

**Summer Survival Guide:
How to Preserve Hard-Won Skills**
Help Students Begin the Next School Year with Confidence
By Marion Hindes

No doubt you are aware that students stand to lose a high percentage of what they have learned this year by the time school has been out a month. They will, unless their hard-earned knowledge is reinforced quickly and consistently throughout the summer.

- No one *wants* this to happen. But what is a busy parent or teacher to do? The following is a plan that is both effective and manageable.
- Make sure students read quality literature every day. Give them an opportunity to earn a reward for both the number and quality of books they have read
- Have students check out the local library in their area. Many have lists of recommended books and even their own reading reward programs for the summer
- For struggling readers, provide phonics resources as well as high-interest reading materials at or slightly above their reading level (which may be lower than their grade level. Remedia specializes in such materials
- Make use of daily learning opportunities:
 - **While cooking or shopping** - math, economics, life, and consumer skills
For example, “Which is the better deal - 10 pounds of dog food for \$9.00, or 20 pounds of dog food for \$16.00?” “Will you please help me make pancakes? If we double the recipe, how many cups of flour will we need? How many teaspoons of sugar?”
 - **While traveling** - history, geography, map skills, plant and animal life.
“It's 90 miles to the next town. We're going 65 mph. If we don't stop, how long will it take us to get there?” Ask, “Let's look at the map and figure out the shortest route to get to where we're going.” Bring along a guide on birds, animals, or plants and look up the plant and animal life native to the area you are visiting. Visitors' Centers can give you information on the history, geography, geology, etc. of an area.
 - **While watching educational programs** - science, history, government, and politics. Watch them with your children. Besides discussing the information given, try a few “critical thinking” strategies:
 - Evaluate the accuracy of the information given.
 - Evaluate the credibility of the sources.
 - Identify biases of the people on the program.
 - Discuss the values/ethical issues involved.
 - Discuss whether you agree or disagree with the information, and why.

To provide adequate review and reinforcement, and especially to address specific skills deficits, you may need to do more: Give students fun, skills-based materials. In just

minutes a day, they will be reviewing and reinforcing essential core skills. (They will probably learn something new and exciting as well)! We especially encourage using materials in Reading, Math, Language Arts, and Writing, as they receive the most attention on standards-based tests.

Now that you've done a little research, determine which of your students' skills need the most reinforcement, and which materials would be most valuable and enjoyable for them. (Parent/teacher communication will be of great help in this process). Then all you have to do is gather the materials, set aside a little time each day, and have the security of knowing that your students are gaining knowledge - not losing it - this summer. Not only that, they will enter the next school year with greater confidence and a sense of accomplishment. And, just maybe, this summer you won't hear, "Teacher/Mom/Dad, I'm bored!"