

EACH DAY, I SEE THE LINGERING IMPACTS OF THE PANDEMIC play out as parents contact our practice, wondering if our tutors or executive function coaches can help.

The most common concerns are among parents of students with ADHD and weak executive functions. They say their kids can't seem to focus and aren't meeting their potential.

When parents raise these issues, although they're worried about the here and now, I think they're ultimately concerned about the future and whether their child has the skills necessary to succeed in college and beyond. They're wondering, "if this is so difficult right now, what is it going to be like at the next level?"

Although my experience has been that the majority of kids turn out to be just fine, they all need a little extra help getting there—and that's especially true this summer.

In the past, if your child didn't put much of a focus on academics over the summer, they were probably a little behind in the fall, but still just fine. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed that because many kids, of all ages and abilities, are already several months behind before summer break even begins.

New research released this school year shows, just like the coronavirus, the recovery from learning loss is slow.

- Students with ADHD need more specialized support to recover, according to a study published in the *Journal of Attention Disorders*.
- University of Virginia researchers found that first and second graders are failing to meet reading benchmarks in "historic" numbers.
- McKinsey & Co. researchers analyzed testing data from millions of students and discovered that the average K-8 student started about five months behind in math this school year.
- And high schoolers? ACT scores are now lower in every subject.

It's a troubling trend our tutoring team at Educational Connections is witnessing and helping students, especially those with ADHD, work through each day—from the second graders still learning to read after virtual kindergarten and first grade classes to the eleventh graders who took Algebra II remotely and are now missing the necessary fundamentals to keep up in pre-Calculus.

This is proving to be another long, challenging school year. Your kids deserve a break, but what they do this summer is critical.

I recommend using this summer as an opportunity to give your child the tools and knowledge they need to start the next school year with greater confidence. The



How to Prevent Kids with ADHD from Falling Down the "COVID Slide" This Summer

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ACETHE



BREAK

good news is there are simple things you can do to help prevent a combined COVID and summer learning slide.

Before summer starts, sit down, and have a conversation with your child about what will happen over the next few months. If you offer them choices, they might be more willing to do the work.

Summer Learning Suggestions for Elementary Students

1. *Connect with the teacher.*

The summer is a great time to review what your child learned this school year and preview what's coming up in the fall. However, if you're unsure what material to ask your kid to work on, ask their teachers before the school year ends. They might already have a packet prepared or a list of recommended workbooks or summer reading.

Local libraries also provide many free resources, including reading programs that could help motivate your student when classes aren't in session.

2. *Find educational screen time.*

Sure, you don't want your kid playing Roblox all summer, but that doesn't mean they can't find a healthy mix of entertainment and educational content to fulfill their daily screen time fix.

If your child struggles in a particular subject, YouTube has many fun learning channels that could spark their interest, like MathAntics or Jack Hartmann's Kids Music Channel. Also, try to find an online learning program they enjoy. I often recommend Arcademics, Starfall, and IXL. Be sure to check in with your child's school or your library again because many offer free or discounted subscriptions to certain learning platforms.

3. *Set up Montessori-style stations.*

You can encourage younger kids to work independently by setting up a few areas in your home with stations for reading, writing, math, or art. This could include a bin with books in it or an area by your sofa with puzzles. Your art area could include coloring books, cutting activities, or even Legos or a Lite Brite (remember those?) to improve fine motor skills.

Just like in a Montessori classroom, the workstations should stay simple, organized, and have everything your child needs to complete each activity on their own.

4. *Rely on good old-fashioned practice.*

Paper, pencils, pens, and workbooks are among the best and cheapest learning tools. When buying workbooks, avoid those that include every subject or an entire grade level. For example, bridge workbooks are popular, but difficult for kids with ADHD. They often include content kids aren't familiar with, which cre-



ates frustration. Instead, look for workbooks that focus on the specific skill your child needs to work on, like multiplication, division, or handwriting.

5. *Incorporate daily reading and writing.*

Reading and writing skills have greatly suffered during COVID. Make sure to keep up your nightly shared reading time this summer, and try to throw in some DEAR time where everyone in your family **drops everything and reads**.

If your child doesn't have a summer reading list, head to Amazon, type in something specific like *best books for fifth-grade boys* and see what sparks their interest. Audiobooks are great, too. Even though kids aren't reading while listening, they're still practicing comprehension and vocabulary skills. And during TV time, try turning on the subtitles.

