

Have You Heard? Extended School Year Program Maintains Skills

At the start of a new school year, all students take a few weeks to get back into the groove of learning but for some time off can be very detrimental to the next school year. Red Clay's Extended School Year (ESY) and autism programs help qualified special education students remain on track and retain the skills they learned during the previous school year.

Read More

Special education students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) are recommended by their building level IEP team for placement in the ESY program based on their need for maintaining the skills and progress they have acquired during the regular year. Students in grades K-5 attended classes at one of three sites: Richardson Park, Forest Oak or Lewis Dual Language Academy. Secondary students attended H.B. du Pont.

This year, 152 students are enrolled in Richardson Park's five-week ESY program that began on June 19th and ended on July 20th. They worked daily with their teachers and Chrome books on academic and social goals extended from the school year. Some also received occupational, physical or speech therapy and assisted technology. They enjoyed the attention they got from being in a small classroom and like coming to school, even in the summer. The students worked hard to achieve their individual goals but like kids everywhere they look forward to "exercise breaks" and snacks.

"The benefits of ESY are strong for both the staff and students who participate. Students are provided the opportunity to practice and build upon the skills that they developed during the school year. Staff members are often able to utilize new or different teaching strategies, learn from other teachers, and step out of their comfort zones. My favorite part of ESY are the relationships that are able to be built in such a short time; the small group environment and opportunities for students to experience success at their own pace encourages a desire to learn and builds confidence going into the next school year," said Erin Blansfield, coordinator of the Extended School Year program at Richardson Park.

In addition to ESY, Red Clay's full day autism program at Richardson Park and H.B. du Pont was in session from June 20th through July 26th. It focused on social communication, interaction, body language and vocational skills for the older students. Qualified students also worked on academics and some received related services, continuing with their IEP goals. Program coordinator Jill Wheeler says it gives kids an outlet, activities and an opportunity to interact with technology. The summer session helps students maintain their progress with social, academic and other skills.

By participating in Red Clay's Extended School Year and autism programs, students are able to maintain the skills they have worked hard to accomplish during the school year and will be ready to strive for new goals when they return to school this fall.