

# Summer Tutoring

## [Catching Up- Ladue News](#)

Thursday, April 7, 2011 11:06 PM CDT

There's a reason why things become cliché: Most of the time, they're true. The old saying, *If you don't use it, you lose it*, is particularly apt when it comes to math and reading skills. Unfortunately, the summer break gives students ample opportunity to lose many of their skills, particularly in subjects where they struggle.



Enter summer tutoring. "If you don't practice, it all goes away," says psychotherapist Russell Hyken, an educational diagnostician and therapeutic placement specialist with educational + psychotherapy services. "If you struggle, to take a math enrichment class over the summer is a great idea. Even a two-week review to keep things fresh keeps those skills alive." Hyken also stresses the importance of reading. "Reading is the core of every class. It's vital to keep that skill up to snuff, even if it's pleasure reading." Kids are more likely to push slightly beyond their current skill level when they're enjoying the content, he adds.

A tutoring schedule largely depends upon the individual student's needs and goals, says Elizabeth Gill, owner of Just Learn, a tutoring center in Warson Woods. For students who need to recover credits, a summer course could be two hours a day for six weeks; for others it might be an hour a week in a classroom or one-on-one setting, she says. When families plan vacations, it's usually possible to work around that, and Gill often suggests relatively small assignments that the student can work on throughout the trip. "I think it takes the stress off when they walk into the classroom in the fall and they remember things," she says. "They start off feeling better about themselves."

Gill says that self-esteem is a big part of the reason that a lot of parents and students seek tutoring. "One of our big goals for each student is to improve their self-esteem academically," she says. "We want to give them the tools to get out on their own and become more independent in their learning--that's a great thing to get out of it."

School is a big part of life for kids and teenagers, so it's no surprise that how they perform plays a significant role in their self esteem. "If you're bringing home As and Bs, you're a happy kid," Hyken says. "If you're bringing home Cs, Ds and Fs, then life becomes more difficult in general. Arguing about basics like curfew, activities and a clean room gets amplified when kids aren't doing well in school," he adds. "If they're making As, parents tend to overlook those things, but when grades aren't as good they look at things more deeply."

Hyken says that a lot of students have minor learning disabilities--what he calls 'cracks' in the learning

profile--and those problems follow them around throughout the day. Even students who have a 'superior/average crack' can face a lot of frustration. These kids have above average performance in some areas--perhaps they've been attending private school or taking honors classes--but they struggle in reading, math or another discipline. "They don't know what to do because they think it's just them, but a few basic strategies and a little extra time can put them on the right track."

Summer also is a good time for incoming seniors to study for a second shot at the ACT or SAT, Gill says. "If they're taking it in September or October of their senior year, their goal is to increase their score," she says. Just Learn offers a two-day, five-hour math course to prepare students for the ACT. "It's like studying for a final exam," she notes. "We go through all the concepts from pre-algebra to trigonometry--every concept you might see on the ACT." The review is geared toward the critical thinking that is required on the test rather than rote memorization, she says. "If you understand where it's coming from, you don't have to memorize the formula."