

A quick guide to summer learning

By Katherine Dedyne, Times Colonist

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Abigayle Carlson and Roan Demmings, both 8, with teacher Helen Thomas enjoy class in the great outdoors.

Photograph by: Bruce Stotesbury , Times Colonist

A quick look at some 'summer school' options available in Greater Victoria.

Victoria Read Society. "We do an assessment with the student to find out what they're good at and what the gaps are and then we build an individual program to help the student fill the gaps," says executive director Claire Rettie. Students' programs are "always different" and not tied to the B.C. curriculum.

There is emphasis on helping students understand context in reading, then writing about that context.

Ten one-hour sessions cost \$465, generally with one teacher to two students, or \$665 for one-to-one teaching. Both include a short assessment -- a full academic assessment is \$75 extra. Class times are Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. at 201-2631 Quadra St. and 1:30 to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday at 302B 9775 4th St. in Sidney. The 10 hours can be chosen from any two weeks in the six weeks available July 6 to Sept. 4.

Tuition assistance may be available for low-income households. Registration: 250-388-7225

TutorFind Learning Centre. Owner-teacher Duncan McDougall has taught math for 30 years and specializes in arithmetic without a calculator, fractions and "the art of estimation" to put kids in the right ballpark. He and his certified teaching staff offer four-week sessions of one hour per day, five days a week in math, reading, literacy and writing skills for elementary grades. "It's intense -- you have to get a child used to it and into the groove," McDougall says. "If you take little kids, two times a week, it's not enough." He wants to instill the confidence that so many kids have lost through calculators and help them do math in their heads. Homework of about 15 to 20 daily minutes is par.

He employs six tutors in five classrooms at the centre. Teaching is "usually one-on-one" but numeracy workshops usually are in groups of about six. Tutors are matched to students by qualifications, the students' needs and personality.

Rate is \$40 per hour. Hours are 9:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. -- seven days a week at 207-3994 Shelbourne St. Registration: 250-472-1937.

Sylvan Learning Centre. "Our testing pinpoints the exact skills the student is having difficulty with," says franchise owner and teacher Penny Loome, noting that not understanding one skill can cascade into many others, and Sylvan has identified hundreds of skills. A struggling student generally requires 36 hours of instruction over the summer, after which there's a "significant jump" in scores. If not, Sylvan offers 12 hours of free instruction. Students in Grades 2 to 7 are taught in groups of three per certified teacher specializing in their subject. Instruction is a minimum of two hours a week at \$47 to \$50 an hour. Open Monday to Friday mornings and Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. at 1623 McKenzie Ave. Assessment fee is \$200. Sylvan's curriculum is in line with the B.C. curriculum. Registration: 250-477-3212

Oxford Learning Centre. Teachers are certified in remedial education and take small groups of two to three children back to successful learning they have already accomplished, and build on that, along with games and contests to make learning fun, says owner Darlene Pettitt. Children need to learn with others around rather than in a secluded "vacuum," she adds. Students get a 90-minute assessment to identify gaps in reading, writing, spelling and math before taking a minimum of 16 one-hour summer classes.

Rates range from \$33 to \$41 per hour. Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Monday to Thursday 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

A typical summer program is twice a week for two hours at 203-1595 McKenzie Ave. Registration: 250-477-5550

Smart Tutor Referrals. "If a student is struggling in reading and they happen to be really interested in motorcycles, the tutor may show up with a magazine on motorcycles and ask the student to read," director/owner Dahlia Miller says. There are 50 tutors who are

teachers matched to students after a 35- minute interview on their learning style, strengths, interests and personality. Together, they can capitalize on learning in their own backyard -- think the Fibonacci arrangement of sunflower seeds -- with undivided attention.

Cost is \$35 to \$45 per hour, usually two hours per week whenever it suits the student. Homework is assigned if needed. Travel fee is \$1 to \$2 per session. Assessment is \$35. Registration: 250-544-1588

Kumon Math and Reading Centre. "We focus on independent learning -- not on tutoring in homework," says franchise director Linda Birley. Usually three or four children learn with one assistant trained in-house for the Kumon program that in math focuses on "lots of practice and repetition." Assistants -- often university students -- are supervised by teachers. "Students are very current; the kids like that," Birley says. Pupils learn in one large classroom to develop rapport and usually receive 15 minutes of homework a day. Cost is \$125 per subject of eight to 10 hours per month; two subjects for \$200. Assessment is free, but it's \$50 to register.

One hour per week per subject is recommended; no more than two. Hours are Monday to Thursday from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at 204-3965 Quadra St. Registration: 250-479-1800.

Kumon Math and Reading Centre in Colwood instructs quite a few children with special needs at Gordon United Church at 935 Goldstream Ave. Hours are Monday and Thursday from 4 p.m. to 6:30 p.m at \$125 per course per month; two subjects for \$200. Registration: 250-474-4175.

Kumon Math and Reading Centre in Sidney in the library building on Resthaven Drive has a focus on correspondence learning with lessons through the mail every two weeks at \$125 per course per month. Also open from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. Monday and Thursday. Registration: 250-656-6696.

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