

# MIGHTY ROOTS ACADEMY



VOL. 8 | SUMMER 2025



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# mighty roots academy

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*Welcome!*

Summer is a season of sunlight, freedom, and boundless exploration. It invites us to stretch our days a little longer, wander a little farther, and soak in the wonders of the world around us.

In this issue, we're celebrating the vibrant energy of summer with articles that encourage curiosity, hands-on learning, and outdoor discovery. Whether your days are filled with nature hikes, messy experiments, creative projects, or quiet moments under a shady tree, there's magic to be found in every corner of the season.

We encourage our families to embrace the warmth, let go of rigid routines, and let learning flow naturally through play, observation, and connection. From gardening and nature journaling to stargazing and storytelling around the campfire, summer offers endless opportunities to learn and grow together.

Let this season be a reminder that education doesn't pause when the school year ends—it simply takes on new forms. May these long, golden days spark inspiration, wonder, and meaningful memories for your family.

Here's to a summer filled with joy, adventure, and the ever-growing love of learning!



*Summer is in full swing!*

*For many, that means summer camps, sports activities, and vacations. Even if a few of those are sprinkled into our schedule, we often find ourselves with plenty of slow, at-home days too. That can feel a little tough—especially when we scroll through social media and see what everyone else seems to be doing.*

*As you browse through this issue of our Mighty Roots Magazine, I encourage you to hold onto the message from the Pixar movie Up:*

*"Adventure is out there!"*

*This summer, look for adventure in the little moments—a fun audiobook, a game that keeps learning fresh, or an edible experiment in the kitchen. By the end of Up, the main character realizes that the little things in life are the "true adventure."*

*It's not about the picture-perfect vacation photos. It's about those small moments of wonder we create right at home. So grab that oven-fresh frozen pizza or a classic PB&J for a picnic on the trampoline. Camp out in the backyard, go for a hike, pretend you're a character from the latest book you read, write secret messages with ciphers and codes, or turn a heat advisory into a "spot the differences" book day or a movie challenge.*

*However you spend it, I hope your family enjoys the adventure that summer brings. Adventure is out there!*

*~ Tracy Schroeder*

## *A Message from our Director*







# Rooted in Summer

Summer has a magic all its own. The days are long, the sun is warm, and everything feels a little more alive. There's a special kind of energy in the air—birds singing, bees buzzing, kids laughing, and the steady hum of nature doing its thing.

For homeschool families, summer is a great time to lean into a slower, more playful rhythm. It's less about schedules and more about curiosity—following what excites us, exploring the outdoors, and letting learning happen naturally. Whether it's splashing in a creek, planting something in the garden, or just lying in the grass watching clouds go by, summer gives us permission to relax and enjoy the simple stuff.

It's also a chance to reconnect—with nature, with each other, and with the joy of learning for its own sake. There's something special about discovering new things when you're not rushing or trying to check a box. That kind of learning sticks—and it feels good, too.

So let's soak up these sunny days, make room for wonder, and find learning in the everyday moments. Whether you're chasing fireflies or diving into a good book under a shady tree, may this summer bring plenty of joy, connection, and wide-open possibilities.



# Freedom Forts and Fire

words by  
Kerry McGhee



## What Risky Play Teaches Our Kids

My childhood was filled with wading in rock-bottom creeks, running through dew-wet fields, and climbing scratchy hay bales. This was when outdoor play didn't have the classification of 'free play,' it was just play. We climbed trees, played in the mud, and organized intricate games with friends and neighbors. Hours were spent without adult supervision, because although we knew a grown-up was around, we also knew we were certainly not welcome indoors.

Much of what we were doing then is what qualifies as risky play today. Risky play can be defined as "thrilling and exciting forms of physical play that involve uncertainty and a risk of physical injury."<sup>1</sup> It can include playing at heights, high speed, use of dangerous tools, rough housing, and unsupervised play. Today, with societal emphasis on physical safety, we might assume that risky play should be avoided. However, research in child development shows that risky play is key in children's physical health, social skills, executive functioning, risk assessment, and creativity. Evidence shows that the benefits of risky play outweigh the actual risk of physical injury that may occur.<sup>2</sup>

It's important to distinguish that allowing risky play does not mean ambivalence or neglect from supervising adults. Supervision of risky play empowers and guides the child to assess and make decisions about their own comfort level with the situation. Adults can and should still intervene to prevent injury, and risky play should always be age-appropriate.

(continued)



At Mighty Roots, our emphasis on outdoor free play inherently involves some risk. Although always supervised, students climb trees, swing from ropes, and build forts. In age-appropriate classes, they will make fires, use knives, and practice archery. Although these skills may or may not translate directly into future career paths, they build confidence, assist in developing interpersonal skills, and provide an opportunity for hands-on skill development. Our goal is to empower and guide children to make positive decisions for themselves, overcome difficulties, attain personal goals, and work cooperatively in a community setting. This all starts with play.

