

Pointers For Parents

Learning Opportunities During School Recess

(NAPSA)—Schools are closed. It's a snow day. It's the winter break or the summer vacation. You've watched TV, played video games, baked cookies. Now what? Schools are closed for several more days.

But a break from school doesn't have to be the equivalent of a learning-free time for kids.

For children who have been struggling in school, a school recess can be their opportunity to catch up on key skills and feel more confident when they head back to class. For students who do well, it's an opportunity to keep their enthusiasm high for learning.

Parents can play a key role in reinforcing learning on an ongoing basis. Here are some tips, suggested to make sure that every holiday is a good balance of free discovery, play, leisure and learning for kids.

Read. Everyone has his or her favorite book, so read them to each other. It's fun for the older kids to read their favorite childhood books to their younger siblings. Act out your favorite scenes for the enjoyment of everyone.

Play games as a family and, for some quiet time, as individuals. Some mind-engaging activities include board games, crossword puzzles, Sudoku, jigsaw puzzles, coloring, finger painting, watercolors, scrapbooking.

Keep up the lessons. Check those spelling words—if there aren't any from school, assign your own. Practice math facts. Read the next chapter in the social studies book.

Practice. Practice. Practice. Workbooks and learning kits can



Workbooks can help improve learning skills when children are not in school.

help fill in the gaps and provide the practice needed to excel in school. For example, supplemental education companies like Sylvan Learning provide a wide variety of exercise books that include fun, teacher-reviewed, age-appropriate games and activities. These resources offer chapter books with grade-appropriate vocabulary, flash cards, CDs and games that can equip families with fun, effective and grade-appropriate learning tools during the holidays.

Keep writing. As a family, keep a holiday journal. Have everyone write a few lines each day about important and not-so-important events. The weather, the rainfall, the consecutive sunny days, the growth rate of the tomato plants. Favorite movies, TV shows, sporting events. People you've visited or who have visited you. Neighborhood news and events. New friends. School plans for next year.

Try to keep up normal routines. Yes, the snow throws everything off, and that's okay. It's good to take a break (or have one thrust upon you) from time to

time. But try to keep bedtimes, mealtimes, study times and other important personal routines (medications, for example) as close to normal as possible. When you know schools will reopen again, start to get back into the swing of things right away.

Organize. Take this found time to organize notebooks, planners, backpacks and study areas at home. Make sure everyone's up-to-date on assignments that will be due when school starts again.

Keep it informal. You don't have to re-create a classroom experience at home. You shouldn't, as a matter of fact. Kids will soon "get it" that they can be learning new things, remembering old ones and using their knowledge as a simple matter of course. Keep up the holiday fun. Just keep up the learning, too.

A recess or day off from school is no excuse to put kids' brains on hiatus. It's for a different kind of learning.

For additional resources and information, visit www.randomhouse.com/sylvanlearningbookstore.