

Some ABCs

By RON INOUE

in education

Editor's Note: Should you have any questions or suggestions for this or a future "ABCs" article, please let the author know by writing him at the Center for Cross-Cultural Studies, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701 or by calling (907)479-7185.

Summertime provides parents with an opportunity to reinforce some of the basic reading and mathematical skills their children have acquired during the school year. While most youngsters resist being formally taught anything during the summer, parents can reinforce certain skills like reading by suggesting related summer activities for their children.

Many youngsters will be searching for things to do after the novelty of summer vacation ends. A search of the book shelves of your local library, store, and your home will yield many do-it-yourself books which parents may suggest for reading to their children. Books requiring physical activity may be particularly interesting to children, activities such as growing a garden, taking care of pets, building models, playing "Dungeons and Dragons," or purchasing and maintaining a bicycle.

Using the latter as an example, a parent could relate many reading and computational skills to a youngster's research, purchase, maintenance and use of a bicycle. The young reader could review catalogs to learn of the types of bicycles available and the accessories which might be necessary for its intended use. Consumer guides and magazines could be consulted to check for safety features of the various models and for dollar value. Payment, including shipping costs, could provide an opportunity for the youngster to earn the money to pay for the bicycle, learn about checking accounts, credit card purchases, money orders, and general money management.

Once the purchase arrives, the youngster could use reading skills to assemble the bicycle. Instructions and schematic drawings would need to be consulted as would be maintenance and repair manuals and certificates of warranty. Subscription to a bicycling magazine might be an additional way of reinforcing reading as these types of magazines are generally of high interest and expose the readers to many aspects of bicycling—touring, racing, etc.

This example illustrates one way in which a parent might encourage youngsters to use their reading and mathematical skills and perhaps even motivate reluctant learners to want to learn to read. It is also important to parents to recognize that youngsters follow the examples of their elders. If you actively use your reading and math skills as a part of your daily activities, your youngsters will probably follow suit.

As a parent you might consider activities to recommend when your youngsters begin complaining about having nothing to do. Fun, activity-related readings for your youngsters probably already exist on the book shelves of your home, your local library, or local store. With some forethought you can help your youngsters have a fun and "educational" summer.