance. Often, feelings of imbalance come from neglecting one or more of those areas. Let your child help you in setting big goals for the summer and small goals for each day.

Mind goals:

Academic activities or goals.

- » For a 4/5-year-old, it might be learning how to tie a shoe.
- » For an older kiddo, maybe it is learning a new language or learning typing skills.

Body Goals:

Physical Activities or Goals

- » Building something with sticks outside, kicking/throwing a ball, learning to dribble, exercise, learning yoga, or learning a new dance.

Soul Goals:

Goals that just make you feel good inside

- » Art, music, being creative.
- » Spending time in prayer.
- » Service Activities - where we are serving others (chores, helping neighbors or siblings, or praying for others)

Just remember, children need to feel like they are involved in their goal setting. At St. John, we conference with kiddos regularly to set goals and to help them to feel they are involved, and their voice is heard.

Voice and choice

- **Work for a win-win when organizing your day**

While children need to have a voice, it's also necessary to consider everyone in the family, and what life looks like for them. Parents may still be working from home and need their own quiet space to meet their responsibilities, or to just have their own downtime. "Voice and choice" encourages conversation, cooperation, and empathy for others.

- **Importance of balance**

Summer is a time when you and your child can loosely schedule their days. Typically, kids thrive and take comfort in the predictability of a schedule. Still, they also love that schedule balanced with fun free play! We're living in a time when some kids have every minute of their day scheduled, and both parents and kids are experiencing burn out. Create a balance between responsibilities, goals, and downtime. There's no "right" or "perfect" way to organize your day. Just make sure it has opportunities to work on these different areas in whatever way that works best for your family.

- **How will you go about achieving goals?**

Setting goals is one thing you can incorporate into your child's daily routine. Summer has always been an ideal time to try something new! Think back to those three goal areas - mind, body, and soul. What does your child want to learn more about, how do they want to grow, how are they going to achieve it? It's time to put words into action! For example, if it's a mind goal, did their teacher send home a summer packet to review academics? Or if they

want to learn how to bake a cake, plan on checking out old family recipes and create a grocery list. If it's a body goal, like running a 7-minute mile, what do they need to do regularly to accomplish that? If it's a soul goal, something that fills them up, like becoming a better visual artist. It may require watching drawing videos on youtube or gathering different art supplies. Brainstorm with them what they will need to meet their goals and how you can provide those resources to help achieve them!

- **Don't forget to have fun!**

And remember, while it can be exciting and invigorating to have goals and plans, it's also important to just enjoy summertime and have fun! Provide the opportunity and flexibility each day to fill their spirits with joy and laughter - that's part of the "downtime" we talked about earlier. What's fun for them? Who do they want to play with (safely)? Where would they like to go? The more family members can share their ideas, the more enjoyable it will be for everyone!

Create a Special Summer Toolkit...

- Use money you would have spent on those camps
 - » Get a storage bin, a box, an empty drawer, or anything that your child can get to easily and put supplies in there.
- Art supplies
 - » gel pens, stickers, fun sidewalk chalk, smelly markers, black scratch paper, colored glue, construction paper, colored tape, fun craft scissors, pipe cleaners, etc.
- Writing stationary, cards and stamps
 - » This could even be a cheap notebook that they could use as a daily journal or just a drawing pad.
- Recycled materials
 - » toilet paper tubes, paper towel tubes, kleenex boxes, applesauce tops, cardboard, leftover wrapping paper, tissue paper, wood building blocks, etc...
- "Learning Workbooks" or Oriental Trading craft kits that kids could easily do
- Use when needed! Maybe everyday or maybe you just pull out when needed

Keep socializing and serving (safely)!

- Family connectedness
- Maintaining friendships
- Serve others

A few more ideas...

- St. John School – Summer Learning Academy – stjls.org/summer
- Keep reading
 - » slcl.org/summer-reading | slcl.org/virtual-branch
- Virtual Camps/Learning skills
 - » stlparent.com | skillshare.com
- Vacation Bible School
 - » pathfinderstl.org/vbs
- Learning Websites/Apps
 - » starfall.com | gonoodle.com | abcmouse.com | [Art Hub for Kids on YouTube](#)
 - » commonsensemedia.org/blog/free-online-events-activities-kids-at-home-coronavirus
- Podcast
 - » [Wow in the World](#)
 - » [Story Pirates](#)
- Facebook Pages
 - » [Magic House](#)
 - » [St. Louis Zoo](#)
 - » [St. Louis Aquarium](#)
 - » [St. Louis Science Center](#)

Some things never change!

- Backyard BBQ, bonfires, s'mores, sunshine, warm temps, and water play
- Making new memories

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