



PROJECT ACCESS FACT SHEET #25



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SUMMERTIME...AND THE CURRICULUM IS EASY

Ah, summer time! You'd be ready to kick back and take it easy, except that you've signed-on to teach summer school. Will it be the same old grind for another two and half more months? No way! Let's plan to have fun while teaching and learning.

Summer school is an excellent opportunity to relax the strict routine of the regular school year, add outdoor activities, and plunge into community-based instruction. With planning, you and the students can do more than you thought possible.

Relaxing the Routine

All year long you taught your students how to follow a visual schedule and worked hard on those IEP objectives. This summer you can encourage flexibility in your students by having them follow a visual schedule which includes many new and different activities, all directed toward the skills in those IEP objectives. Lots of longer activities can occur in the summer when there aren't any school bells to interrupt. Everyone's lives are enhanced by experiencing new things and boredom is avoided.

Practice newly acquired social skills by inviting a variety of new people (predicted by pictures in the visual schedule) to accompany your class. With predicted changes in routine, students with autism learn to generalize and maintain new skills. They also meet and practice relating to new friends of all ages.

Add Outdoor Activities

Wonderful lifelong movement activities can be introduced easily in the summer. It's easy to walk in the neighborhood surrounding the school, run around the track, go swimming in the city pool, bicycle on the school parking lot, hang from the jungle gym, follow the exercise trail in the city park, and even pitch horseshoes. All these can be done with the same age friends, and can be followed by a trip for ice cream. What great lifelong habits we have the chance to build through summer activities.

Community-Based Instruction

Since it's warm, let's walk to the neighborhood grocery to buy the few things we'll need to make our lunch. We could pack it in bags and take it to the park, even invite the students'

parents along. Short trips to frequently visited destinations can teach reading, money skills, interacting with sales persons, crossing the street, following maps, waiting, choice making, awareness of careers, etc. Practicing all those skills in the natural environment makes them meaningful to your students.

Isn't summer school great? And the curriculum...it's eeeassy!

Extending the School Year into Summer

Q. Dear ACCESS:

My youngest son is a preschooler and has been diagnosed with autism. How can I make sure he receives an extended school year if he is entitled to it?

Concerned Mom

A. Dear Concerned,

This is a good time to ask, because it is during IEP conferences that the committee determines whether a student with a disability requires an extended school year in order to achieve a free appropriate public education (FAPE). As a result of a federal court decision, the need for extended school year services must be considered for "all handicapped school-aged person (3-21) in the state of Missouri who require or may require or benefit from an educational program in excess of the traditional nine-month school year." The educational program for students with disabilities cannot be limited to a specific number of days, but is determined with regard to the needs of the individual student. An extended school year is an integral part of the IEP for those students with disabilities who cannot receive an appropriate special education program within the traditional school year. Just like with other IEP decisions, parental involvement is important and data must be gathered about the student's performance in relation to IEP goals and objectives.

A primary factor in determining the need for extended school year is the level of difficulty the student has with loss of previously learned skills and his/her ability to regain them. This rate of regression and recoupment is a commonly recognized factor, though not the only one.**

**The case law indicates a need to consider the prediction of regression/recoupment problems, as well as several other relevant factors in the whole educational experience of the child.

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