1) Over the summer months, students forget some of what they have learned in school.

2) Students score lower on standardized tests at the end of summer than they did at the end of the previous spring.

3) Cooking, budgeting, gardening, food shopping, household maintenance, travel, outings, etc., do not contribute to summer learning.

4) Students lose approximately 2.6 months of grade level equivalency in math over the summer months each year.

5) Children from lower income families experience an average loss in reading skills over the summer months.

6) If children read “high interest, ability-appropriate” books during the summer, their reading skills can actually grow.

7) Key studies indicate that achievement gaps between high and low performing students grow over the summer, but not during the school year.

8) Children from all backgrounds learn at similar rates during the school year, but each summer students of high socioeconomic status continue to learn while those of low socioeconomic status fall behind.

9) There is nothing parents or communities can do to eliminate or reduce learning loss.

Do you Know?

1) True. Over the summer months, students are likely to forget up to 2.6 months of what they learned the previous academic year (Cooper, 1996).

2) True. Except for reading scores for middle class students, scores are lower in the fall than they were in the previous spring (Cooper, H., Nye, B. K., Lindsay, J., & S. 1996).

3) False. These are learning experiences that can develop reading, reasoning, math, problem solving, planning, and other skills.

4) True. Math learning loss crosses all populations of kids (Harris Cooper, 1996).

5) True. Low-income students generally lose about two months of reading achievement. Middle-income students experience slight gains in reading performances (MetaMetrics).

6) True. If children read “high interest, ability-appropriate” books during the summer, their reading skills can grow as much as their peers who attended summer school (James Kim, Harvard University).

7) True. Two-thirds of the academic achievement gap in reading and language found among high school students has been explained through the learning loss that occurs during the summer months of the primary school years (Diane Grazer, education consultant, Wyoming Department of Education and Entwisle, D., Alexander, K., & Olson, L. 2000).

8) True. Multiple studies have found the summer learning loss varies by income and race, and its impact persists even past childhood (Barbara Heyns, New York University, Alexander, K., Entwisle, D., Olson, L, Johns Hopkins University).

9) False. Something as simple as providing books and encouragement has been shown to develop reading skills. St. Paul Schools has created a good resource for suggestions and guidelines at http://sprocketssaintpaul.org/news-and-media/doesummer-countdown. Create a “scavenger hunt” of idioms, or articles, or ways to save energy.

Now you know. What can you do?
Some of us think of summer as a time to let go of schedules, abandon bed times, sleep in, or camp out. Older students may use it as a time to get a job and earn a little extra money for added independence in the months ahead. Still others see it as a time to watch TV, play video games, follow celebrities on twitter and nap. However it is spent, summer has long been considered a part of our Minnesota culture alm most an annual rite of passage.

Unfortunately, summer is also something else. Summer is a time of learning loss for students. As much as one-third of what was learned during the previous academic year in school is lost. The loss is greatest for those who are not involved in a variety of experiences. Those experiences don’t need to be expensive or even have a cost at all.

Research shows that the learning gap among students grows during the summer season when kids are out of school, and not during the academic year. The most information and understanding is lost in Math skills. This is good information to have because it means families and communities and schools can all be a part of eliminating the learning gap. We can target summer as a time to hold learning expectations and to add experiences. Some ideas include:

- Students, ask teachers to send home math problems for you to do over the summer and ask the teachers if they will either send a separate answer sheet with explanations or will go over the answers with you in the fall.

- Count, measure, weigh, estimate, solve problems daily.

- Walk, bike or drive to the library weekly. Spend some time exploring the library. Read a little about places in the world, or artists, or something that interests you personally. Ask the librarian to suggest good reading material to bring home. At some libraries, you can even check out paintings to hang on your wall for a time. Learn about the life of the artist or just see what you notice about the painting – its colors, shapes, story.

- Read, read, read, together or with others.

- Each week, write a story about some person you come across. The story can be real or made up. Read it to someone. Use at least a couple of words you haven’t used before.

- Use scraps at home to create a model of your dream work place or home.

- Create a healthy meal from food to which you have access. Research and design a $5 meal that is both healthy and tasty. Learn about proteins, sugars, salts and what they can do to your body and how they can be reduced in the foods you eat. Or try a meal that is all fruits and vegetables.

- Listening to a type of music you have not listened to before. Make instruments of things you have around the house and produce a song.

- Color, paint, or draw with a pencil or chalk what you feel or want.

- Parents with babies or preschoolers, count objects, look at books, color, compare sizes of things, review the alphabet and numbers. Read and count, read and count, read and count… Make eye contact and have conversations.