

## What Parents Need to Know About Summer Enrichment Camps

By Bobbi DePorter

Every year, parents are faced with the same question: how to make the summer both fun and constructive for their kids. More families are turning to summer enrichment programs as a way of adding value to the summer camp experience.

But not all summer enrichment camps are created equal. Here are some points to consider when evaluating programs for your son or daughter for this summer.

### **Does the area of enrichment have any practical application to your child's academic future?**

Several camps position themselves as “enrichment programs” when, in reality, they are glorified and expensive vacations for the students who attend. Do the kids like these camps? You bet. But before signing up, take a good look at the program's schedule of activities. Close inspection may reveal that there's far more downtime and unstructured free time than there is quality enrichment.

There's nothing wrong with indulging your son or daughter in one of these programs, some of which are held in Europe, on cruise ships and in tropical locations. Just know that there may be little or no lasting value to the student or the parents in this investment.

### **What kind of training and expertise does the staff possess?**

If a summer program bills itself as providing new skills to participants, then make a point to learn about the background of the staff who will teach these skills. Are the program leaders teachers themselves or experts in a particular field? Also, inquire as to the training they receive. Many summer programs scramble at the last minute to hire summer staff and, as a result, the experience and training of some staff members may be lacking.

### **Is there a balance between learning and fun?**

The last thing a student needs in summer is more school. A good summer enrichment program gives students the feeling that they're at camp, not back at school. While some programs try to combine learning and fun by giving the campers adequate free time, the best camps incorporate fun right into the learning. When a student enjoys the learning process, the brain does a better job of assimilating and retaining the new information.

### **In what ways can a program enrich a student's life?**

When most people hear “summer enrichment” they think of academic enrichment. Clearly, when students are able to acquire new skills in such areas as creative writing, reading comprehension, problem solving and critical thinking, they benefit. But if a camp offers them growth in life skills areas that build their confidence, motivation and self-esteem, as well as their communication and leadership skills, then you've found a summer enrichment program that can help a student grow in school and in life.

### **What's a good length of time for a summer enrichment camp?**

There is no set length that is best. Students do benefit from some downtime in the summer, so a program that runs three or more weeks may be excessive and expensive. On the other hand, camps that last just a few days will have limited value. Similarly, day camps don't have the same impact as residential enrichment camps, where students get to stay on-site for the duration of the program. Teens, in particular, are nocturnal. Some of the best learning can come in the evening sessions of summer programs. Look for enrichment camps held on college campuses. Middle school and high school students enjoy the experience of living in college dorms for a week or more. It can even prove to be inspirational as they begin to think about college.

In summary, sending your son or daughter to the right summer enrichment program can pay long-term dividends for the entire family. Newly acquired academic skills, increased motivation or added confidence can translate into better grades, as well as new academic and personal interests. In turn, this growth can lead to better colleges, college scholarships and rewarding careers.

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**About the Author:**

Bobbi DePorter, teen motivation and accelerated learning expert, has changed the lives of over five million kids through her SuperCamp and Quantum Learning school programs. SuperCamp is a learning and life skills summer program with more than 66,000 graduates in the U.S., Europe, Asia and Latin America. Quantum Learning is an accelerated learning-based teaching and learning methodology that has helped improve thousands of schools and districts across the nation. Bobbi is the author of more than a dozen books, including *The Seven Biggest Teen Problems and how to turn them into Strengths (An Insider's Look at What Works with Teens)*. For more information, visit <http://www.SuperCamp.com> and <http://www.QLN.com>. Contact Bobbi at [bdeporter@qln.com](mailto:bdeporter@qln.com).