Some empowering phrases for supervising risky play might be:<sup>3</sup>

- **Do you feel** ... stable on that log of wood/ the heat of that fire?
- **Do you see** ... your friends nearby/ how high you are?
- **Notice how** ... these rocks are slippery/ sharp this tool is.
- **Are you feeling** ... scared/ excited/ safe?
- **What's your plan** ... if you jump on that boulder/ dig that hole?
- **How will you** ... get down/ go up/ get across?

Sources:

1. [Risky play in children's emotion regulation, social functioning, and physical health: an evolutionary approach](#)
2. [What is the Relationship between Risky Outdoor Play and Health in Children? A Systematic Review](#)
3. [Healthy childhood development through outdoor risky play: Navigating the balance with injury prevention](#)





# TURN THE PAGE ON SUMMER

## A Parent's Guide to Summer Reading Incentives



Summer reading programs for kids offer a fun way to encourage reading and earn rewards. Programs like Barnes & Noble's, Scholastic's, and Pizza Hut's BOOK IT! program provide incentives like free books, digital rewards, and pizza. These programs often involve reading logs, tracking reading streaks, and earning prizes.

Here's a closer look at some popular summer reading programs:

### **Barnes & Noble Summer Reading Program**

Students in grades 1-6 can read a designated number of books, complete a reading journal, and earn a free book.

### **Scholastic Summer Reading**

Kids can participate in a digital reading community through the Scholastic Home Base app, tracking their reading, earning digital rewards, and helping to unlock donations for **Save the Children**.

*(continued)*





### **Pizza Hut BOOK IT!® Program**

Students in Pre-K through 6th grade can earn a free single-topping Personal Pan Pizza for meeting reading goals. This program also extends to the summer with **Camp BOOK IT!**.

### **Mensa for Kids Excellence in Reading**

This program encourages kids to read from the National Endowment for the Humanities' Summertime Favorites list, with the chance to earn a certificate and t-shirt.

### **Books-a-Million Summer Reading Adventure**

Kids can earn prizes and rewards by reading and completing the reading program.

### **Half Price Books Summer Reading Camp**

Kids can earn Bookworm Bucks, which can be used for discounts at Half Price Books.

### **Panda Express READ WITH ME Program**

Students can earn free Kids Meal coupons for reading a certain number of books.

### **Chuck E. Cheese Reading Rewards**

While not a specific summer program, Chuck E. Cheese offers a reading rewards calendar where kids can earn points for reading.

**Also be sure to check in with your local library.**







“I was rich, if not in  
money, in sunny hours  
and summer days.”

*~Henry David Thoreau*



# Rooted and Ready: Homeschooling Through High School

words by  
Tracy Schroeder



Many parents start to feel nervous when the high school years approach. While the early years of homeschooling may have felt manageable, high school can bring a new wave of uncertainty.

But remember why you started homeschooling in the first place:

- You wanted a personalized education for your child.
- You wanted more time with them and a chance to be part of their learning journey.
- You wanted to ease some of the pressure of traditional schooling.
- You wanted to nurture your child's interests.
- You wanted a safe, supportive environment that helps them grow.

(continued)





All of these reasons are still valid—and still possible.

When high school nears, it's common to wonder if homeschooling is still the best path. The pressure to "do it right," prepare for college, and meet academic expectations can feel overwhelming. But you don't have to abandon your homeschool vision. Even if you struggled through chemistry or never wrote a thesis, you can homeschool high school—and do it well.

Here are five encouraging truths to help you feel more confident:

**1. There's no one-size-fits-all course list.**

There is no national or official required set of courses for homeschoolers to graduate or even to get into most colleges. You have the flexibility to tailor your student's education to their interests and goals.

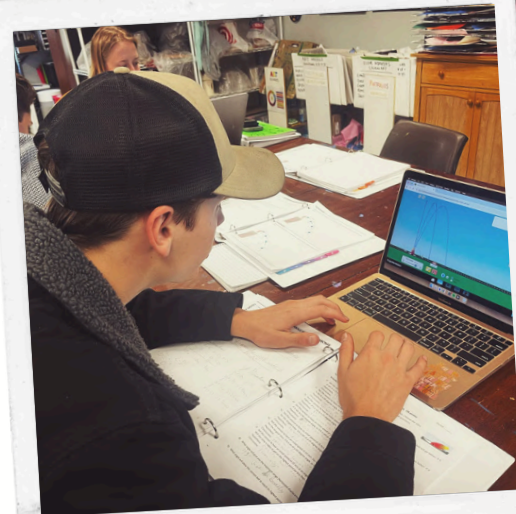
**2. You create the transcript—and the course list.**

You decide what classes your student takes. Their science class doesn't have to be the traditional biology-chemistry-physics track. If your student is fascinated by forensic science, environmental science, horticulture, or astronomy, let them dive in! Colleges often appreciate students who pursue subjects with genuine interest.

