



June 2022

Summer - A Time to Encourage the Love of Learning and Reflection

The summer is here, and with it comes a unique opportunity to support your child's learning as well as find a valuable time to bond with them. Gifted children thrive on learning and making connections. As a parent or grandparent, the more unstructuredness of summertime gives you the opportunity to work with, enrich, and get to know your children better. I am going to encourage you to do the following three things for your child this summer: provide opportunities to authentically learn, time to reflect & discuss, and appreciate some down time.

Many times schools focus on what students are required to learn, regardless of student interest, as well as focusing on assessments and grades. None of this is typically appealing to children, especially our gifted and twice exceptional learners. Summer is not a time of not learning, in fact, I would argue it is a fantastic opportunity for real learning. This is the chance to experience new things, explore, and learn without the school learning structure.

We should use this time to encourage learning the authentic way, through experience! I encourage you to take some time and look into doing some of the following with or for your child/children. Some of these activities they will want to do, and some they will not. I encourage you to let them do many of the activities they want to do, but also do one or two that will push or challenge them.

Go to museums, zoos, aquariums, National Parks, theaters, the movies. There are bound to be surprises and opportunities to learn new things.

Participate in sports, the theater, family events, summer camps. These are all good to meet other children and adults who may have similar interests, but also will have other perspectives to learn and grow from.

Read Find a book or two to read with your child. Talk about the story, the characters, decisions made, etc. Learning from books cannot be underestimated.

Do hands-on projects such as model building, create some art, work in the garden, buy and learn to care for some house plants, adopt a new pet, etc. Help them find their passions, and create/build something, or care for something real.



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All of these are important opportunities to not just experience with your child, if not to just have them experience, but also to have discussions with them. These discussions not only help you get to know them better but will help them learn and grow from the experiences. Having children think and reflect on their learning, in these cases, learning experiences is important to helping them grow and learn from them. Take this time to talk about not just how they did and what they learned, but also how this learning affects them, how the others involved may feel or learn, and how these experiences can be applied to other events in their life.

One of the greatest learning tools is to ask, "Why?" and then listen. Then follow up with another, "Why do you think that?" All of these experiences can help a child better understand themselves, their strengths and weaknesses, but also how they can grow, learn and adapt. It also helps with understanding others and their relationships when working with others. This is an invaluable tool when preparing to be successful in our culture and workplace no matter what they decide to do in the future.

We also should not forget about valuing down time. I see so many parents scheduling their children for one club, event, or tutoring activity after another outside of the school day. It makes me wonder when these kiddos have time to think and reflect on their own. Gifted children can have infinite interests, and having them partake in them is highly important, but too much of a good thing can no longer be a good thing.

One of the best parts of the summer is that it brings a greater chance to be bored. Please keep in mind, our children need time to reflect on their own, let their minds rest, and have a chance to contemplate and become who they are. Please do not over schedule them. When we are bored or unstimulated, we get to know ourselves better. Make sure your child has some time just to be.

I hope you all have a chance to help your child grow this summer, and that you have the chance to get to know them better and build some cherished memories. Please also know that as adults, we are also always growing, learning new things, and also learning to better understand ourselves. We just need to sometimes be in the moment. With everything going on, don't forget to take some time for yourself.

- *Adam C Laningham*