

"But it's just like more school!"

Only nerds go to Science Camp!" Sigh. To be totally honest, this was precisely the reaction I anticipated when I approached the idea of an "academic" camp with my children, versus the sports oriented sessions they normally attend. They raise an interesting point: Are camps that are geared toward science, math, technology, robotics and computers really only for the "braniacs" or "eggheads"? Do the children who attend these camps have the opportunity to release some physical energy and socialize as well? I took my own concerns and did some investigative work on the subject, and came up with some unexpected and interesting results.

Eva Chan enrolled her 10 year-old son Jonathan in the University of Toronto Science Outreach Camp last summer, and actively recommends the program to friends. "Jonathan did the Flights of Fancy session and found it quite interesting. It covered topics such as how birds are able to fly against strong winds and the whole physics of planes and parachutes. He liked dropping stuff off of high places as well!" Eva confirmed that her son will definitely be returning next year for the Grade 5 curriculum, which promises to expose the world of roller-coasters in a fun and educational way. The hands-on approach really appealed to both Eva and her son, as did the opportunity for a mid-day swim and the fact that many experiments were done outside. While Jonathan is a bright child who does well academically, Eva states emphatically that "If Jonathan heard the term 'eggheads' used, then chances would be slim to none that he would ever return." Clearly this camp was more about fun than grade advancement. Outside activities, reinforcement of the curriculum; sounds pretty good. (ecf.utoronto.ca/~sciout/ for more information and registration).

Mamie Escaf enrolled her six year-old daughter Paulette in S.M.A.R.T.

Camp-Learn-A-Lot

Math and science camps mean fun, friends and fitness too

By Kathy Buckworth



Camp after hearing great reviews. The basic concept of the camp is to integrate math with co-operative and somewhat competitive games in a fun environment. "It is math based – the kids love it. All of the games involve math, so that the kids do not even realize they are learning. They might do a relay where they have to add numbers to tag off." The games were played both indoors and outdoors at the school, and included sports such as basketball, soccer, volleyball, baseball, dodgeball and many more team activities. According to the camp brochure, "Arts and crafts as well as educational toys and games are used to round out a programme that is both effective and educationally sound.

Approximately 30 percent of the program includes integrated math." Fun and learning...hmmm. smartcamp.org, or (416) 285-1488) So far, so good.

Math, science, what about technology? Look no further than The Children's Technology Workshop, which offers children from Grades 2 to 8 the opportunity to participate in technology-based "adventures" that take place both on and off the computer "with a focus on engineering and robotics, video game creation, animation and graphic design." From designing cars to creating deep space transmission, making your own video games, hosting the Olympic Games, building computer-controlled castles,

becoming a clothing designer – there is something for every interest. They also offer after school programmes in addition to i-camps. (ctworkshop.com or 1-866-704-2267). Cars, clothes...



not so boring and “school-like” after all.

What about older children, where incorporating leadership and learning might actually enhance the camp experience? Many “mini-universities” have been springing up across the province. McMaster University (in Hamilton) offers a two week program for children aged nine to 14, in addition to a Junior Leadership Programme for 15 and 16 year olds. According to the literature, “The camp is designed to show that learning can be fun through hands-on activities. Your children experience what it is like to be a real university student (without the test and exams, of course!)” Children can choose from different modules such as The Mind & More (Psychology), Physics in Technology, Tune In (Music), The Artful Artist, The Healing Hand (Medicine) and more. They even

Girls can WIN two weeks at camp!

5 Elements is offering a two-week summer camp session to one lucky girl and a friend, valued at about \$1700. 5 Elements is dedicated to building self-esteem and empowerment for girls aged nine to 15. They offer workshops in relationships, conflict resolution, bullying, inner critic and goal setting. They utilize expressive arts, improv, photography, creative movement and self-defense, and look at makeup, fashion and interior

design to round out the program. www.5elements4girls.com

Names will be chosen in a draw. Please submit your name, address, phone number and email address, with the heading “5 Elements Contest” to Maria Paguirigan at maria.paguirigan@tpg.rogers.com, by fax to 416-764-2894 or by mail to Maria Paguirigan, Today’s Parent Toronto, One Mount Pleasant Road, Toronto, ON, M4Y 2Y5. See regulations on our website, todaysparenttoronto.ca. All entries must be received by Feb. 28, 2006.

get to stay overnight in a residence one night, swim in the Olympic-sized pool and use the outdoor recreation area. (athrec.mcmaster.ca/camps/mini/index.htm, or 1-905-525-9140). While this camp is academic, the opportunity for growth, learning, and plain old fun away from the folks is very attractive to older children.

Mini-University is also offered at the University of Toronto (juniorblues.ca), with a complete “Leaders in Training” Program focusing on team building activities to “help campers find their strengths as leaders.” Seneca College offers Arts & Science camps

for all ages (Junior, Intermediate and Senior levels) with intriguing course titles such as Rocketry, Science Safari, Videokids, Merlin, and more. Check them out at senecac.on.ca/home/kidstuff/camp or (416) 491-5050, ext. 2329.

Knowledge, fun, fresh air and friends. Armed with this new outlook on “academic” camps, I now face the challenge of having the kids narrow it down to just one...or maybe two.

Kathy Buckworth's first book, The Secret Life of SuperMom is available in bookstores everywhere.

What is the Ontario Camping Association?



The Ontario Camping Association (OCA) is a not-for-profit voluntary organization of professionals involved in operating children’s summer camps. For parents, one of the most important aspects of the OCA is its camp accreditation program.

Accreditation means that a camp has shown adherence to more than

400 standards developed by camping professionals. In many cases, these standards exceed existing government regulations and cover areas where no government regulations exist. The standards describe good camping practices in every area of operation: health, food service, water supply, leadership, site and facility, program areas, off-site trips, insurance, transportation and administration.

How does a camp become accredited?

On application for membership in the OCA, a camp becomes a provisional member. For the next two summers, the camp works toward meeting all the standards. After a visit from an experienced standards visitor and approval by the OCA Board, the camp becomes an accredited member. They commit

to following the standards every year and receive a standards visit every four years

What does accreditation mean to campers?

The accreditation program was developed to ensure the health and safety of campers. Parents of prospective campers should feel free to ask a Camp Director about any aspect of the camp’s operation, for instance: How old are your counsellors? What is the staff/camper ratio? Can you accommodate the needs of my child? What are the qualifications of the person responsible for Health Care? What is your camp’s philosophy?

To view the OCA summer camp guide, a free listing of all the OCA accredited camps, call (416) 485-0425 or go to ontariocamps.ca.