

# PREPARING FOR SEPTEMBER

**A GUIDE FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS**



# CAROLYN'S GREETING

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These are unprecedented times and the crisis surrounding Covid has certainly changed the way children learn. As a professional, I have had to change the way that we deliver services. We had to move to online tutoring and by offering personalized activities and resources available online.

No one can be sure of what September holds. I want to make sure all children have the opportunity to return to the class feeling confident.

I am also aware that it is harder than ever before for parents to teach their own children at home. That's why I've written another guidebook-that you can also access for free.

Traditionally, most parents use summer as a break. However, I am getting so many phone calls from parents who feel that after months of limited learning, they have to do something.

This guidebook is designed to help you support your child emotionally, stimulate them academically through easy to replicate activities, and to help you help your child become an enthusiastic learner.

As the owner of a tutor company, I believe strongly in one to one education. Your children will grow because of the time you spend with them learning.

*Carolyn Rankin*  
Carolyn Rankin BA BEd OCT  
Founder of Rankin Educational Services

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There isn't a season for learning.  
Learning is a year long and a life long  
pursuit.



## To Get Where You Want to Go: **You Need to Know Where You're Starting**

### *Assessment is Key*

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When I start working with a student, the first thing I need to know is what they can already do.

To push a child to do work, especially during the summer, it is key to make sure that the initial assignments aren't too easy or too difficult.

As a teacher/tutor, I want to know the grade levels of their reading, their ability to write based on instructions and how your child will handle math questions they don't know how to answer.

I use a variety of tools from my own assessments, reading psych eds, lengthy follow ups with the parents and teachers and, of course, my own experience. The work I do as a tutor is very specialized, and though

*I wouldn't suggest doing it the way I do, there are easy ways of getting a good idea of where to begin. Instead of having your children write tests (which would be like pulling teeth in the summer), there are a variety of ways of getting the information you need.* boost the morale of all working on the project.

## Ways to Assess Your Child



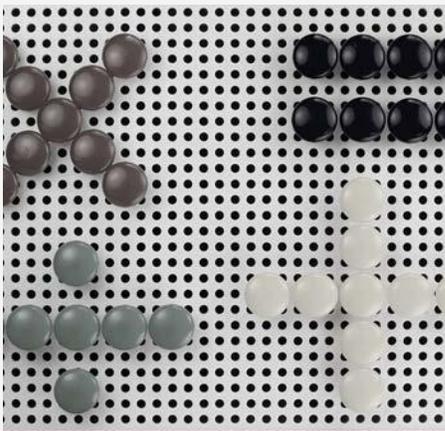
### **REPORT CARD**

Report Cards are the easiest way to determine which areas need to be worked on. I mainly focus on the Learning Skills and Comments. The grades are carefully considered but are not always able to capture the complexity of learning. If you have questions after reading the report card, contact the teacher.



### **GET YOUR CHILD TO READ TO YOU**

I have motivated children into doing this by promising them a new book as long as they can prove they can read it. They should only make 5 mistakes by the end of the page — The Five Finger rule.



### **MATH GAMES**

I use an app called Math Workout. This app tests the children's ability to answer basic math questions. This will give you a good idea whether or not your child knows their math facts and how much time you should spend practicing this skill. Being successful in the later math grades is dependent on your child knowing their math facts.



### **ASK YOUR CHILD**

Oftentimes, children know what they want to focus on and have their own goals. If you want your child to go along with summer learning, it is essential that they are able to have some input on their goals.



Parents who take time to learn  
with their child,  
give their child the greatest gift:  
**a love of learning.**

# SETTING GOALS



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**Just practicing without any sense of why you're practicing is the easiest way to get a child to resent the practice.**

Set goals together, write them down and be prepared to praise any movement your child makes towards these goals. Make Summer Goals and then Weekly Goals.

Instead of having math improvement as a goal, a better goal, for example, would be to “answer 50 multiplication questions in 4 minutes.”

Then, as a parent you can put your energy in to helping with that goal.

Instead of “read more”, I would make the goal “read 30 minutes per day” and have them explain what they read. This way both you and your child can be successful.

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**Remember: any progress is progress. If your child just completes the work – even if they struggle, that is success.**



# BUILDING SKILLS

What you can do and how to do it

TOPIC	DETAILS
<b>Math:</b> Facts Challenge	Set a timed goal each week that is doable and just a bit harder than the week before. Set a reward for meeting the goal.
<b>Math:</b> Grocery Game	When you go grocery shopping have everyone guess how much the groceries are going to cost. Teach them about rounding numbers in the store by telling them the store price and then round it to the nearest dollar. Then have everyone guess again before checking out.
<b>Reading</b> Subtitles on Videos	This is an easy one. Subtitles can improve your child's ability to read and connect sounds and visual spelling of the words. Now your child can have screen time without guilt!