**3. You don't have to teach everything.**

Not confident in a subject? That's okay! Your student can take an online class, join a local co-op or enrichment program like Mighty Roots Academy, or even create an independent study using a variety of resources and hands-on learning.

*(continued)*





#### **4. College classes are an option—even in high school.**

Many colleges offer reduced tuition for high schoolers. Some even have early college or dual-enrollment programs. These can be a great way for your teen to challenge themselves or explore subjects you'd prefer not to teach at home.

#### **5. Social opportunities still exist.**

Worried your teen will miss out on clubs, sports, band, theater, dances, or graduation? These are often available through homeschool groups, online communities, and even local school districts—depending on your state and district policies. Social media has also made it easier than ever to connect with other homeschool families and find opportunities nearby.

Homeschooling a high schooler may feel intimidating, but you don't have to do it alone. Find a supportive community that aligns with your family's values and goals. With the right tools and support, homeschooling through high school can be just as rewarding—and just as personalized—as it was in the early years.

You've come this far. Keep going. You've got this!







# KITCHEN CHEMISTRY

Recipes  
That Mix  
Food with  
Fun

Looking for a way to keep hands and curious minds busy in the kitchen (or the backyard)? These recipes are more than just tasty treats—they're mini science experiments too! From chemical reactions that create fizz to the slow infusion of flavor powered by the sun, each one offers a hands-on way to learn while you snack. These are perfect for summer afternoons, homeschool enrichment, or anytime you want a little magic mixed with your meal.



## Sun Tea: A Delicious Science Experiment

~ from Ms. Tracy

### Ingredients:

- Clean glass jar or pitcher (glass is best to avoid chemical leaching from plastic)
- Filtered water
- Tea bags or loose-leaf tea (black, green, or herbal)
- Optional additions: fresh fruit, herbs (like mint or lemon balm), sweeteners (sugar, honey, agave)

### Instructions:

1. Clean and sanitize your container with hot, soapy water.
2. Add tea and water: Place the tea in the jar and fill with water.
3. Steep in the sun: Seal the jar and place it in direct sunlight for 3–4 hours.
4. Chill: Remove from sunlight, refrigerate immediately, and let cool.
5. Serve and enjoy: Add fruit or sweetener if desired and serve over ice.

**Safety Note:** Don't brew longer than 4 hours due to potential bacterial growth. Refrigerate right after brewing and consume within 24 hours.

### The Science Behind It:

- **Extraction:** The sun gently heats the water, helping draw out flavors from the tea.
- **Diffusion and Osmosis:** Molecules from the tea move into the water, changing its color, taste, and aroma.

(continued)





# Ms. Renee's Chocolate Chia Overnight Oats

## Ingredients:

- 1 cup milk of choice
- ½ cup oats
- 2 tbsp chia seeds
- 1 tbsp maple syrup or honey
- 1 tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder

*Optional:* 2 tbsp chocolate protein powder

## Instructions:

1. Shake or stir all ingredients in a mason jar.
2. Refrigerate overnight.
3. In the morning, stir again and add toppings if desired.

**Toppings** (*optional*): Yogurt, dark chocolate chips, berries

## The Science Behind It:

Chia seeds absorb liquid and expand, creating a pudding-like texture. This gel formation is due to the soluble fiber reacting with the liquid—a fun intro to food chemistry!



(continued)



## Ice Cream in a Bag

*Turn cream into ice cream in just 10 minutes  
—no machine needed!*

### Ingredients:

- ½ cup half & half or heavy cream
- 1 tbsp sugar
- ¼ tsp vanilla extract
- Ice
- ¼ cup rock salt
- 1 quart-sized zip-top bag
- 1 gallon-sized zip-top bag

### Instructions:

1. Pour cream, sugar, and vanilla into the quart-sized bag. Seal it tightly.
2. Fill the gallon-sized bag halfway with ice and add rock salt.
3. Place the smaller bag inside the large one and seal.
4. Shake vigorously for 7–10 minutes until the mixture thickens into ice cream.
5. Rinse the small bag before opening and enjoy!

### Science Behind It:

Salt lowers the freezing point of ice, making it colder than 32°F. This super-cold environment causes the cream to freeze while you shake it—demonstrating freezing point depression.

*(continued)*

“HAPPINESS  
IS... EATING  
ICE CREAM  
ON A HOT  
DAY.”



