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Fight the Summer Learning Loss

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As our students embark on their summer vacation, we need to be reminded of the loss in academic skills and knowledge that is inherent with a three-month break from school.

Known as the "summer learning loss," studies show that, on average, students will drop one to two months in grade equivalency in reading and math skills during the summer. For low income students, this gap increases to three months behind grade level. Teachers often spend the first few weeks in September reviewing past material and fundamental skills.

Most developed western countries' educational systems require a longer school year and have vacation breaks no longer than five weeks. These shorter breaks maintain the continuity and rhythm of learning. In the United States, any model that increases the length of the school year counters the widely held belief that children need free time, recreation and a break from any academic routine or expectations.

So what can be done to counter this learning loss? While still enjoying the change of pace and the flexibility of the summer schedules, there are a few ways families can be intentional about maintaining and advancing their children's academic skills.

The following are proactive steps to ensure your child is keeping pace academically:

- **Take advantage of summer school offerings** - Each of the Glenbard high schools has a variety of summer offerings. There are opportunities for enrichment, credit recovery and bridge classes.
- **Check your school's suggested reading list** - Many schools' websites list recommended books that are highly regarded. Often these books will be prerequisite readings for classes during the next school year.
- **Develop a leisure reading plan** - Research shows that students who read five or more books during the summer will maintain or experience gains in their reading scores. Parents are encouraged to make good use of the quality local public libraries that we are privileged to have in our communities.
- **Visit a local museum or landmark** – We are fortunate to have a wealth of interesting museums, zoos and arboretums in our communities and within a short drive. You and your children will be amazed at the educational gems right here in our area.

Summer learning through reading can be a community-wide priority. There are a variety of roles that public agencies, community-based organizations, cultural institutions and public schools can play in prioritizing the importance of reading. I know I will take full advantage of the summer schedule to catch up on my reading!

With an intentional approach and a commitment to continuous learning, we can help students maintain their skills and build upon them during the sunny days of summer.