

Summer ²⁰¹⁶ Camps

Education & Activities



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CENTRE VIEW

Summer Camps Education & Activities

Camps Combine Education and Fun

Local camps help students maintain school skills in a relaxed environment.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

One summer Ana Lado created a summer camp activity for students at her neighborhood pool. The Marymount professor set up a picnic area, and included activities and books. Her plan was to engage the students and give them the opportunity to read and build reading skills while still enjoying fun activities traditionally associated with summer.

"I got six kids who were older to read to six kindergartners. I chose kids who had potential, but who were at risk," said Ana Lado, Ph.D., professor of Education at



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Kara Dedon, a Marymount University graduate student, will be the director of the school's camp.

Marymount University in Arlington. "Reading with a kindergartner or first grader for 15 minutes got the students reading and built their confidence."

This summer Lado and her colleagues at Marymount are offering "3E: Explore, Enrich, Enjoy," one of several area camps with an academic component. Their goal is to enable students to brush up on, gain or maintain academic skills in a relaxed environment.

Marymount's 3E camp enables campers to choose what they focus on at camp. In addition to traditional camp activities, the camp will include academic projects like exploring science through nature and electronic gadgets, studying math by making boats, language arts by writing their own stories and fine arts by creating plays and cartoons.

For those who want an in-depth review of a school subject and the chance to participate in hands-on summer camp activities, academic camps fill both needs.

"[Academic camps] supplement what students are getting during the school year and allow them to experience subjects and topics that they're not getting in public school," said Dan Stalcup, Associate Director for Fairfax Collegiate, a Herndon-based organization that offers summer programs for students entering third through ninth grade.

Programs at Fairfax Collegiate run the gamut from filmmaking and robotics to engineering and classic children's literature. For example, third and fourth grade students can learn to craft their own short stories during a Story Writing course in Alexandria, Chantilly and Ashburn.

Campers who enjoy reading and want to delve into award-winning novels by authors

such as Madeleine Engle or Rebecca Stead can take "Reading Newbury Winners" with sessions in Chantilly, Ashburn, Fairfax, McLean and Reston. Students can spend two weeks reading books that have been awarded the Newbery Medal for excellence in literature for children.

Fifth and sixth graders who love math and want to hone their analytical and logical thinking skills can spend their time engaging in chess, Stratego and

other mind-bending activities in the "Brain Games" camp, which will be offered in Chantilly, Reston, Herndon, McLean, Alexandria and Oakton.

Future detectives might enjoy taking a forensic science class in Alexandria, Chantilly, Herndon, Ashburn, Falls Church and McLean. "Students learn about the science in criminal justice, like blood-typing and fingerprinting by actually doing the experiments and seeing them in action," said Stalcup.

"Students get a lot of personal attention because the classes are small, and the instructors either have or are pursuing a degree in the topic they're teaching," said Stalcup. "They're all very passionate about the subject they're teaching."

Academic camps might be a good fit for students who are curious about a particular area of study. "Many parents want something that is both fun and educational, meaning it will help their child keep [busy] and develop skills needed during the school year," said Tina M. Morris, Child Development Programs Consultant at George Mason University. "I think both parents and educators realize that summer vacation does not have to be a break from learning."

The decision to send a child to a camp

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that focuses on reading, science, math or another school subject instead of a purely recreational camp is a personal one, says Lado. "There are some kids who can visit their grandparents in Maine all summer and they come back to school in the fall and pick up where they left off," she said. "Then there are other kids who can't pick up easily. Those are the kids who would benefit from an academic program."

Students appreciate the ability to focus on one subject in a relaxed atmosphere in an academic camp. "If kids are taking a subject at a fast-clip pace, but they don't do well, they miss key skills. The next year they move to a higher level class, but the same problem still exists," said Lado. "When they take a week or two during the summer and immerse themselves in a subject, they go stronger into the next school year. In camp, it's the only thing they're doing academically and they can concentrate on it."

