

# To The End of the Semester — And Beyond

*by Diane Trautman*

I'm looking forward to the winter holidays. It may not be quite as restful as I envision, but the slower pace will allow for more family time and for interesting day trips.

Before the school break arrives, however, we need to get our children through this semester. If your child is struggling in a subject, it's vital that you step in to help or that you work with a qualified tutor well before tests are administered. With subjects such as math in which concepts must be mastered sequentially, or with history and science that require memorization, two weeks of tutoring before a test is not sufficient. It will just leave the student feeling ill-prepared and defeated.

To prepare for testing, students need to organize all notes, graded tests and other materials. Some teachers may give a printed study guide, while others will offer verbal recommendations. Make sure that your child knows what to expect on a test and that he sets aside time every day to review for each class.

It's always a good idea to talk to your child about what she's learning in any given class. You can take that a step further and help her do a little research about the topic of the day. Even if the research is not required, delving into a specific subject will help the student develop a greater depth of knowledge than can be gained in a fast-paced classroom. So many times parents will tell me that their child doesn't know why they're learning what they're learning. We can help them make those connections.

Even though the winter school break is shorter than summer vacation, it's good to keep our children's minds engaged, so that when they return to school they are mentally up to speed.

Fortunately, we can exercise our children's brain cells (and our own) under enjoyable circumstances by taking them to concerts, plays, dance and other performances, or by going to art galleries, museums, the zoo, or an aquarium, and then discussing the experience afterwards. Which painting or instrument did they like best and why? What was the dancer trying to convey? Do they have some new understanding of the zoo or aquarium creatures beyond what they learning in science class? Encouraging curiosity, in itself, is wonderful. When we can tie the experience into school studies, so much the better.

We wish you safe, peaceful, and joyous holidays!