

June 2020



Dear Families,

The school year is at an end, but as Lifelong Learners there's no end to the knowledge that can be gained. I'd like to share some ways you can truly help your child make the most of the summer ahead! Many of these ideas have been adapted from a letter written by Betsy Eggart, a primary teacher who lives in Florida. I concur with her thoughts.

- Teach your child to tie his/her shoes. Find a fun trick! Watch a video! Give an incentive! Be persistent! Just make sure your child isn't the one dragging laces through the bathroom and mud puddles and asking the teacher to tie them.
- Keep a bedtime routine. This has probably been challenging with Distance Learning interrupting family life. During the summer, there will be nights that bedtime rules don't apply. Overall though, if we keep our bodies in a routine with sleep, September won't hit quite so hard, provided we're back in the classroom!
- Choose a few family members and friends to write letters to this summer. Ask your child to write in full sentences, ask questions and give details. Writing with a purpose makes it real for your child. Maybe someone will write back! Include an envelope with a return address and stamp to encourage a response! My home address in 7020 N. Olin Ave. Portland, OR 97203. I'd be happy to receive a letter and write back. Heaven knows I'll be here all summer!
- Sit at the table and eat together. Really watch your child. Is he/she sitting on his/her knees, mouth wide open, food everywhere? This is how your little one looks at school during lunchtime, too. Work on that. Okay. This doesn't apply to everyone. 😊
- Encourage kindness. Find someone or several others that your child can do something simple for- just to make someone happy. Deliver cookies, make a card, flowers, chores, a song...something simply for a smile. Keeping social distancing in mind, of course!
- Don't rush to the rescue. Children need you, but they also need to learn to solve problems on their own, too. If your child is in a situation that is frustrating, but not harmful (example: can't put together a new toy, can't open something like a fruit cup or container, can't decide which color shirt to wear) let your child work it out! It saves time and our nerves to step in and just do it, however, in the long run, it's crippling our children of the basic and necessary skill to problem-solve

and think through an issue...for themselves. Hang back...just a bit. Your child will be ok! Remind him/her to stop, name the feeling, and calm down. We learned three different ways to calm down. Ask your child to show you (belly breathe, count, and use positive self-talk).

- Read to your child and have your child read to you or a younger child. Please make reading a part of your summer days. Even though public libraries are still closed, many materials are available digitally. Most importantly, let your child see you read. Use different voices for characters. Have your child tell you the best parts and predict the ending. We tell children all the time that they must read, but are we showing them that we read?
- Practice math skills, too. Look for real-life situations like at the store comparing prices, counting coins, calculating miles taken during a trip, using fraction words when eating a sandwich or a pizza, measuring things to cook or make a project. Have fun with all the different ways numbers are used in everyday life.
- Put your phone down. We must look up from our screens and look at our children. They are growing so incredibly fast. We could spend this summer scrolling through Facebook and Instagram vacation pictures of other people wishing we had their reality, or we could celebrate our own reality by running through the sprinkler in our own backyards. This will probably be easier for us to do this year!
- Rest. Be ok with not constantly going somewhere. Society has us believing we must seize the day and do it all. Our children have worked hard, and they need to rest. If we keep them in perpetual motion through the summer, it will feel like a continuation of the chaos without the homework. Squeeze in the fun, but allow time for rest, too. Unscheduled time gives way to creativity. Rest renews our bodies and our minds for the next school year and helps us be able to better cope with life's uncertainties. And as always, remember to pray. I will certainly pray for all of you daily.

Thank you so much for entrusting me with your precious child this school year and for all your support, patience, and hard work! Take care of yourselves and each other. God bless you.

Love and prayers,

Ms. DeVaney-Willkes