Since students spent so much time typing and relying on auto-correct during virtual learning, our tutors notice that many messy handwriting and lack on-level grammar and spelling skills. The summer is a great time to encourage daily writing practice.

Many kids with ADHD are reluctant writers, so it's important to find an engaging way to put pen to paper. One strategy I love is using a dialogue journal where you can share a conversation with your child by writing back and forth in a composition book.

Begin by writing your child a question such as, "What did you learn at basketball camp today?" and then leave the journal in their room. After they write an answer, respond the next day with a note and a different question. Don't correct their spelling or grammar, instead use this as an opportunity to let them practice their handwriting and getting their thoughts down on paper.





Summer Learning Suggestions for Middle and High School Students

Some older kids will be willing to do schoolwork at home this summer because they don't want to go back to class unprepared. But the majority of middle or high schoolers may not do these things unless they are working with someone who is not their parent. For those students, delegating this is key.

1. Enroll in a summer learning program.

Summer classes and camps are great ways to maintain structure during summer break. If you're looking for something to keep your student engaged online, have them search through Out-

school (<https://outschool.com>). The catalog of one-time classes and weekly clubs is extensive. If your kid has unique interests or specific academic needs, chances are they will find something new to try this summer. We once had a younger student who loved Dog Man, so his mom enrolled him in a mind/body relaxation course that used themes from the popular graphic novel series.

2. Get your child one-on-one help.

Many parents don't want to assume the role of homework police, especially during school breaks. Constantly asking your daughter, "Did you do this Algebra worksheet yet?" or barking orders at your son to do what you already asked three times won't equal a summer of success.

Getting outside academic help can reduce that friction and improve your relationship with your child. Perhaps ask a college-student neighbor to work with your child or enlist a professional tutor to create a personalized learning plan.

Setting aside time with someone who can provide your kid with one-on-one academic attention and accountability can help reduce your family's stress this summer and offer peace of mind as your children and teenagers start the next school year. **A**



As a former teacher, author, and speaker, **Ann Dolin, MEd**, is committed to equipping parents and students to succeed academically and enjoy the K-12 journey together. Since 1998, her team at Educational Connections (www.ectutoring.com) has helped thousands of kids overcome obstacles and achieve goals through one-to-one tutoring, test prep, executive function coaching, and college consulting. Dolin is an expert on academics and ADHD. She was a board member of the former Washington, DC, chapter of CHADD, has spoken several times at the annual CHADD conference, and has been featured in the Washington Post and Parents Magazine. She serves on the editorial advisory board of CHADD's Attention magazine and on the board of the International Dyslexia Association.

ADDITIONAL READING

Eliana Rosenthal, Sara Franklin-Gillette, Hi Jae Jung, et. al, Impact of COVID-19 on Youth with ADHD: Predictors and Moderators of Response to Pandemic Restrictions on Daily Life. *Journal of Attention Disorders*. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/10870547211063641>

University of Virginia. Examining the Impact of COVID-19 on the Identification of At-Risk Students: Fall 2021 Literacy Screening Findings. *Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) Report*. UVA School of Education and Human Development. https://pals.virginia.edu/sites/g/files/jsddwu1006/files/legacy-pdfs/PALS_StateReport_Fall_2021.pdf

McKinsey & Company. COVID-19 and Education: The Lingering Effects of Unfinished Learning. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/covid-19-and-education-the-lingering-effects-of-unfinished-learning>

Shannon Hayes, MPA. Learning Opportunities: Understanding Scores from ACT's Assessment Suite During the COVID-19 Pandemic. ACT, Inc. July 2021. <https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/2021/Learning-Opportunities-Understanding-Scores-Assessment-Pandemic-Accessible.pdf>

FUN YOUTUBE LEARNING CHANNELS

MathAntics | <https://www.youtube.com/user/mathantics/videos?app=desktop>

Jack Hartman's Kids Music Channel | https://www.youtube.com/playlist?app=desktop&list=PLQK2XiUY9C2gXua_3AB_n149hpPVq01y

Arcademics | <https://www.arcademics.com/>

Starfall | <http://starfall.com/>

IXL | <https://www.ixl.com/>

