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Laurier's BrainWorx summer camp uses fun to teach children about psychology

WATERLOO – Crafts, games, sports, outdoor play – and plenty of learning about psychology and the brain. That's what [BrainWorx](#), a unique summer camp at Wilfrid Laurier University's **Waterloo campus**, offers children aged **six to nine**.

BrainWorx is run by Professor [Kim Roberts](#), director of Laurier's [Child Memory Lab](#) and a member of Laurier's departments of Psychology and Criminology. Campers will have a chance to participate in studies that explore how children learn, remember and differentiate information. In the process, they learn how research works and about the areas being researched – all while having fun.

"When they've done the studies, we tell them about the experiments, what we're looking at and why this is an issue," said Roberts. "For example, if a study is looking at hearing, we would explain to them that even though the sound goes into our ear, unless our brain interprets that sound, we don't understand what we heard."

BrainWorx provides an unusual opportunity for young children to learn about psychology, which can have concrete benefits. Learning about behaviour helps children build self-regulation skills and learning about areas such as gender differences and memory can help them understand themselves and the world more accurately.

Though children's participation in studies is always voluntary – parents must also give informed consent – most enjoy the one-on-one time with adults they've come to know. Many children are also pleased to learn that they are participating in work that could benefit other kids.

"For example, if it's a study on language, we might be able to show them a language program we've put together based on the findings of previous studies," said Roberts, who is running the camp for the fifth time since 2010.

This year's studies include one that seeks to determine [how children differentiate between sources of online information](#) and others that focus on children's memories of events. The research will serve to write guidelines for professionals, such as teachers, social workers and judges, who often need to interview children.

Other activities, such as building models of the brain and making slime, teach kids about science more generally. A lot of just plain fun is built in too. Campers take trips to the pool and climbing wall, as well as play outside daily. With only about 30 campers a week, kids get to know each other and the staff well.

BrainWorx runs **July 9-13** and **July 16-20**, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., at a cost of \$170 per week or \$310 for both weeks. Children can be dropped off between 8:45-9 a.m. and additional supervision until 5 p.m. is available for an additional charge of \$30 a week. [Registration](#) is online.

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