## FIZZY LEMONADE

### Ingredients:

- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup lemon juice
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sugar or equivalent of preferred sweetener
- $3\frac{1}{2}$  cup water or sparkling water (preferred)
- 1 teaspoon baking soda (omit if using sparkling water)

### Instructions:

1. Combine lemon juice, cold water, and sugar in a 1 quart or larger pitcher. You can adjust the amount of sugar to your taste.
2. Carefully stir in 1 teaspoon of baking soda.
3. Watch for the fizzing and bubbling as the baking soda or sparkling water reacts with the lemon juice.
4. Stir until the baking soda dissolves and add ice if desired.

### The Science Behind Fizzy Lemonade:

The acid (lemon juice) and base (baking soda) react to form carbon dioxide bubbles—just like in real soda! If using sparkling water, you're simply adding pre-dissolved  $\text{CO}_2$ .



recipe and photos  
by Tracy Schroeder





## Solar Oven S'mores

Harness the sun's energy to melt chocolate and marshmallows!

### Ingredients:

- Graham crackers
- Marshmallows
- Chocolate squares
- A recycled pizza box, aluminum foil, clear plastic wrap, and black paper

### Instructions:

1. Line the pizza box with black paper and aluminum foil to reflect sunlight.
2. Place your s'mores inside and cover with plastic wrap.
3. Aim the lid to reflect the sun into the box and wait 20-30 minutes.

### Science Behind It:

This is a simple introduction to solar energy and heat absorption. Black paper absorbs heat, and the foil reflects sunlight to create a warm, oven-like environment inside the box.





## Edible Slime

(by hessunacademy.com)

### Ingredients:

- 1 cup marshmallows
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup cornstarch
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup powdered sugar
- Coconut oil (for hands)
- Food coloring (optional)



### Instructions:

1. Microwave marshmallows in a safe bowl for 30 seconds. Stir.
2. Mix in powdered sugar and cornstarch.
3. Coat hands with coconut oil and knead the slime.
4. Too sticky? Add more cornstarch. Too stiff? Microwave for 10 seconds.
5. Eat or discard within 2 days.

### The Science Behind It:

This is a Non-Newtonian fluid, meaning it doesn't behave like a solid or a liquid. The different molecules make it stretchy, soft, and pliable—perfect for play (and safe to eat!).







“Keep your face  
always toward  
the sunshine...”

*~Walt Whitman*



# MEET OUR LEARNING GUIDE

intro by  
Angela Schilling

## CHRISTINA SANDBERG

At Mighty Roots Academy, every Learning Guide brings their unique story, skills, and passions to our nature-rich homeschool community. This summer we're thrilled to introduce Christina Sandberg.

A small town girl that made her way to Kansas City and stepped boldly into a world of homeschooling and teaching. Her creative skills, from design to photography guides the hearts and minds of her children and the students at Mighty Roots. Her fun personality, quick wit and heartfelt leadership creates an environment where curiosity thrives, laughter is welcome, and every child feels seen and inspired.

We are beyond grateful for the joy, talent, and friendship she shares with our community!

### **Tell us a little about yourself**

I'm from a small town in Southeast Missouri—the kind of place where if you blink, you'll miss it. After high school, I moved to Kansas City “just for a year”... and here I am, nearly 27 years later. These days, I live in South KC with my husband, our two amazing kids, and our Cavapoo, Charlie. I love live music, camping and kayaking, gardening, metalsmithing, reading and hanging out with friends.



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### How did you find out about Mighty Roots?

I first heard about Mighty Roots through a Wild + Free group. At the time, my son was still too young to attend, but I kept my eye on the school from afar (okay, I basically stalked them on Facebook). The vibe was just what I had been looking for, warm, creative, and outdoorsy—I knew we had to be part of it someday.



### What inspired/encouraged you to be a Learning Guide?

My son started attending Mighty Roots in 2020, and that's really when our family's deeper connection began. I joined the board in 2021 and started helping behind the scenes with admin work. As my daughter got closer to joining the academy, Tracy started casually (and not-so-casually- Ha!) suggesting I become a Learning Guide.

At first, I shrugged it off. I didn't think I had what it took—I wasn't a "teacher" in the traditional sense. But the more I thought about it, the more it tugged at me. I finally followed that nudge (you know the one—it doesn't go away until you listen). It was a leap into the unknown, a total stretch outside my comfort zone, but something in me said, "This is where you're supposed to be next."

And here's what I've learned: Comfort zones are cozy, but nothing grows there. Sometimes you just have to take a step, even if you are unsure where it will lead.



### What do you love most about teaching at Mighty Roots?

The students, hands down! They are hilarious, curious, insightful, and always surprising me. I think I learn as much—if not more—from them than they do from me!

I also love the friendships I've made with the other Learning Guides. They have become my community and my people. It feels like being part of a team and a family that gets you.

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## Which subjects or activities are you most passionate about teaching?

