How summer camps are helping students acclimate back to school ➤ Page 6
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## Weekly Camps  
(All ages. All Levels. Comprehensive Curriculum)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Recreational Academy (Lighter Intensity but still learning and development)</th>
<th>High Performance Academy (More Intense with a focus on performance and results)</th>
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<td>• Red Ball (Ages: 3.5-7)</td>
<td>• Super Red (Can serve, score, rally)</td>
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<td>• Orange Ball (Ages: 7-10)</td>
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<td>• Teen Development (Teenagers who are new to tennis. Ages: 13-18)</td>
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| • Recreational Yellow (Players who have tennis experience but who just want to play for fun or play High School tennis. Ages: 13-18) | • Tournament players (USTA, UTR, ITF)  
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Palo Alto: 7/11 - 7/15; Pleasanton: 7/25 - 7/29

CREATIVE WRITING—concentrates on a variety of literary forms (e.g., stories, plays, poems, journals, autobiographies, letters) and authentic self-expression, with emphasis on descriptions of character, setting, and action, as well as writing mechanics.

Palo Alto: 7/18 - 7/22; Pleasanton: 8/1 - 8/5

PRESENTATION SKILLS—(subtitled “Persuasion” this year) develops students’ analytical, public speaking, and sales skills, with emphases on planning, outlining, and crafting consistent messages based on emotional, logical, and ethical appeals.

Palo Alto: 7/25 - 7/29; Pleasanton: 7/18 - 7/22

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When Jijie Wei discovered that her 4-year-old daughter’s pre-K day camp was opening in person this winter following months of virtual activities due to the pandemic, she jumped at the opportunity to enroll her in a physical classroom surrounded by kids of various ages.

“Online school ... was pretty hard for all of us,” said the Peninsula mother, who along with her husband, has been working from home while their two children have been learning and socializing remotely.

Wei said virtual activities pale in comparison to the in-person classroom experience, especially for her preschool-aged daughter who has missed out on early education activities that children her age typically get to experience before heading off to kindergarten. Wei said young children like her daughter have lost critical opportunities to socialize with other kids during the pandemic.

Wei hopes to make up for those lost opportunities by sending her daughter to Steve and Kate’s day camp for unstructured daily activities aimed at kids ages 4-12.

Wei is not alone. A growing number of parents are turning to camps for more than extracurricular educational and enrichment activities: Camps are now seen as places where children can learn vital social skills and acclimate to a school-like environment following months of isolation during the pandemic.

Studies show that math and reading aren’t the only aspects of learning that have been disrupted by the shelter-in-place orders. Distance learning has had impacts on mental health, too. In October 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics declared the decline in children’s mental health a national emergency.

To combat what has now been labeled the “COVID slide,” some local camps are increasingly emphasizing those harder-to-quantify socialization and behavioral skills typically learned at school.

At Camp EDMO, a summer program for children pre-K through grade 8, activities not only focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEAM) but also social and emotional learning skills. This involves what the camp calls “RECIPE skills,” which stands for responsibility, empathy, collaboration, initiative, problem solving and emotion management.

“We incorporate a lot of mindfulness
Summer Camp Connection 2022

activities in our programs now,” said Eduardo Ca-
ballero, who founded the Camp EDMO in 2004. The nonprofit operates camps on school campuses nationwide, including locations in Menlo Park, Palo Alto and the greater Bay Area.

“We do deep-breathing exercises and facilitated conversations, just giving opportunities for kids to talk about things that are coming up for them,” he said.

Caballero said during the pandemic, the camp has provided “trauma-informed training” for the staff and on-site counselors, so they in turn could provide children who may need to work on behavior management or need to talk through a traumatic event a safe place to do so.

The camp incorporated social and emotional learning concepts prior to the pandemic, but Caballero has noticed that these “soft skills” have become more important in the past two years. When he visited a K-5 EDMO site in San Francisco last summer, Caballero noticed how the children had no concept of personal space.

