

Parents help out.....

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holding the book, imitating the characters' actions or voices.

- Encourage the child to create books. Any child who has started to color can "write" a book. Staple together some paper and turn the child loose. The end reward: he gets to read the book to his parents.

Besides books themselves, a home computer also can help a child master reading skills.

"Computer play and games are ideal vehicles for guiding the growth of children's abilities in reading and writing," says Thomson in Penn State's College of Education.

For example, by using cursors on a computer, children can learn more easily about concepts such as "above," "below," "left" and "right," which are a prelude to

reading skills.

- Color graphics, music and games in a computer lesson make reading a fun experience for children, Yawkey says. Through the computer, children can work at their own pace and focus their attention on recognizing and typing out words, without becoming too frustrated over handwriting skills.

When that long-awaited first day of elementary school finally arrives, parents unofficially hand the job of teaching over to the expert — their child's teacher. But parents still retain some academic responsibilities, agree educators, and parent-teacher conferences can be an important tool for defining them.

Together, parents and teachers can discuss a child's progress, define his positive qualities, and, if necessary, the need for special education of some kind or outside help, such as an after-school tutor.

During the conference, the teacher can shed light on ways that parents can help with homework and reinforce what is taught at school, such as making flash cards for a particular class.

She also might suggest learning games, books, videotapes or computer software that could help the child in a problem subject, or challenge him on to new heights in an area where he excels.

As a student advances through school, the parents' role changes, but doesn't necessarily lessen, according to Charlie Gawie, coordinator of San Diego's secondary schools' in-school counseling service.

Parents of an older student, still should be involved with homework, at least to the extent of seeing that it gets done, Gawie says.

Parents also can lend a hand in creating a suitable environment for study, Gawie says. Syndicated interior design columnist Sharon Owen Haven describes this environment as a well-lit, distraction-free area, preferably in the student's bedroom, equipped with:

- A desk that provides plenty of room to "spread out" books and assignments.
- Basic reference materials such as a dictionary.
- Easy-access storage for all materials the student uses, such as books, typewriter, calculator, computer and supplies.
- A chair that provides back support, so the student can sit straight up with both feet on the floor.
- A bulletin board or space for pictures, photos and awards to lend a personal touch.

After school classes, clubs get kids moving

By Karen Caldwell
Copley News Service

Summer is over, and so are swimming lessons, summer camps and vacations — activities that kept your child active and happy through the summer. He'll no doubt be busy with school projects and studies, but you're wondering about his free hours — the ones that tend to be spent in front of the television when it's too cold or cloudy to play outside.

But autumn leaves and cool temperatures don't have to trigger the back-to-school blues and after-school boredom. Extracurricular activities abound for children during the school year — some social, some academic and some purely for fun. With an almost endless list of possibilities it's safe to say there is an after-school activity to meet every child's interest, or need, and every parent's schedule and budget. Here are a few of the possibilities.

- **Classes that teach something new.** A surefire way to beat the I-am-bored-and-want-to-watch-TV syndrome — help your child learn something new. There are after-school classes that teach kids everything from gourmet cooking to French conversation to speed-reading.
- **Develop a fledgling talent.** All

children have some unique quality. It could be a skill, a talent or a consuming interest. Whether it's dance, art, wood carving or model airplane building, there are dozens of ways you can help him along.

For instance, if all your little girl can talk about is ballet, you might enroll her in dance lessons, take her to performances and recharge and bring home armloads of books and magazines on the subject.

There are also toys that can incorporate a child's special interests.

- **Clubs and organizations:** Fall is an opportune time for a child to get involved in a community organization such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and 4-H. Most areas also offer clubs that unite young enthusiasts — computer buffs, bookworms, bird-watchers, stamp collectors, chess players or skiers, for example. Check the library or school to see what's available, or help your child organize his own group.

- **After-school programs:** Many working parents are enrolling their children in after-school programs, where their kids stay busy with adult-supervised activities such as art projects, games and music until their mothers or fathers get off work and pick them up. A growing trend, these pro-

grams have been established in elementary schools, community centers, YMCAs and libraries.