I teach a few different classes, and each one brings something unique to the table. But I'm especially passionate about the creative ones—like videography and phone photography. I love watching students tap into their storytelling skills and express themselves in new ways. It's pretty incredible what they come up with when you give them the tools and space to explore.

## What drew you or got you into homeschooling?

I never imagined myself homeschooling... until my son was born. Then it was like a light switch flipped. Suddenly, I couldn't imagine sending him off for most of his day. I wanted something more personal, more flexible, more in tune with our family's rhythm. I wanted him to have time to be a kid, to chase curiosity, to ask big questions and not be told to sit still all the time.



**“EVERYTHING YOU WANT IS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF COMFORT.”**



## What are some challenges you find with homeschooling?

Homeschooling can be beautiful and freeing, but let's be real—it's not always easy. One of the biggest challenges is managing all the roles at once—being a wife, parent, teacher, activity planner, and housekeeper... all day, every day.

Another challenge is learning to trust the process. It's easy to fall into comparison mode or worry you're "not doing enough." But homeschooling isn't about replicating school at home—it's about creating something new and beautiful that works for your family.

*(continued)*





**Is there advice you would give to a family just starting out on their own homeschool journey?**

Absolutely. First, give yourself grace—lots of it. You're going to have great days and not-so-great days, and that's normal.

Start slow. Very slow if needed. You don't have to do all the things right away. Focus on connection and rhythm before you dive into curriculum.

Find your people—whether it's a co-op, a nature group, or even just one or two other homeschooling families who get you. Community makes such a difference.

And lastly, trust that *you can do this!* You know your child better than anyone, and you don't need to be an expert in everything—you just need to be willing to learn alongside them.

**Is there a particular quote or mantra that guides you in life?**

This quote has stuck with me through many seasons of change—especially the ones where I've second-guessed myself or felt stretched thin. It reminds me that courage isn't always loud or bold—sometimes, it's simply the quiet decision to show up again, to keep trying, and to trust that growth is happening, even on the hard days.

**“Courage doesn't always roar.  
Sometimes courage is the quiet voice  
at the end of the day saying,  
‘I will try again tomorrow.’”**

*- Mary Anne Radmacher*





# 5 BUDGET-FRIENDLY SUMMER ADVENTURES

FUN WAYS TO BEAT BOREDOM WITHOUT  
BREAKING THE BANK

words by  
Renee Bichel



Summer schedules often open up space for fun daytime activities—but not everyone can swing \$100 outings every week!

Whether you're trying to keep the kids busy, cool off, or just get out of the house, here are five fun and frugal options for enjoying summer without overspending.

## 1. Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

The Nelson is a beautiful, peaceful escape from the summer heat. You don't have to see every gallery—just pick one and let curiosity guide you. Younger kids especially love the statue gallery and the Egyptian mummy, while older kids might enjoy the architecture and storytelling in the art. Don't skip the Mezzanine courtyard café—it's the perfect spot for a mid-visit snack.

Admission is free; parking in the garage is \$14.

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## 2. Free Splash Pads

Most metro areas have public parks with splash pads—mini water parks that are great for all ages! Here are a few favorites around the Kansas City metro (*not an exhaustive list*):

- **John Anderson Park** in Grandview, MO
- **TB Hanna Station Park** in Raymore, MO
- **Roe Park** in Overland Park, KS
- **Dagg Park** in North Kansas City
- **Loose Park** in Kansas City, MO

**Tip:** Bring towels, sunscreen, and maybe a change of clothes—some of these parks also have playgrounds or picnic areas to stretch out your visit.



## 3. Kids Bowl Free

The Kids Bowl Free program (details at [kidsbowlfree.com](http://kidsbowlfree.com)) is a great way to spend a hot or rainy afternoon indoors. While parents typically need to pay to bowl, the savings for kids make it worthwhile. It's a small effort for a lot of fun—and some much-needed air conditioning!

(continued)



#### 4. Summer Movie Deals

Many local theaters offer deeply discounted tickets to family-friendly favorites during the summer months:

- **AMC Theaters:** \$3 movies on Wednesdays and \$5 on Saturdays
- **Regal Theaters:** \$1 movies on Tuesdays and Wednesdays
- **B&B Theaters:** Summer Kids Series runs 3 days a week—\$3 tickets for Backstage Pass Members, \$5 for non-members

Check each theater's schedule online to see what's playing near you!

