Instructor (that are just plain fun) etc.)

Include obstacles like testing dents through the school year; board game that takes the students three spaces through the year. From special ways to say goodbye to fun activities to share with parents, here are over 50 ideas to keep the learning going.

**Last-day activities that bring it home**

These activities will help your students reminisce, celebrate fond memories, and bring closure to your class. They can be adjusted for any grade level.

- **Sign it:** Create an autograph book for each student. On the last day of school, pass around the books for each student to sign.
- **Record-keeping:** Create a class book of records. Help the class come up with categories, and assign the records (most pairs of shoes, most freckles, most creative, etc.). Every student should have one.
- **Play school:** Create a class board game that takes the students through the school year: include obstacles like testing (You’re too busy and focused to move: Skip one turn,) and field trips (You’re on the roller coaster at Six Flags. Move ahead three spaces).
- **Launch it:** Clean out your classroom and give students memories by raffling off items in the classroom. Start with smaller items (such as pencils) and work your way up (class art projects, etc.).
- **Dear next year:** Have students write a letter to next year’s class. Ask them to tell the incoming class what they liked and give the incoming students advice.
- **Class-time line:** Create a time line of the year together. Post butcher paper around the room and mark off months and important dates. Have the students walk around and fill in events that they remember well.
- **Graph it:** Calculate the amount of time you, as a class, have spent in reading, math, gym, library, lunch, recess, and other planned activities. Then create a graph of how you spent your school year.

Starting off right

Even though you’re raging for summer vacation, students—especially young students and those with disabilities—may have a hard time moving from the structured school year to full-time vacation. It’s important for teachers to recognize that many children with disabilities have difficulty transitioning,” says Dr. George Giuliani, president of the National Association of Parents in Special Education and director of the Graduate Program in Special Education at Hofstra University. The best thing teachers can do is sit down with parents to discuss summer. “Have a plan,” says Giuliani. “Discuss the options. What will the child do—take time off? Go to summer school? Go to camp?”

In the classroom, don’t have one plan for all students. “Every child is different,” says Giuliani. “Mid-May through June, teachers should have sessions to discuss recreation. Talk about what the students want to do during summer vacation and how they’re going to do it. Have them set goals.”

**Summer math activities**

Help students maintain their math skills and keep them thinking in numbers all summer long.

- **For Grades K–3:**
  - **Shopaholic:** What can you buy for $5 at the corner store? From the ice cream truck? In a hardware store? At the beach?
  - **Change it up:** Start collecting change in a jar on the first day of summer. On the last day, estimate your change, count it, and plan a special purchase.
  - **Summer patterns:** Create patterns using summer items (popsicle sticks, shells, flowers). Or, draw patterns in the sand or dirt using a stick or your hands. See how long you can carry out your pattern—along the length of the sandbox, or across the grass.
  - **Napkin fractions:** Fold paper towels or napkins into large and small fractions, from one-half to 1/16. Use markers to label and decorate the different fractions.
  - **Design hunt:** Keep an eye out for shapes, patterns, and designs when you’re out and about. You never know what you’ll find in the architecture at the airport, the shopping mall, or even the grocery store.

- **For Grades 4–8:**
  - **Record-breakers:** Use a stopwatch to time yourself running, roller blading, swimming, or biking. Then try to beat your time. Be sure to keep the distance you’re moving the same for each trial. Graph the results. (You may need a partner for this.)
  - **Where will you be?** Using a map, calculate where you will you be if you travel 20, 50, or 1,000 miles from home.
  - **How many ways?** As you’re exploring your neighborhood during the summer, how many routes can you take to the school, the grocery store, the mall, or your friend’s house? What’s the catch? No backtracking and you must take a new route each time.
  - **Let’s eat:** Prepare a meal or dish for the family. Before you go to the supermarket, find a recipe, write what you need and how much. At the supermarket, choose the best-priced option.

**Summer reading activities**

These ideas will keep kids engaged in reading, writing, and thinking creatively even on the hottest days.

- **Water writer:** Using a pail of water and a brush, have kids write words on the blacktop or sidewalk.
- **Sell summer:** Tell kids, Try a new product or activity and write about it. How would you describe it? Would you recommend it? Create an advertisement to sell it to others.
- **Plan a trip:** Have kids use the Internet, travel guidebooks, brochures, and maps to plan a dream day, weekend, week, or month-long trip.
- **Summer sleuth:** Have kids follow a story in a newspaper during the summer, or investigate a local story (e.g., an upcoming fair). Tell kids: Write about the event as it unfolds so that you have it documented from start to finish.

- **Play it:** Take an adventure book with a clear plot (The Phantom Tollbooth, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, etc.) and invent a board game based on it.
- **Comic strip:** Write a comic strip about a fictional character or yourself. See how long you can keep the strip going. Read classic comics for inspiration.

**Summer science fun**

Summer is the perfect time for children to explore their extracurricular interests, like science. Here are some activities that will have children hypothesizing all the way to September.

