

## Parents Make the Difference!



### Establish learning goals for your child over the summer

The summer months are looming. What is your child going to do during all that time when she's not in school?

Without a plan, she'll probably spend too much time in front of the TV. She'll probably also drive you crazy by announcing, "I'm bored."

So start planning for the summer months now. Work with your child to set learning goals for the summer:

- Read at least four books. Research shows that kids who read just four books over the summer will avoid "summer slide," or the gap in academic skills, when they go back to school in the fall. Listening to audio books will also build your child's vocabulary and her confidence. Many public libraries have these available to check out.
- Try something new. The child who has never thought of herself as an athlete could spend the summer learning a sport. The kid who feels shy might look for a chance to be in a summer play. Summer is a good time to stretch.
- Let your child take a risk. No, you don't have to let her try skydiving! But if she's never climbed a tree, give her a chance to learn the skill. Trying and mastering hard things is how your child learns.
- Don't let weak areas slide. If there is a subject your child struggles with, don't let her take the whole summer off. Ask the teacher for some ideas about how she can practice over the summer so her learning doesn't slide backwards.

#### Remember the 85-15 rule when it comes to discipline

Too often, discipline gets a bad rap. Parents sometimes think it means punishing a child who has misbehaved, which involves setting rules, enforcing them and handing out consequences. And none of that is very enjoyable for kids or parents.

The word discipline comes from the Latin word *disciplinare*, which actually means "to teach." So try thinking about discipline in a different way. Think of discipline as a way to give your child the tools to succeed in life.

Most of your discipline--roughly 85 percent--should focus on encouraging good behavior. That involves spending time with your child. Model the behavior you want to see in your child. If you want a kind child, you should be kind to others. If you want a responsible child, you should show that in your own behavior.

That leaves just 15 percent of the time to focus on negative behavior. You may still have to do time-outs sometimes. But you'll spend most of your time on things that really matter.

#### Control summer screen time by setting limits for the family

You've probably heard the experts' advice: "Limit kids' screen time to two hours a day or less." That includes watching TV, using the computer for fun, and playing video games. For most families, that's easier said than done! It helps to:

- Explain that the whole family is going to focus more on exercise and less on sitting around.
- Commit to being a role model. That means parents will watch no more than two hours a day, too. Replace screen time with activities everyone will enjoy.
- Keep track of viewing and physical activity. How much time does your family spend looking at screens? Being active?
- Combine activities. Do sit ups while watching a show or turn commercial breaks into "movement breaks."
- Set other limits. Keep the TV out of your child's bedroom and make meals TV free. When you watch together, discuss shows and advertisements critically.
- Avoid using TV time as a reward--or taking it away as a punishment. These habits make TV more attractive.