For example, The Madeira School in McLean is offering summer programs in Trigonometry and Geometry. "These courses are intended for advancement into higher level math classes, and based on our classes taught during the academic year," said Ashley Smith, Associate Director of Communications at Madeira. "A student who is interested in math and wishes to advance to higher levels will benefit, as well as students who need a refresher or a better understanding before moving ahead."

When choosing an academic camp, parents should look for camps that are not all work and no play. "I want to make sure it has a healthy balance of recreational and educational enrichment activities," said Morris. "If the campers are enjoying the activities and the counselors are skilled, the program should, as a natural effect, promote the building of positive relationships with their peers and their counselors."



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From Colonial History to Future Entrepreneurs

Campers can explore diverse interests in specialty summer camps.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

This summer dozens of elementary school-aged children will travel back in time to the Colonial Era where, among other things, they'll learn to spin cotton into cloth for garments.

Learning how to run a lemonade stand like a Fortune 500 company and use the profits to invest in the stock market will be on the agenda for other local children. Both activities are offered by local specialty camps aimed at giving children opportunities to explore their interests in a way that they cannot during the school year.



PHOTO COURTESY OF VISIT FAIRFAX

Camp Washington at Mount Vernon gives campers a glimpse of early American life.



“During the school year, there is so much emphasis on testing that the creative and collaborative nature of children gets lost.”

— Carolyn Lorente, Ph.D.

“I think summer camps are a great way to promote thriving if it is done right,” said Carolyn Lorente, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology at Northern Virginia Community College in Alexandria and a camp consultant. “During the school year, there is so much emphasis on testing that the creative and collaborative nature of children gets lost. A great camp can create space for our children to flourish.”

SPECIALTY CAMPS offer young campers a chance to focus on a specific area of interest such as cooking, financial literacy and even gaming.

For example, Spark Business Academy, a Northern Virginia based organization that teaches financial literacy to young students, is offering its Future Millionaires Camp in Arlington. Students learn about money concepts that range from setting up a lemonade stand that makes a profit to understanding the stock market.

“The name is definitely tongue in cheek,” said Chuchi Arevalo, the organization’s founder. “We teach personal finance, leadership and innova-

tion. We give them life skills that they aren’t learning in school and promote financial literacy that is fun even for students in first and second grade.”

RISING FIFTH- and sixth-grade students will get a chance to take a trip back in time this summer at Mount Vernon’s Camp Washington. During each of the three one-week sessions, campers explore the history of George Washington’s estate and learn about his legacy.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MASON GAME & TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY

Students in the Mason Game & Technology Academy Summer Camp will be offered classes in Game Design, Creation and Entrepreneurship, Minecraft and Cyber Defense.

From farming and spinning fibers into cloth to making ice cream and meeting the estate’s heritage breed animals, hands-on activities will give campers a glimpse of many aspects of early American life at Mount Vernon.

“The summer camp is designed to help engage students while having fun,” said Melissa Wood, spokeswoman for Mount Vernon. “[It] gives kids the opportunity to go behind the scenes and experience history in their own backyard.”

For More Information

Game and Technology Summer Camps

potomacacademy.gmu.edu/mgta/summer/

Future Millionaires Bootcamp/ Stock Market Acres

moneynewsforkids.com/

Camp Washington and more at Mount Vernon

www.mountvernon.org/plan-your-visit/calendar/events/camp-washington-summer-day-camp-at-mount-vernon/

YOUNG GAME DESIGN aficionados can spend the summer with Mason Game & Technology Academy’s (MGTA) camps. Students take classes such as Game Design, Creation and Entrepreneurship, Minecraft and Cyber Defense.

“We run our classes at Mason in Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William,” said Vera Lichtenberg, Director of the Mason Game & Technology Academy at George Mason University.

“We also do a great deal of community outreach to train teachers, engage underserved students, and generally, help students realize that Game Design is a STEM field that not only engages those who love technology, but also those on the artistic side: writers, music composers [and] designers.Ó

MGTA is part of the Mason Computer Game Design Program and the Community Outreach Youth Program for the Virginia Serious Game Institute.