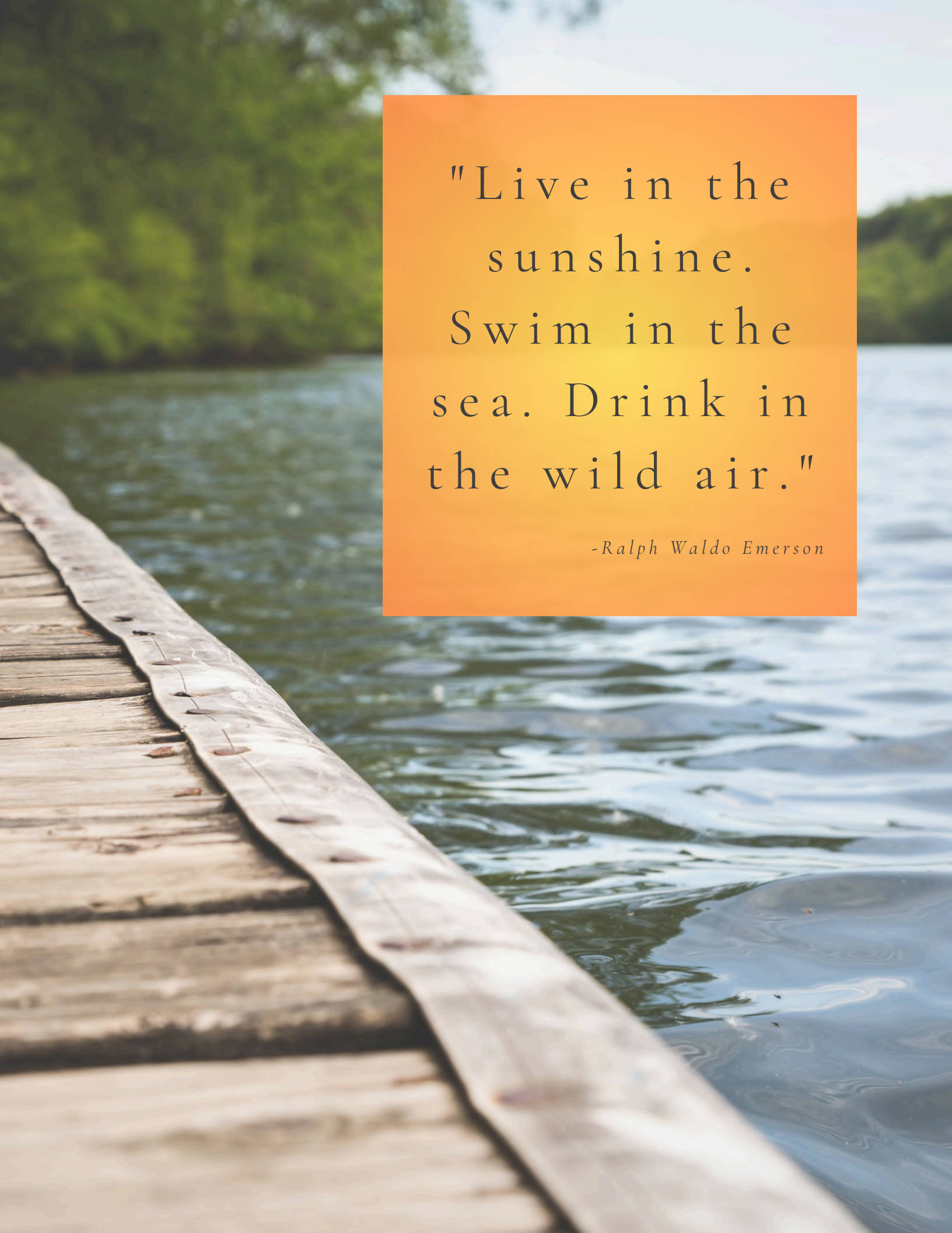
#### 5. Mall Walks & Indoor Adventures

Malls can be surprisingly great places to explore with kids of all ages. From people-watching to window shopping, it's an outing with built-in flexibility.

- **Oak Park Mall:** Pack a lunch and eat in the food court. When my kids were younger, we'd treat ourselves to a cookie or drink. Now that they're teens, they bring their own money for Boba and candy from the fancy shops!
- **Crown Center:** Another indoor option with lots to see. Pack a lunch, browse the shops, and don't miss walking across the skyways to Union Station—a beautiful, historic building that's fun to explore and full of photo opportunities.





A photograph of a wooden dock extending from the bottom left towards the center of the frame. The dock is made of weathered wooden planks and has a metal railing with visible rivets. The water is calm with gentle ripples, reflecting the light. In the background, there is a dense line of green trees under a clear sky. An orange rectangular box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing a quote in a serif font.

"Live in the  
sunshine.  
Swim in the  
sea. Drink in  
the wild air."

*-Ralph Waldo Emerson*



# MATH IN THE WILD

## Simple Math Games to Keep Skills Sharp This Summer

by Tracy Schroeder

Summer is a season of slower mornings, barefoot afternoons, and spontaneous adventures. But even in the most relaxed seasons, a little gentle structure can go a long way—especially when it's tucked into play. Math games offer a chance to weave meaningful learning into the fabric of your day, whether you're at home or on the go. They're quick to pick up, flexible for multiple ages, and easy to adapt for more challenge when needed.