- **Music:** Music stands in a class by itself, since a young musician has dozens of opportunities at his fingertips for learning and performing, whether he plays a piccolo, piano or a percussion instrument.

After school, a child can take group or private lessons, participate in community and school bands and orchestras and, of course, establish a regular routine of practice.

- **Wondering if Junior is ready for scales, sharps and sight-reading?** A child's interest in music, attention span and eagerness to learn are the best indicators of when he should start, according to the National Piano Foundation.

- **Money-making ideas:** If your child is pushing for an unreasonable raise in his allowance and has plenty of spare time on his hands, why not help him make a little money on his own?

Here are several ideas from *Fare's* magazine that are perfect for children:

- Pet-sitting, where a child takes care of a traveling neighbor's bird, goldfish or cat.
- Dog-walking — especially popular during cool weather.
- Some types of yard work, such

as weeding, flower planting or removing rocks and branches.

- **Chores:** Who says the responsibility of old-fashioned chores around home is outdated for today's youngsters? "Real work" as young as 4 years old, and has a positive effect on their development, according to University of Georgia consumer economist Anne L. Sweasney in *Working Mother* magazine.

She asserts that help is good for kids, helping them develop independence and self-esteem while making them productive members of the family.

School Lunch Week

Each year, the second week in October is designated by presidential proclamation as National School Lunch Week. In 1986, the U.S. Agriculture Department's School Lunch Program celebrated its 40th birthday.

School lunch is big business. Schools, both rural and urban, served more than 15 billion lunches in the past 40 years. California is about 90,000 schools combined to serve nearly 24 million children daily. (CNS)

Preparing to take SAT, quizzes and other tests

By Eric Jada
Copley News Service

For students from grammar school to high school, the end of the summer signals the beginning of the back-to-school, test-terror blues. Whether it's a spelling quiz, a midterm or the Scholastic Aptitude Test, taking any test means butterflies in the stomach, sweaty palms and pressure for many teens.

Because of these fears, many students spend too much time worrying about a test and not enough time preparing for it.

"Students don't have to suffer to be high scorers," says Stanley H. Kaplan, president and founder of the Stanley H. Kaplan Education Center, a nationwide test preparation program.

Kaplan has compiled the follow-

ing tips to help students overcome their pre-test jitters and perform to their best abilities.

BEFORE THE TEST

- **Plan ahead:** Start from the first day of class to take well-organized notes on the lectures in outline form. Develop a personal shorthand so you can take accurate notes quickly.

- **As you read textbooks and other materials, underline the main points of each section with a highlighting pen.** Then, summarize these points in your own words in the margin.

- **Develop an overview of the material by understanding how chapters relate to each other to form a unified body of knowledge.**
- **Keep simplifying your notes as you study so that eventually, one or two key words will summarize whole concepts.**
- **Don't just memorize information.** Make sure you understand the principles involved and how you solved the problems before going to the next chapter.

- **If you're studying a foreign language, make up flash cards with the English word on one side and the foreign word (and article, if appropriate) on the other side.** Ask family members or friends to go through the cards with you.

THE SAT

The SAT, alias "stress and tension," evokes a unique fear in many college-bound high school students. When the dreaded SAT is looming, students welcome all the help they can get. Here are some test tips geared especially for the SAT.

- **Bring a sharp mind, but make sure the points of your No. 2 (soft-lead) pencils aren't too sharp — they might break.**
- **Know the directions that precede each test section so you won't have to spend even one second rereading them when you are taking the test.**
- **Don't gorge yourself with a 10-course breakfast the morning of the test — blood will rush from**

your head to your stomach, and you think with your head, not your stomach. But do eat breakfast. Try a snack of raisins or chocolate-coated candies during the test.

- **There is a penalty for an incorrect answer, so don't guess wildly.** However, if you can eliminate at least one choice that you know is wrong, the odds are in your favor of getting the correct answer.


- **Make sure you don't go on the answer grid — check if every fifth question to make sure the number of your question matches the number on your grid.**
- **Don't cram the day before the test.** Last-minute preparations will just cause anxiety.

TEST TIPS

Other general test tips:


- **If there are essays on the test, read each one through and jot your thoughts in the margin.** Then, organize the notes into a logical sequence before you start writing the essays.

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