

The Summer Break and its Effect on Students with Disabilities

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As the school year comes to a close, many parents including myself are shouting to the top of our lungs for the opportunity to slow down, relax and recharge for next school year. The summer break may have both positive and negative effects on children with disabilities. Some students with special needs adjust well to the "rest period" of a break, while others fare better with consistent academic and social stimulation. Because the specific needs of a child may involve academic delays, behavioral issues, social deficits or a combination of the three, the overall effect of a two to three month summer break may vary significantly from one student to another. Summer break can be a positive experience for many students with disabilities. Children with special needs sometimes benefit from being able to "recharge their batteries" over the summer so that they are relaxed and ready to begin the next grade in fall. For some students, the day-to-day work of a school day can be overwhelming and in many cases a summer break offers some well-needed time off. If a parent is aware that his or her child has social difficulties, the parent can make extra efforts to provide opportunities for their child to interact with other children without disabilities. This can be carried out through planned trips to the library, pool, bookstore or friends' houses in a more relaxed environment.

Some children with special needs are negatively affected by a summer break from school. A few of the drawbacks are:

- **Regression of Academic Skills:** Students who need consistent instruction in academic subjects in order to retain information may face challenges when starting a

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new grade after a summer break. Parents should keep a record of how their child does after summer and holiday breaks, and if they notice that the child struggles to “catch up” after the break, this may be a warning sign that regression is an issue.

- **Regression of Social Skills:** Kids who have communication disorders may regress socially if they are not in regular contact with peers over the summer.
- **Interruption of School-Based Therapies:** Children with special needs who receive speech therapy or occupational therapy during the school year may lapse in progress if not enrolled in a summer program.
- **Deviation from Routine:** Some children with special needs thrive on routine and may not react well behaviorally if sleep or travel patterns are changed in the summertime.

By now, parents should have received notification of their child’s eligibility for the Extended School Year Program and met with the IEP team to discuss further. Children found ineligible for extended school year services can sometimes still attend summer school courses in subject areas like reading and math. This option can be beneficial for students diagnosed with Learning Disabilities who primarily struggle with academics.

If you are having difficulty seeking a summer camp or program for your child, check your local newspaper or give us a call for a copy of a directory as a place to start.



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