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from the director's desktop

"No more homework, no more books." I remember singing that song as I walked home on the last day of the school year. I knew my summer would be filled with family vacations, regular trips to the public library, and enriching experiences that would keep me occupied and learning until Labor Day. Even so, the truth was that I *liked* school, loved reading, and would have been happy if I could have stayed in the classroom all summer.

My elementary school years came well before we knew anything about "summer slide," the loss of learning that affects primarily low-income children during the three long months of summer that they are not in school. And it was long before schools provided basic services like nutritious meals to a growing percentage of school-age children.

Today, we know that summer matters. That three-month break in learning hinders the success of our schools—and the health and well-being of our students. Today, when half the children in our nation live in poverty, the idealized summer vacation that I looked forward to is far from the norm. For too many children, summer means a loss of access to books, adult mentors, meals, and enrichment. And for many more, for whom school is still the safest place in their lives, an unstructured summer is not something to look forward to.

Fred Brown, a former elementary school teacher who is now deputy executive director of Learning Forward, describes what happened when those students return to the classroom in "All Children Deserve Uninterrupted Learning!" Hint: It is not pretty. Teachers spend the beginning of each new school year reteaching material from the year before. Then they rush to cover the material assigned for that year. And then summer happens again and the cycle repeats.

That's why this issue of the *Standard* focuses on the critical importance of extending learning time

throughout the summer months. In "Summer Matters: Advocating for Summer Learning That Can Weather Political Seasons," Aaron McQuade notes, "Summer is...critical to each child's development, both mind and body. Any meaningful attempts to get at America's equity divide and the consequent gap in opportunities for kids must include summer education as a key part of the solution."

State boards of education can play a key role in enabling summer learning for all students. Longtime Michigan state board member Kathleen Straus discusses the process her board went through to set standards for out-of-schooltime programs. Michigan has been a national leader in expanding the definition of "school day" and "school year."

If you are concerned about funding (and who isn't), Bob Seidel's article, "Finding Funds to Move Summer Learning Forward," outlines several funding streams that can help support this work. Rhode Island's efforts to diversify support for this important public responsibility, outlined in Adam Greenman's article, "Rhode Island's Innovative Solutions to Summer Learning Loss," may also give you some ideas of how your state can take action on this critical priority.

NASBE is grateful to The Wallace Foundation for their support of this work. Later this year, the Foundation will release the results of a comprehensive evaluation of what works in summer learning.

Schools and teachers work hard all year to ensure that every child gets a chance to achieve. Yet the evidence now shows us that if students do not have meaningful summer learning opportunities, they are likely to lose a significant amount of the content they have mastered. We hope this issue of the *Standard* will start a conversation in your state about how you can foster strong summer learning programs for all students.