

# summer

## Tutoring a flexible to summer

### Camps combine learning with fun

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*Summer is a time of fun and relaxation for children, says the Vancouver director of TutorBright, a national company that provides tutor and mentoring services for kids of all ages.*

"While we all deserve a summer break, it's also important to consider the significant amount of time our children will be away from their studies and learning activities," says W.Y. Na. "An equivalence of one year for every five and a half."

Na added lengthy summer breaks have a different effect on students than that of shorter Christmas holidays and Spring Break.

"Research confirmed that summer 'brain drain' does not only stagnate learning, it actually causes learning loss," said Na.

He noted while not every student experiences this "summer slump" to a large degree, the majority will lose some math and language arts skills, which impacts their ability to absorb new material at the next grade level. Na said because teachers don't always have the luxury of revisiting the previous year's material, it's important students return to school with that knowledge intact. And that's where TutorBright can play an important part in the summer.

"The cumulative effect over the years can make a big difference in a child's prospects of getting into the school, university or discipline of their choice," said Na. "The brain is like a muscle, if you don't use it, you lose it and it will be difficult to restart."

But luckily, Na said, there are simple activities a parent can initiate to exercise a child's brain muscle without taking away the joys of summer, including 30 minutes of reading daily on a favourite topic and staying active in sports or the outdoors.

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Na said one-on-one tutoring is a great flexible way to allow students to still enjoy their holidays without enrolling them in summer school.

"Increasingly, parents are hiring tutors during the summer to help their children get ahead, not just to catch up, as admission to certain high schools or colleges becomes extremely competitive," said Na. "It is the survival of the fittest."

Meanwhile the founder and director of Vancouver's Pear Tree Education says diversity in summer camp programs helps stave off boredom and makes kids more well-rounded.

"You get a lot of sports camps in Vancouver, but you don't really get a lot of camps which integrate science and cooking within those courses," said Paul Romani. "We think there's no point in learning about sports if you don't know how to take care of your body."

Kids can join a number of various themed courses at Pear Tree this summer, which Romani says have a function as well as being fun — they're connected to school and also real life. The sports science camp is one example. Instead of simply playing beach volleyball or tennis, kids join the camp leaders in grocery shopping to buy ingredients for recipes they follow back at camp. They learn about plyometrics, or "jump training," and other forms of exercising. The kids also upload everything they do onto the

# camp-o-rama

## alternative school

camp's blog to learn those skills, too. Romani said the range in course content allows campers to have fun while learning, and it's more realistic for them to be doing different things.

"You can certainly play sports and have fun but there needs to be some kind of purpose to it for us. And not just for us, but also for the kids as well," said Romani. "The whole point is to become a well-rounded person. And for kids to realize that they're not just good at one thing, they're capable of doing a variety of different things well."

Kids from ages five to 14 can sign up for as few or as many week-long classes at Pear Tree as they like. The courses range in diversity from art to graphic novels to magic to marine biology.

Vancouver school teachers run all the courses at Pear Tree, so they're trained to help kids handle their emotions, develop their personalities and build confidence, Romani said.

The camps' theme content is all based on children's ages, so that kids get the kind of

learning that is right for their age group, said Romani. Children who are 10 understand things like cooking on a different level than teenagers, he noted.

A new course this year is the Pear-Formers course for 10 to 14-year-olds, which focuses on the performing arts, including the study of drama scripts and learning about the technology involved in filming. Romani noted it's not good for the kids or educators to always be running the same kind of activities.

"If you're constantly doing the same thing all the time, where is the learning on your part?" he said.

Summer day camps at Pear Tree run for nine weeks starting July 2 and finishing Aug. 28. Visit [pear-tree.ca](http://pear-tree.ca) for more information.

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