# BUILDING SKILLS

continued

## What you can do and how to do it

TOPIC	DETAIL
Reading Book Club	Choose a book with your child. Read some of it together and have your child read some of it independently. All you need to do is talk about the book.
Writing Daily Journal	Family journal time at the end of the day is a great way to keep your child writing. You can either share or keep them private. By modelling writing, you make your child more willing to write.
Writing Letters to Family	This is a simple one. Have your children write out a letter to a family member or close friend. Give them the expectation, e.g.: "It needs to have three sentences and you should tell them something you are excited to do with them when you see them next."



# BUILDING SKILLS

continued

## What you can do and how to do it

TOPIC	DETAIL
<b>Learning Skills</b> Look Up Answers	If your kids are typically curious, they probably ask you a lot of questions about a lot of things. Instead of explaining the answer, have them look it up.
<b>Learning Skills</b> Information Race	Ask your kids a question and see who can find an answer quickest. An example might be, "how many legs does a tick have?"
<b>Learning Skills</b> Model Learning <small>GRAND TOTAL</small>	Wonder things aloud, such as "How many people live in Florida?" If you are talking about Florida. Look it up together and talk to your child about what words you typed into Google.

# ROADBLOCKS

Having a successful summer is dependent on avoiding key roadblocks

01

## READING MATERIALS THAT ARE TOO DIFFICULT

If your child is a struggling reader, use tools to help keep their love of reading alive. Audiobooks are a great way to support a reader. Another tool is to watch a movie/tv show prior to reading the book. The prior knowledge and provided visualizations can help them understand a novel they have chosen.

02

## NOT ENOUGH POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Your child needs A LOT of positive reinforcement to be successful. They need a compliment to get going, praise to keep going and verbal rewards once they've finished. It may seem like too much but learning is hard and makes someone vulnerable. It doesn't have to be an over the top compliment, just a simple "good job" is all that is required.

03

## COMPARING CHILDREN

Nothing turns a child off from learning more than when they are compared unfavourably to another child, whether it be a sibling or friend. Each child is different and you should focus on what makes them special and different. "Noah is always a hard worker but Bob is more focused on video games." This is an exact quote from Noah and Bob's mom (except with names changed). Not surprisingly, Bob performed in the exact way his mom expected. Instead, I would have preferred if she said: "Noah always does his school work, and Bob is so creative and makes his own comic books."

# ROADBLOCKS

Having a successful summer is dependent on avoiding key roadblocks

04

## INCONSISTENCY

Inconsistent practice will make your child frustrated and shut down. They won't see the progress and it will feel like there is no point to working hard. I know summers are busy and that's why I suggest having a set schedule and sticking to it like you would any other activity. However, the more you do it, the more children will be willing to do it.

05

## HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Which leads to the next point. Children always perform to the level you believe they can. If you set low expectations for their output or focus, that's what you'll get. Even if you are struggling with how you feel about your child's learning, aloud you need to speak about your child positively. Sometimes, when you're on the phone with a friend you might be too honest and if your child hears it will impact them negatively.

06

## UNCLEAR INSTRUCTIONS

Children aren't great at inferencing. When you ask your child to do something you need to be clear and explicit. I always think written instructions work best (for children who are readers). If your child struggles with focus, give all the instructions at once, but reinforce each instruction until it's completed. For example, "read the article, answer the questions, then edit." While the child is reading, I will keep prompting until they're done. Then help them transition to answering the questions.

By avoiding roadblocks, you can avoid frustration, anxiety and stress

# DEALING WITH ANXIETY

## NOT EATING HEALTHY OR EXERCISING

The number one suggestion I give families dealing with anxiety is to make sure they child is eating well and exercising daily. Kids with anxiety should exercise prior to doing any learning.

## MODEL STRESS RELIEF

Self care for parents is essential. When you're dealing with your stress, talk about it with your kids. "I'm going to make a to-do list because I'm feeling overwhelmed," or "I am going to talk to my friend Raven because I need some support."

Develop a routine and use a visual schedule so that your children know what to anticipate in their day. You can read some of my past blogs on this issue.

## ROUTINE IS HELPFUL

Develop a routine and use a visual schedule so that your children know what to anticipate in their day. You can read some of my past blogs on this issue.

## REDUCE SCREEN TIME

There's nothing wrong with screen time inherently. However, the problem might be that leaving screen time behind can lead to anxiety. The longer they play without breaks the harder it is to leave it behind. Also, social media can lead to anxiety and a feeling that, as a child, they always have to be available to their friends.



# FOR MORE INFORMATION ON LEARNING AT HOME

CHECK OUT MY OTHER  
GUIDEBOOK:

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## SUCCESSFUL AT HOME LEARNING

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**YOUR CHILD  
WILL BENEFIT  
FROM YOUR  
HARD WORK**

*Thank you for helping your child*

CAROLYN RANKIN

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