- **Map the weather:** Keep a running log of the weather. Include temperature, humidity, clouds, precipitation.
Island Left

Win the weather. How will it be tomorrow? Wind, air pressure. Can you predict what the weather will be tomorrow? Could you organize, categorize, and label. Present rocks, shells, or other natural objects to organize, categorize, and label. Present your own natural history museum.

Hot-weather inventor: Design an invention that you can use during summer. Some ideas: sunglasses that change color from red to yellow to blue, or a new beach toy.

Answer a question: How long does it take an ice cube to melt outside in the summer heat? In the refrigerator? Hot-weather inventor: In an air conditioned room?

Float or sink: In a pool or the bathtub, hypothesize which items (soap, dry sock, bottle of shampoo, rock, etc.) will float or sink. Test your hypotheses.

Design an invention that you can use during summer. Some ideas: sunglasses that change color from red to yellow to blue, or a new beach toy.

Great books on the big screen

These new movie releases of favorite children’s titles will keep you entertained all summer long.

Nancy Drew by Carolyn Keene. The ever-perky, resourceful young detective stumbles across a long-unsolved crime.

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix by J.K. Rowling. Harry returns for a fifth year at Hogwarts and faces a nasty new adversary in Dolores Umbridge, the new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher.

And at your video store:

Bridge to Terabithia by Katherine Paterson. It tells the classic story of how two friends build their own magical world, and was recently rereleased.

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe by C. S. Lewis. This live-action and computer-enhanced version takes the classic story to a new level.

Keep the kids busy with activities that keep the kids busy and build reading and math skills.

For kids on the bus or families on vacation, put those long rides to good use with activities that keep the kids busy and build reading and math skills.

For grades K–3:

Car bingo: Create a car bingo card with words, shapes, colors, and items that children will likely see during a trip (stop signs, billboards, railroad signs, etc.) to reinforce reading skills, math, and sight words.

The number game: Look out the window and call out when you see one, two, three, or four of something, and so on.

The alphabet game: One person chooses the right side of the road, and the other chooses the left. Call out objects that you see in alphabetical order (you can use a sign only for one letter). The first person to get to the letter z wins.

For grades 4–8:

Capital game: Take note of each license plate you see, not by state but by state capital. The first to correctly identify 10 state capitals wins.

Cow game: One person takes the right side of the road, the other takes the left. Keep count of all the cows you see. You earn one point for each cow. When you see a cemetery out of your side of the road, you lose all your points.

Animals galore: Decide on a number of points for each animal that you see (cow = 1 point, horse = 1 point, pig = 2 points, etc.). As you drive, add up the points. (Continued on page 68).
points. Play until one person gets 10
points, or for a set time.

Math with license plates: Use the
numbers on license plates to practice
addition, subtraction, multiplication,
and number patterns and see just how
creative kids can get!

Be honest, you’re as excited about sum-
er as the students are. Here are some
ways to make the most of it.

• Start a new hobby.
  Take an art, music, or language class.

Write a blog or go retro—make your own
cards or stationery using rubber stamps
and ink. Take up a new form of exercise.

• Read a good book. So many wonderful
titles, so little time. Here are a few to try:
The Freedom Writers Diary, by Zlata
Filipovic and the Freedom Writers. The
story of a first-year teacher who intro-
duces her students to firsthand historical
accounts and uncovers her students’
personal histories and creativity in the
process. Teach Like Your Hair’s on Fire:
The Methods and Madness Inside Room
56, by Rafe Esquith. The story of a
teacher’s experience at a central Los
Angeles elementary school under NCLB
and the bureaucracy of American educa-
tion. Along with his story, the book pro-
vides teaching ideas and strategies. Up
the Down Staircase, by Bel Kaufman.
Revisit this classic to see just how much
and how little have changed in education.

• Visit as many museums as you can.
  Without a doubt, it will lead to new
teaching ideas. And you never know, it
  might be a great place for a field trip
  next year!

• Apply for a teacher award. Some
  national prizes to dream about: The
  American Stars of Teaching Award from
  the Department of Education
  (www.t2tweb.us/AmStar/About.asp); the
  Association for Supervision and
  Curriculum Development Award gives
  out the Young Educator of the Year
  award annually for teachers younger than
  40 (www.ascd.org); ING Unsung Heroes
  gives out over 100 grants and awards
  each year (www.ing-usa.com); and the
  National Education Association for
  Teaching Excellence gives out an annual
  award for public educators
  (www.neafoundation.org). Search for
  more at www.teacherscount.org.

• Mentor a soon-to-be first-year
  teacher. Find one through an alternative
  teacher-certification program in your
  area. Visit The New Teacher Project at
  www.tntp.org for a list of school districts
  that they work with around the country.

• Don’t forget about the hammock.
  Relax and read books you love, dig in
  the garden, and above all—sleep in!

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