

PRESS RELEASE



July 17, 2019 Online at www.proedtn.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ENDLESS SUMMER

It is said that sunshine is the best medicine and the best sunshine is found during the summer. The concept of an *Endless Summer* was based on a 1964 Bruce Brown movie built on the idea that if someone had enough time and money would it be possible to chase summer across the world. In both the Northern and Southern hemisphere making it endless. Alas, teachers neither have enough time nor money, and it is almost back to school time here in Tennessee. For students, it means summer is coming to an end. For parents, advertisers tell us, it is the most wonderful time of the year.

Teaching has a calendar unlike that of most other vocations. Some mistakenly believe that teachers only have annual instructional time for 180 or so days. The romanticized summer off for teachers is as likely as an endless summer for most of us. Educators have responsibilities beyond their days with students. Others often fail to take in after school hours, lesson prep, weekends, professional learning, parent-teacher conferences, and, “in-service” days to name a few. In urban communities, they have to factor in travel time as teachers, often cannot afford to live in communities where they teach. The same is true of police, fire and hospital personnel.

The argument can be made that teachers knew the task was tough when they took the job assignment. This is true. However, few jobs are as demanding as teaching. Certainly, summers off are a thing of the past. Most educators are paid for 10 months and have money withheld from their check, so they can get paid for 12 months. [USA Today](#) points out that across the country, “teachers often trade their summer vacation for other work opportunities to make ends meet. Recent data from the National Survey of Teachers and Principals showed nearly one in five teachers hold a second job during the school year.”

Many parents legitimately worry about the “summer brain drain,” also known as the “summer slide” that children experience. This concept refers to the loss of skills and knowledge that happens in the summer months. David Quinn and Morgan Polikoff review of academic literature [summarized several findings](#) regarding summer loss, and concluded that: (1) on average, students’ achievement scores declined over summer vacation by one month’s worth of school-year learning, (2) declines were sharper for math than for reading, and (3) the extent of loss was larger at higher grade levels. None of this attributable to teachers.

Parents who combat this academic issue understand that learning occurs beyond the classroom. They help their children find opportunities to grow and learn. You must engage children in both mental and physical activity, not strictly tied to formal education. If you missed out on these opportunities, it is never too late to

SUMMARY

We should acknowledge we are indeed falling behind, because we are not addressing the summer loss of learning adequately. Endless summer has to become endless learning for all of us; educators, parents, and students.

supplement a child's learning. The key is to be actively engaged in your child's education throughout the year. Parents and students can no longer take summer off either.

Therein lies the problem, absent the concept of year-round school, summer breaks are not equal for all students. The range of activities, including summer camps, family vacations, and home learning activities are different. Access to summer activities may vary for children from different socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds. Child care arrangements are also a factor, as well as the education level of parents. Communities need a plan for enrichment activities for these students with increased access for children of low socioeconomic status.

Some children return to school ready to learn, others come back needing to catch back-up, and some even missing necessary prerequisite skills. That should create some valid concerns for annual tests. Writer Seth Godin suggests that "Better decisions, emotional labor and the confidence that comes from education are the future of work. Either you're on that path or you're falling behind."

I would add that Godin's quote is applicable here as well, and we should acknowledge we are indeed falling behind, because we are not addressing the summer loss of learning adequately. We need more parent engagement. Endless summer has to become endless learning for all of us; educators, parents, and students. Surf's up, and sadly Summer is nearly over.

#####

JC Bowman is the Executive Director of Professional Educators of Tennessee, a non-partisan teacher association headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee. Permission to reprint in whole or in part is hereby granted, provided that the author and the association are properly cited. For more information on this subject or any education issue please contact Professional Educators of Tennessee. To schedule an interview please contact [Audrey Shores, Director of Communications](#), at 1-800-471-4867 ext.102.