Keep math skills sharp this summer with these fun and simple card games! All you need is a standard deck of cards and a few minutes of play. These games are great for reinforcing foundational skills like addition, subtraction, rounding, and critical thinking—without the need for worksheets or screens.

So grab a deck of cards, head outside, and let learning unfold naturally. These games are a great way to keep young minds engaged while honoring the joy and freedom that summer brings. Play one around the campfire, bring another to the park, or turn a quiet afternoon into a fun family tournament. However you use them, you'll be building skills and memories at the same time.

(continued)



## 99

*A fast-paced game of mental math and strategy!*

### **You Need:**

- A standard deck of cards (no Jokers)
- 3 or more players

### **How to Play:**

1. Deal each player 3 cards.
2. Place the rest of the cards in a face-down stack in the center.
3. Players take turns playing a card to the center, adding its value to a running total. The goal is to keep the total at or below 99.
4. After playing a card, the player announces the new total and draws a new card.

### **Card Values:**

- Number cards = face value
- Face cards = 10 points
- Ace = 1 or 11 (player's choice)
- 4 = reverses the direction of play (no points added)
- 9 = skip (no points added)
- 10 = subtract 10 points from the total
- King = brings the total directly to 99

If a player cannot play a card without going over 99, they're out for the round. Shuffle and deal again to start a new round!



# Add It Up $5+5=10$

Great for practicing addition, estimating, and place value!

## You Need:

- 1 deck of cards (use only numbers and aces)
- Paper and pencil (optional)

**Players:** 1-2

## How to Play:

1. Shuffle the cards and place them in a face-down stack.
2. Flip over two cards to create your target number (e.g., flip a 5 and an 8 → your goal is 58).
3. Draw one card at a time, adding each to your running total.
4. Try to reach your goal exactly—if you go over, you lose the round.

## Level Up:

- Use addition and subtraction to hit the target number exactly.
- Keep face cards in the deck. When drawn, players must round the current total:
  - Numbers ending in 0-4 round down.
  - Numbers ending in 5-9 round up.
  - (e.g., 54 rounds to 50, 57 rounds to 60)



# 100

Practice subtraction and place value with this simple solo or partner game.

## You Need:

- 1 deck of cards (numbers and aces only)
- Paper and pencil (optional)

**Players:** 1-2

## How to Play:

1. Start at 100.
2. Flip over one card at a time and subtract its value from the current total.
3. Continue drawing and subtracting until you reach 0 or go below it.

## Level Up:

- Include face cards and use rounding rules as in Add It Up.



## Make 25



A strategic game of quick mental addition and decision-making.

### You Need:

- 1 deck of cards (numbers and aces only)

**Players:** 2 or more

### How to Play:

1. Deal each player 5 cards, face down. Players pick up and look at their hand.
2. Place the rest of the deck in a face-up pile.
3. Players take turns discarding one card and picking up a new one from the top of the pile.
4. The goal is to collect 5 cards that add up to exactly 25.
5. When a player reaches 25, they call out "25!" and set aside those cards as a point.
6. Return remaining cards to the deck, reshuffle, and play again.
7. After all cards are used or time runs out, the player with the most 25s wins!



## Math War

A twist on the classic card game that reinforces mental math.

### You Need:

- 1 deck of cards (numbers and aces only; ace = 1)

**Players:** 2

### How to Play:

1. Deal all cards evenly between players.
2. At the beginning of each round, players choose a math operation (addition, subtraction, or multiplication).
3. Count together: "1, 2, 3, flip!" Each player turns over their top card.
4. The player with the higher card solves the equation using both cards.
5. If the answer is correct, they win both cards. If incorrect, the opponent may steal by answering correctly.

### Level Up:

Keep playing rounds and recycle cards back into players' hands. The game continues until one player wins all the cards.





# MOVIE

• NIGHTS •

by Christina Sandberg

**Pages to  
Popcorn**

**Turning Summer Reading  
into Movie Night Magic**



## FROM CHAPTER ONE TO CLOSING CREDITS

Summer is the perfect time to slow down, and get lost in a great book. But what if you could turn that quiet reading time into an exciting event the whole family looks forward to? This summer, try something new: pick a book to read together, then celebrate finishing it with a themed movie night. It's a simple way to encourage reading while creating lasting memories!

This past year at Mighty Roots Academy, our **Book vs. Movie** class explored the magical connections between books and their film adaptations. Throughout the year, we read stories like *Holes*, *Bridge to Terabithia*, *Hatchet*, *Hoot*, and *Zathura*, diving deep into character choices, plot differences, and the creative decisions filmmakers made when translating words to the screen.

And here's what we learned: watching the movie after reading the book isn't just a fun reward—it's an opportunity to think critically, share perspectives, and celebrate the power of storytelling across different mediums. This summer, you can bring that same idea home!

