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## **Summer learning opportunities vital to future success**

*By Sean Marx and Jennifer Peck, Oakland Tribune My Word © 2013 Bay Area News Group*

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Forward-thinking businesses that wish to invest in education ought to invest in high-quality summer learning opportunities because they provide such significant returns.

A century of research shows a lack of summer learning opportunities leads to summer learning loss -- the loss of skills and knowledge during summer vacation that causes teachers to spend valuable fall classroom time re-teaching important concepts and forcing school districts to spend more of their limited resources on catch-up.

Summer learning loss is cumulative, so students who don't catch up become increasingly at risk for dropping out of school entirely.

It's not just academic performance that suffers when students miss out on summer learning, but also their physical health. Without access to summer learning opportunities, students are more likely to remain sedentary and eat unhealthy foods.

Instead of watching TV and eating junk food, or skipping meals entirely, students could be in summer learning programs that strength their academic and social skills and improve their health through physical activity and healthy eating. In Oakland, and across California, we need our future workforce to be mentally and physically fit to thrive in an increasingly competitive economy.

When students struggle, their working parents struggle as well. The stress of helping their children catch up drains parents' energy and ultimately hurting their employers as well.

All of this adds up to a clear bottom line: summer learning loss is a loss for students, as well as their families, schools and businesses.

By investing in summer learning, businesses can help students maintain, and even accelerate, their academic progress and health gains. High-quality summer learning programs are certain to yield a strong Return On Investment by providing:

- Educational ROI: Students progress instead of regress, improving their vocabulary, confidence and general readiness to learn.
- Health and well-being ROI: Students continue to access beneficial physical activity and nutritious eating.
- Financial ROI: Summer learning programs are less expensive per day than a regular school day.

According to the National Summer Learning Association, the cost of re-teaching material that students forget due to summer learning loss is four to six weeks of school time, or \$1,500 per student. When schools partner with community-based organizations on summer learning, they can deliver high quality programs for lower costs.

Thanks to creative public-private-nonprofit partnerships, California has emerged as a summer learning leader. High quality summer learning programs across the state -- including those run by Oakland Unified School District -- offer uniquely valuable opportunities for students to learn while having fun by blending academic content with engaging learning activities.

With strong local and statewide momentum for summer learning, now is an opportune time for businesses to invest California's summer learning excellence.

Recognizing the critical importance of summer learning, Give Something Back Office Supplies is proud to serve as the inaugural business partner of the statewide Summer Matters Campaign — a diverse coalition working to expand access to high-quality summer learning for all California students.

Having invested more than \$5 million in local communities in the past two decades, Give Something Back is confident in summer learning's proven returns.

Businesses and business leader who care about education can visit [summermatters2you.net](http://summermatters2you.net) and learn how to help ensure that all California students can thrive year-round.

*Sean Marx is CEO of Oakland-based Give Something Back Office Supplies. Jennifer Peck is co-chair the of Summer Matters Campaign and Executive Director of the Partnership for Children and Youth, based in Oakland.*