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How to Choose a Summer Camp for Your Child

by Susan Potts

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It may seem early to consider summer activities for your child, but early planning can make the difference. Whether your child attends a day, sports, or a specialized camp through Howard County or somewhere else here is some advice for selecting summer activities and programs for your child.



HCAS is hosting a [Special Needs Camp Fair](#) Jan. 30 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Cedar Lane School.

1. You know your child best. Consider what experiences they are ready for. Try to match your child's interest, abilities, and personality with the right setting.
2. Don't be afraid to take a risk. Your child may not seem ready for camp today, but remember that June is still months away and a lot can change in four or five months. They don't have to be a star performer, just have an interest.
3. Talk to other parents. The best recommendations are through word of mouth. A good program will get a lot of attention, so ask and listen.
4. Now that you've selected some options, ask questions and request information. Ensure that the camp meets your family's values and your philosophy. Don't settle for a program or camp because it fits your schedules. Find out what a typical day is like. How are activities structured? Do they foster growth development through their programs? What is the camper to counselor ratio? How do they hire the

EVENTS

28 JAN

[AMC Sensory Friendly Movie Monster Trucks](#)

30 JAN

[Special Needs Summer Camp Fair](#)

4 FEB

[Yoga for Children and Teens with Autism](#)

11 FEB

[AMC Sensory Friendly Movie The Lego Batman Movie](#)

18 FEB

[Yoga for Children and Teens with Autism](#)

22 FEB

[Dad's Night Out at Kelsey's Restaurant](#)

25 FEB

[AMC Sensory Friendly Movie Rock Dog](#)

News and Resources from the **SPECIAL EDUCATION NEWS CENTER**

[Transition to Kindergarten Programs Webinar](#)

Learn how special education and related services differ as children transition from an early childhood program to kindergarten.

[Using Visual Supports](#)

Explore how to use visual supports to positively impact your student's behavior and increase independence.

camp staff and what type of screening or supervision for field trips, swimming, and other off-site activities.

5. Consider visiting the camp or program site if possible. Make sure that the setting and staff appeal to you and your child.
6. Know what the policies for the program/camp are. Know how they handle medical needs if your child has medication or medical concerns. Ask about the refund policy -- unexpected things can happen and knowing the options ahead of time can help in an emergency.
7. Ask how staff communicate with parents about concerns, up-coming events, and other information that needs to be shared with parents. Ask how you can reach the staff or supervisor. Open and regular communication is key to a successful experience for your child.
8. Involve your child! It is critical that your child be involved in the selection of and preparation for the summer programs/camp. Their involvement in the process will encourage their participation and ensure your child will enjoy the program/camp you have selected together.

These are simple suggestions for creating a positive, enjoyable summer experience for your child and you. Summer programs and camps offer much more than structured activities. They offer new friendships, new skills, new role models, and a lifetime of memories.

Stop Waiting and Start Planning

4th Annual Transition Symposium Saturday, March 18

HCAS will co-host the 4th Annual Transition Symposium on Saturday, March 18, at Cedar Lane School in Fulton. Titled "Stop Waiting and Start Planning," the day-long conference offers parents, caregivers, professionals, and transitioning youth an opportunity to learn about a wide variety of transition-related topics.



This year's event features a plenary panel of parents whose children have successfully navigated the transition from high school and an update on Maryland state disability policy and initiatives. With an expanded menu of 25 workshops designed for a general audience or specifically for transitioning youth, the symposium will benefit novices to the process as well as those in need of insight on particular issues.

Planned general audience workshop topics include transition planning in IEPs, self-employment, self-disclosure and accommodations, post-secondary credit and non-credit education, DDA services, Social Security benefits, guardianship and alternatives, and assistive technology. Planned transitioning youth workshops will explore public transportation, dating and relationships, self-advocacy, cooking, social

[Maryland Statewide IEP: An Overview Presentation for Parents](#)

Better understand the purpose and intent of each section of your student's IEP.

Do you have questions about special education services and rights? We are here to help. Call 410-290-3466 or email AskUsSpEdQuestions@howardautism.org.

SAVE THE DATE

12th Annual Pieces of the Puzzle Gala
Saturday, April 29
Turf Valley Resort



HCAS HOSTS WINTER POOL PARTY



Families enjoy the indoor pool at Lifetime Fitness during the HCAS Winter Pool Party on Jan. 15.

NEW RESOURCE AND EVENT COORDINATOR



Janet Dabu.

HCAS welcomes Janet Dabu, our new resource center and event coordinator. Janet lives in Howard County. She graduated from Hammond High School and earned a BFA in Animation from the Art Institute of Washington.

media, driving, money management, and micro-enterprises.

The transition symposium is an event of the Transition Outreach Partnership -- a collaborative effort of HCAS, Howard County Public School System, Howard County Government, and Accessible Resources for Independence, Inc. The symposium is sponsored, in part by the Governor's Interagency Council for Youth with Disabilities.

Online registration for the event will open soon on the HCAS website.

HCAS Resource Center and Event Coordinator
Involved with the visual and performing arts since she was young, Janet has volunteered through school and on her own in the community. Janet enjoys reading, cooking, and playing video games in her spare time.

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