

# Summer school with a twist

## Catch-up learning doesn't mean a ruined vacation

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

Kids struggling in school are counting the days to summer not just for holiday fun, but as a break from the stress that falling behind in class can create.

Parents are wondering if this year's report card will be the one that tips the children into formal learning arrangements in July and August to help them catch up come September.

Often, parents hit the "panic button" in summer on behalf of kids who have needed extra help for a long time, says teacher Penny Looe of Sylvan Learning Centre in Saanich.

Local school districts are not funded to provide summer classes for primary grades -- unlike high school -- but parents able to pay out of their own pockets have plenty of choices. Approaches include tutors in the child's home, group instruction at specialized centres and even correspondence learning.

Before signing up for summer learning, check with your child's teacher because "the teacher knows the child," advises Sooke assistant school superintendent Ron Warder, adding the holdup might be a developmental problem or learning disability that won't respond to going over the work. And he believes in learning through play on summer holidays.

"We do make our summer programs fun," says Darlene Pettitt, owner of Oxford Learning Centre in Saanich, a teacher and a mother of two who says she can quickly convince kids that she's not a "three-headed monster" out to wreck their holidays.

One of her goals is to instil motivation to keep learning by boosting children's confidence and teaching them new strategies to be successful.

"But if your child is two years behind, you can't expect them to be caught up in two months," she warns.

For kids in Grades 3 to 6 or 7, Read Society is combining reading skills camps at the Panorama Leisure Centre in August. The \$200 camps are themed to water, sky and land, and will run from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

The camps are timed to give kids "a bit of a bumpstart" before they head back to classes, says Read executive director Claire Rettie.

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