

Exploring Summer Camps Options

By Desiree R. Lindbom-Cho

It is still springtime, but when it comes to scheduling summer activities, if your family is like mine, plans for summer have been underway since the winter holidays when we ran into friends and extended family who were eager to think ahead to warm weather. In anticipation of this summer, we have already booked two

short vacations, committed to having relatives visit from out of state, and signed up for swimming lessons. Somewhere between these trips and visits, my son expects to go to camp like “all” his friends did last year.

Summer camps for gifted students can be especially beneficial because of their unique learning needs (Olszewski-Kubili-

us, 2003). In fact, students enrolled in regular education classrooms may have learning needs that teachers are unable to address during the regular school year (Hertberg-Davis, 2009). Children of any age also benefit socially and academically from being around peers on their intellectual level (Kulik, 2003; Silverman, 2000). Thus, finding the right summer camp can appear difficult as the number of choices can seem overwhelming.

For gifted students, a number of camps with a focus on academics are available (see Resources list). NAGC also provides an online resource directory to help in identifying and selecting summer options. A simple Internet search yields numerous options, but parents should be aware of logistical differences such as timing and cost. For instance, consider the following:

- How long does the camp run from start to finish?



- Will my child stay overnight or is it a day camp?
- Where is the camp? How will my child get to and from camp?
- How much does it cost to attend the camp? Are there hidden fees such as providing a snack, bagged lunch, supplies, and/or other materials to participate? Is financial assistance or a scholarship available?
- What are the requirements for my child to attend the camp? What kind of documentation might I need to demonstrate his or her giftedness or other necessary skills? Are there minimum or maximum age limits to consider?

Although the above questions are important, parents should also consider the interests of their children. Children who are allowed to make choices about their learning are more likely to become lifelong learners (Falk, 2005), and camps exist for children interested in different languages, performing or visual arts, sciences, or sports. There are even programs for populations of students with special needs or life circumstances such as summer camps for children coping with disease, kids whose parents are on active duty in the military, those who are adopted, or high school students interested in college preparation. Colleges, museums, zoos, community centers, religious institutions, and/or city park systems may have other summer programs that are offered locally and that address particular interests that a child may have.

Finding information specific to your local area can be done through a simple Internet search, but families can also often obtain information from the public library. Summer programs through local K–12 schools or universities are sometimes advertised through event fliers that are mailed to households within a community, and my son has even brought home information sheets from school that promote local summer programming.

Lastly, parents may wish to inquire further into particular camps or programs in which their children are interested. Safety, camper satisfaction, and family satisfaction with programs are arguably the most important points to consider. Parents may wish to ask about safety and/or emergency procedures, staff background screening, and formal references or word of mouth information from families who have previously attended programming. As for my son, we will have to discover when and where camps in our area are before I contact “all” his friends’ parents for suggestions on the safest and most enjoyable programs that he may want to attend. ☺

References

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Resources

The following resources are mere starting points for summer programming that may

be of interest to families. Parents must still research individual camps to determine features such as the safety and desirability of each camp for themselves.

• **Awesome Summer Camps & Adventures**

<http://www.summer-camps-adventures.com>
Camps can be found based on a child’s interests in categories such as astronomy, dance, SCUBA diving, and tennis. Other camps targeted at those with special needs are also noted, and websites to each camp are given.

• **Concordia Language Villages**

<http://www.concordialanguagevillages.org/newsite>

Summer camps are offered in 11 different languages, and students are immersed in the language and culture of their choosing. Because the camps are held in northern Minnesota, sites’ names translate to “Lake of the Woods” as in the French camp *Lac du Bois* or the Spanish *El Lago de Bosque*.

• **NAGC Resource Directory**

http://www.nagc.org/resource_directory.aspx

Families can look for summer camp information using the dropdown box labeled “Service Area.” Searches allow for keywords and can be limited by state.

• **Summer Institute for the Gifted**

<http://www.giftedstudy.org>

According to the website, the Summer Institute for the Gifted (SIG) has “well-rounded” programming that addresses more than just academics at colleges and universities around the United States.

Author’s Note

Desiree R. Lindbom-Cho, Ed.S., graduated from Concordia College in Moorehead, MN, with a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and a major in English literature. She has been fortunate to teach across grade levels in regular, special, and gifted education settings. Currently, she is pursuing her doctoral degree at Louisiana State University.