“You can tell from the outset that these kids have not been in a classroom all year,” Caballero said. “They’re not used to sitting down and being quiet for a while (or) playing nice with others — all these simple little skills we take for granted that kids are practicing when they’re in a school environment.

“We just had kids, like magnets, jumping on each other and everything kind of turned physical a lot more quickly, and tempers flared really quickly. It was shocking. Usually in the first day or so, kids are a little more shy coming in, and they’re on their best behavior. It was definitely very different.”

Caballero said one of the reasons parents choose EDMO is to help their children get used to being in an educational setting on a school campus.

“Even if it’s not the exact school, just being in an elementary school campus is a benefit,” he said.

Camp operator and teacher Andrew Merovich also noticed a need to keep kids safely engaged in activities that they could work on together during the shelter-in-place orders.

In November 2020, Merovich started a year-round program for kids of all ages, called Brick Tech, which explains STEM concepts using Lego building blocks. The program was founded to offer hands-on activities at home that could be done
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Summer camps

(continued from page 7)

together virtually during a time when many extracurricular activities were canceled or had difficulties transitioning online.

“I felt like it would be a great idea to try to do some virtual classes and work in different ways to try to bring guided Lego building to the kids where they can learn STEM topics and vocabulary, along with having a fun build to do.”

Merovich said the program, which is based in San Jose, has proved successful. Brick Tech recently partnered with the city of Palo Alto to operate in-person summer classes for local students.

“Parents want to see their kids learn something while also playing,” he said.

Sarah Hewett, senior marketing manager at Steve and Kate’s day camp, which operates a location at Gideon Hausner Jewish Day School in Palo Alto, said she sees camps becoming a de facto preschool for many young children.

In the past two years due to remote learning, some children have come into kindergarten without ever stepping foot on a school campus or getting used to a structured day schedule around other kids, which preschool typically offers, she said.

“We’re seeing now that summer camp is often the very first in-person experience that some of these younger campers are getting,” Hewett said.

Camps also provide more flexibility than traditional preschools, she added.

At Steve and Kate’s Camp, for example, children can experience a day of self-directed activities — including everything from sewing and coding to sports and stop-motion animation — on a flexible schedule that parents can choose.

Hewett said this has been especially attractive for parents who are now working at home while also trying to ease their young children into a structured school environment.

For Wei, she’s already seeing the benefits of sending her daughter to in-person camp.

“She loves it,” Wei said. “She wants to go there every day.”

You can tell from the outset that these kids have not been in a classroom all year. They’re not used to sitting down and being quiet for a while (or) playing nice with others — all these simple little skills we take for granted that kids are practicing when they’re in a school environment.’

—Eduardo Caballero, founder, Camp EDMO

‘Parents want to see their kids learn something while also playing.’

—Andrew Merovich, camp operator and teacher, Brick Tech

On the cover: A camper uses a screwdriver while fixing bolts on a robot vehicle. Courtesy Getty Images.
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- Jazz Camp, July 17 - July 22
- Jazz Camp Online, July 18 - July 22
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environment.
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New Adventures Each Week!
Bring out their best this summer!

Spark curiosity. Discover new skills. Make friends. Stratford offers the perfect summer camp for your child, complete with all the fun, enriching activities that inspire learning and promote independence, in a safe, nurturing environment.

With more options to explore, you can build a one of a kind Summer@Stratford experience for your child!

Registration Opens February 2022
StratfordSchools.com/summer
Traditional camps for kids from Kindergarten through Grade 6
Weekly field trips, Friday themed events, and wacky water days
Awesome adventures and meaningful service opportunities for teens
Hebrew Immersion Camp for Kindergarten–Grade 6

REGISTER TODAY AT OFJCC-JCAMP.COM

Community, character and culture are at the heart of our program that combines high-level specialized sports instruction with the traditional experience of a Jewish overnight camp.

During our one- and two-week day and overnight camp sessions, campers focus on building skills and developing as teammates in their core sport: baseball, basketball, volleyball, soccer and tennis.

• Experienced and Inspirational Coaches
• Individualized Instruction
• College Facilities
• Swimming and Electives Daily

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