

Beware, parents, of summer backslide

Sarah Tindall/Special to the Caller-Times

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CORPUS CHRISTI — Attention parents: Summer vacation is a mere two weeks away.

Two weeks! And then they will be home all day, every day for two months.

Summer vacation is one of the most anticipated moments in your child's life, mostly because they are off the hook in the schoolwork department. This is a well-deserved rest to those who have spent the year trying to remember how to multiply fractions. That little brain needs some time to recuperate from the mental gymnastics it has been going through since August.

But parents also know that after a couple of weeks, a curious thing starts to happen — the dreaded backslide that the teachers are always talking about. Apparently the kids forget a good bit of all that hard-earned knowledge during summer vacation.

Luckily there are many resources out there to help you cope with this problem, and we'll cover them in this column over the course of the next few weeks.

The first is GetNoodles.com. This is a sneaky and awesome way to turn computer time into learning time, without your child even knowing what's up. At the www.getnoodles.com website, parents can download the company's software onto their computer according to their children's age and learning level.

Then as the children are surfing the Web or playing online games, a question will pop up every few minutes that the child must answer before returning to the game. Parents are able to choose specific subjects for the questions with categories varying from shapes to phonics to math to history to SAT Prep, depending on the grade level of the child, or they can opt to have questions generated on a variety of topics.

Yep, that's right. They can return to their Internet fun only once they've answered the question correctly. The next tool is specifically for parents of kids entering third and fourth grade— or any other child struggling with learning times tables.

Learning those times tables is, I can't mince words here, miserable. There is no magic wand to make this happen fast. You must drill and drill and drill, and teachers recommend that you do it over the summer to get a head start on the school year and make the misery less, well, miserable.

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But it doesn't have to be so bad — a local man is ready to help. Kenneth Weldon Smith has written a book called "Times Tables Tales" which goes through some of the multiplication rules and gives kids some tricks to help them understand how the times tables work. This helps them memorize the facts because they comprehend why the answers are what they are and don't therefore have to just learn them by memorization. For information or to purchase the book, contact Smith at smith-ma@swbell.net.

Hope this helps get you geared up for the break — more columns will follow about fun and educational stuff to do this summer with the small fry.

Contact freelancer, mom and professional multitasker Sarah Tindall at srjtindall@gmail.com

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