

SCHOOL HOLIDAYS? MORE WORK, LESS PLAY

Academic boot camps by tuition centres see rising demand in June, and some kids are using the break to reinforce their learning, especially before the national examinations



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The mid-year school holidays are almost over, but some students in Singapore have been focusing more on academics than relaxation during their month-long break.

Tuition centres report a spike in demand for their academic “boot camps” for June for primary and secondary school students. And observers say that spending a significant portion of the holiday period, which ends on June 23, on studies is commonplace in Singapore, which risks fatigue and burnout for kids.

However, some children and parents report satisfaction with the youngster’s goals, motivation and packed holiday schedule.

PSLE PUPILS HIT THE BOOKS

Carson Liu, 11, is among those taking their Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) in 2024, who have spent the mid-year break revising intensively for the national examination.

The oral exams are in August, while the written papers start in late September.

The Primary 6 pupil at Anglo-Chinese School (Primary) in Barker Road is also in the Gifted Education Programme (GEP).

He signed up for three holiday “crash courses” in mathematics, English and mother tongue at tuition provider Future Academy, which typically span a few days each, to reinforce what he has learnt thus far in 2024.

He is also keeping up with his weekly tuition lessons in all four of his school subjects, which include science.

He stopped his badminton, swimming and piano lessons earlier in order to focus on preparing for the PSLE.

He has also “put a pause on” hob-



Primary 6 pupil Teng Kai Xuan is studying hard during the June school holidays, as she wants to do well in the Primary School Leaving Examination and make her father, Mr Teng Wei Loon, proud of her.
ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

bies like chess and video editing.

Carson estimates that he has been spending about five hours on

his studies – including doing past-year examination papers and other assessments – on weekdays during

the mid-year holidays. Several hours on Saturday and Sunday are spent at tuition classes.

He feels his GEP lessons, which include projects such as making a logic puzzle based on sudoku, are “completely different” from the regular syllabus.

The GEP is designed to nurture intellectually gifted students to their full potential.

“I spend a lot of time on GEP. I don’t have enough time for PSLE preparation,” Carson says.

He had discussed his goals and mid-year holiday plans with his software engineer father and teacher mother, who are in their early 40s. He has a nine-year-old brother in Primary 4.

Carson says: “I want to get good marks for PSLE and I want to get into a good school.”

Separately, Teng Kai Xuan, 11, has similar goals, adding: “I want to make my parents proud.”

The Primary 6 pupil at Henry Park Primary School reckons she spends at least three hours studying every day during the mid-year holidays.

Since the beginning of the year, she has completed the Primary 6

preliminary examination papers for 2023 for more than 10 top schools, which works out to more than 40 exam papers for four subjects.

She is moving on to the 2022 papers.

Her father Teng Wei Loon, 44, a maintenance supervisor in the oil and gas industry, has also signed Kai Xuan up for four holiday workshops, including those where she takes English and maths mock exams for practice.

She has regular tuition for science, English and mother tongue.

Mr Teng, whose 41-year-old wife works in the green energy sector, is “more relaxed” with his younger daughter, Teng Kai Li, who is in Primary 3, setting the eight-year-old assessment book pages to do daily, for all subjects.

He says: “It’s good to keep Kai Xuan motivated and inspired. You don’t want to waste this opportunity to do your best.”

“I’m more relaxed with Kai Li because hers is not a critical year. The holidays are for her to keep up the momentum and read up on topics she does not understand.”

A MID-POINT CHECK ON ACADEMIC PROGRESS

Tuition centres are reporting increasing demand for academic boot camps during the mid-year holidays, as parents seek to keep their children meaningfully occupied and help them brush up on their weaker subjects.

Ms Grace Tan, principal and founder at Learning Journey Education Centre, which specialises in English for students from ages four to 18, says: “We’re getting a lot more sign-ups for our online holiday programmes, where working parents don’t need to ferry the child to classes. Many think that the child would be too free otherwise.”

The demand for her centre’s mid-year holiday programmes increased 30 per cent between 2022 and June 2024, she adds.

Her PSLE oral examination preparation courses are especially popular because these exams are coming up in about two months, she says.

I want to get good marks for PSLE and I want to get into a good school.



CARSON LIU, 11. The Primary 6 pupil signed up for three holiday “crash courses” in mathematics, English and mother tongue to reinforce what he has learnt thus far in the year. He and his father, software engineer Harry Liu, are at Carson’s tuition centre, Future Academy, in Bencoolen Street



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