

## *Keep Learning Alive Over the Summer*

Even though the school doors may be closed for the summer, kid's minds are always open to learning. Summertime is a great time for learning. Parents can not only help their kids keep their learning gains from the past year, but also help them get a jump start on the year ahead.

Now, you are probably hesitating as you imagine the cries of protest coming from your child, "Aw, but it's summer vacation! I do not want to do schoolwork now!" But wait-summertime learning doesn't necessarily have to be dry and boring. There are many fun and interactive museums and historical sites all around Massachusetts (and here on the island) that you can visit with your child. Many of them relate to topics that your child will study in school.

*Parents' Place, "Bulletin", Massachusetts Parent Information & Resource Center, Volume 11, Number 3*

## *The Island's Libraries are a Great Summer Resource*

Get information on their **summer literacy programs!**

- The Aquinnah Public Library – 508.645.2314
- The Chilmark Public Library - 508.645.3360
- The Edgartown Public Library – 508.627.4221
- The Oak Bluffs Public Library – 508.693.9433
- The Vineyard Haven Public Library – 508.696.4210
- The West Tisbury Public Library – 508.693.3366

## *Science in the Summer*

Summer is the perfect time to foster children's natural curiosity about the world around them. You don't have to know the answers, be a rocket scientist, or even be "good" at science yourself to encourage a love of science. Here are some tips to guide you in sparking your child's interest in science:

1) **Your attitude sets the stage for learning.** Curiosity, excitement, joy—these powerful emotions influence learning. Parents' attitudes can keep this natural

### Highlights

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\*Did You  
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2) **Science is for everyone!** Many of us grew up believing that only some people were good at science. Today, we know that kids' beliefs about their abilities make a huge difference in their success. Science is really about looking at the world as a problem-solver. It means being willing to grapple with not knowing the answers. Effort and hard work are what matter most. When you see your child wrestling with a problem, praise that effort.

3) **Help children explore the science around them.** Summer time is a great time to 'think science.' Play games and choose activities that help kids become familiar with scientific concepts and thinking. In addition to the ideas below, the U.S. Department of Education has a list of activities to do at home and in the community at [www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/science/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/science/index.html) (English and Spanish).

4) **Help children observe objects carefully.** Noticing details can help children learn to classify or group things. You can help by asking questions about an object's size, shape, color, how it moves, and how it might change over time. Encourage your child to record these observations in a journal.

5) **Encourage children to ask questions.** Curiosity is *the* essential trait of a scientist. Learning to ask questions, propose answers, and test them out are keys to learning in all academic disciplines.

6) **Listen to children's ideas and explanations.** Being listened to gives children confidence. Expressing their ideas helps them sort out what they know and don't know.

7) **Introduce your children to different environments.** Beaches, swamps, and parks, as well as kitchens and backyards are good places to discuss science. Look for situations that encourage playful exploration. Check out museums, libraries, zoos, aquariums. Libraries often have free or low cost tickets for these resources. Go on quests and nature walks. There are about 50 walking trails on the island.

8) **Seize the teachable moments.** Your child sees a beautiful flower and asks about it. Take the opportunity to discuss flowers and how they grow. You can follow up by planting bulbs or flower seeds in the garden or in the house and watching them grow. For older children, use current events in the news as opportunities to explore different topics.

9) **Provide hands-on experiences.** Give children the chance to do science. Science begins for children when they discover that they can learn about the world through their own actions, such as blowing soap bubbles, adding a block that causes a structure to collapse, or starting a compost pile. Talk about what is happening. Actions that require children to use their senses, such as planting and watching a seed germinate, give a strong framework for abstract thinking later in life.

10) **Use the media.** Many movies, television specials, magazines, newspapers, books, and computer programs/websites focus on science. Talk with your children about the science they see. Was it interesting to them, and why? Also, check out Web sites. An excellent place to start is the National Science Teachers Association Web site at [www.nsta.org/portals/parents/explore.aspx](http://www.nsta.org/portals/parents/explore.aspx).

*Parents' Place, "Bulletin", Massachusetts Parent Information & Resource Center, Volume 10, Number 3*

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### **Did you know...**

*...about two-thirds of the academic achievement gap can be explained by unequal access to learning opportunities over the summer? Parents and their communities are critical to keeping learning alive over the summer.*

***All kids deserve and need opportunities to continue learning over the summer!***

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