(continued)





# HERE'S HOW TO START YOUR OWN BOOK-TO-MOVIE CHALLENGE AT HOME

## 1. Pick a book with a movie adaptation.

Choose a title that matches your child's age and interests.

The following books offer great starting points:

- **Holes** by Louis Sachar
- **Bridge to Terabithia** by Katherine Paterson
- **Hatchet** by Gary Paulsen
- **Hoot** by Carl Hiaasen
- **Zathura** by Chris Van Allsburg
- **The Wild Robot** by Peter Brown
- **How to Train Your Dragon** by Cressida Cowell

You can even involve your child in the decision-making—give them a few options and let them choose what sounds the most fun.

## 2. Set a reading goal.

Decide whether you'll read aloud together or set aside daily independent reading time. For longer books, you might pace it out over a few weeks. Build anticipation by marking the final reading day as Movie Night on the calendar.

## 3. Make it an event!

Once the book is finished, turn your living room into a mini movie theater. Let your kids make tickets or signs, set up a snack bar, or even dress up as characters. You can go simple or go all out—what matters is making it feel special.

(continued)





#### **4. Talk about it.**

After the credits roll, take a few minutes to talk about what was different. Did the movie leave out a favorite part of the book? Were the characters how you imagined them? What did the movie get right? These simple conversations build comprehension, critical thinking, and appreciation for both forms of storytelling.

#### **Bonus: Keep a “Book vs. Movie” Journal**

Encourage kids to jot down their thoughts about each book and movie pairing. They can rate both, draw favorite scenes, or write a quick review. This not only boosts writing skills, but makes a great keepsake of their summer adventures in reading.

Whether you read in a hammock, on a road trip, or curled up during a summer thunderstorm, letting books lead to movie nights is a fun and meaningful way to keep reading alive all summer long. And who knows? You might just inspire a new family tradition—or even a future film critic.

So grab a book, pop some popcorn, and enjoy as the story unfolds—first on the page, then on the screen.







"In the storybook of summer,  
childhood friends are always  
the best chapter."



# GROW WITH US THIS SUMMER!



Summer at Mighty Roots Academy is a season of exploration, creativity, and connection. It's when imaginations bloom under sunny skies, curiosity is sparked on wooded trails, and learning stretches beyond the classroom walls. Our nature-based, hands-on approach to education helps students grow not just academically, but in confidence, resilience, and wonder.

As a 501(c)(3) non-profit, we depend on the support of our community to keep this kind of learning accessible and thriving. Every donation, every hour volunteered, and every story shared helps us nurture a place where children can truly flourish.

## Here's how you can make a difference this summer:

- **Give a Gift** – No matter the size, your donation helps fund enriching programs, maintain our outdoor classrooms, and supply students with tools to explore and discover.
- **Sponsor a Class or Experience** – Help us offer unique learning opportunities by sponsoring a specific course, seasonal project, or student activity.
- **Volunteer Your Time** – Join us for a workday, lend your skills, or help prepare materials—there are so many ways your time can support our mission!
- **Share Our Story** – Tell others about Mighty Roots! The more our story is shared, the more families and supporters we can reach.

When you support Mighty Roots, you're helping build a strong foundation for children to learn, grow, and dream big—all in an environment that values creativity, connection, and the natural world. This summer, be part of something growing and good. Support Mighty Roots, and help us keep learning rooted in wonder!



## Final Thoughts

As summer unfolds around us, it brings long days of sunshine, laughter echoing through the trees, and endless opportunities to explore and grow. This season invites us to lean into joy, curiosity, and the simple magic of being outside together.



At Mighty Roots Academy, we see summer not as a break from learning, but as a deeper invitation to learn with the world. Whether it's through garden discoveries, creekside experiments, or creative activities under the canopy of trees, summer reminds us that learning is everywhere—and wonder is always within reach.

This season also reflects the heart of what we do: cultivating a space where children can stretch their imaginations, build meaningful connections, and root themselves in confidence and curiosity.

Thank you for being a part of this journey. Whether you're a parent, volunteer, supporter, or friend, your presence in our community helps make this kind of learning possible.

Here's to a summer of fun ideas, muddy hands, and memories that grow as strong as the roots we plant together!

## **Our Mission**

**The mission of Mighty Roots Academy is to provide active, multiage learning in a nature-rich environment.**

## **Our Philosophy**

**At Mighty Roots Academy, we believe it is most important to develop the skills of independent learning that equip students for a lifetime of inquiry and growth. A true education builds the skills needed for becoming a lifelong learner. We believe that students benefit most when skill-building is the focus, no matter the subject.**





Mighty Roots Academy

[mightyrootsacademy.com](http://mightyrootsacademy.com)