Prevent Summer Learning Loss
Teachers Share Fun and Easy Ways to Keep Children Learning

When students return to school in the fall, it’s easy to see how they’ve grown. Perhaps they’re an inch or two taller. Maybe they have jumped a shoe size. But with the inches they’ve gained, it’s easy to overlook what they may have lost.

Without regularly scheduled educational opportunities, it’s common for students to experience learning loss over the summer. Some studies show that over the summer, students can lose up to two months worth of the grade-level skills they accumulated over the prior school year. For this reason, finding ways for students to apply their skills over the summer is critical for their academic success.

The good news is that summer learning doesn’t have to be compli-

How to Help Kids Keep Learning, Even During the Break

Lo maestros comparten alternativas divertidas para que los estudiantes continúen con su aprendizaje, durante el verano.

Cuando los estudiantes regresan a la escuela en el otoño, es muy fácil ver cuánto han crecido, quizás hasta una pulgada o dos de alto, o una talla mayor en su calzado. Desafortunadamente, con estas ganancias en pulgadas, podemos pasar por alto lo que han perdido.

District Closing the Loop in School-to-Home Communication

As many parents can tell you, keeping up with your child’s homework and grades, or just remembering a parent-teacher conference can feel like a full time job. Parents often find themselves working with a string of missed messages. For teachers, it can be equally challenging to communicate with busy families on a regular basis.

The new SFUSD Sustainability website provides an overview of the exciting environmental projects and programs happening throughout SFUSD. From District-sponsored initiatives, like green cleaning and green building, to school-based efforts, like gardening and field trips, the site provides comprehensive information about how SFUSD is teaching its kids about the earth and providing hands-on environmental activities. A resources section contains links to useful websites in a variety of fields, and a best practices sections, allows schools to learn from each other and easily contact the movers and shakers in the city. A click on “Go Green at Home” shows visitors what they can do to minimize their own environmental footprint. Check it out: www.greenthenthexgen.com.

How it Works
With School Loop, SFUSD schools and teachers will be able to create custom, professional-looking websites to publish class news, events and information. Teachers will be able to post homework on their site and create instant notification to parents and students via a regular homework email, or send voice messages (in the family’s home language) for parents, and even mobile phone calls will be able to access their assignments via classroom websites.

In addition, class websites will feature useful elements such as a school calendar, links to projects, discussion boards, and even a dashboard that can be filled with links to other important sites and a gradebook for each student. Access to student’s information on School Loop will be password-protected for parents, students and school staff.

continued on page 12

Continúa en la página 3

continued on page 12

Make a family calendar plotting out everything that needs to be done during the week. Talk with your kids about the schedule of activities that happens before an event.

La versión en español se encuentra en las páginas de adentro

中文版見内頁

This paper is made possible with the support of The Examiner
Ask a Graduate: SFUSD Alums
Share their College Advice for Outgoing Seniors

Douglass Gee, Mission High School ’08, U.C. Berkeley
I came to Berkeley for some of the wrong reasons. I decided to follow my high school girlfriend here, but then she broke up with me over the summer. Now we live in the same dorm building. When she sees me she’s like, “Do I know you?” Now that I’m here, I’m trying to make the most of it. I realized that even if people from your high school go to college with you, it’s important to branch out. Make friends in your classes and take advantage of club socials throughout the year to meet new people.

Kristina Esocbar, Thurgood Marshall Academic High School ’08, St. Mary’s College
“Try to eat healthy. Otherwise, you’ll pile on the ‘Freshman 15’ and no one wants that. I always try to find healthy alternatives to the cheeseburgers that are served in the cafeteria. Go for the salad bar.”

Sanyee Yuan, Lowell ’08, Harvard University
“In college, it’s very easy to get involved in extracurricular activities. Most colleges will have open houses where freshman can come learn about clubs. If you see something you’re kind of interested in, just go to the information session to see if you like the members. Branch out from the activities you did in high school. One of the most meaningful parts of college is trying something new.”

Michael Gipson-Carman, June Jordan School for Equity ’08, California Maritime Academy
“I would tell seniors to start thinking on their own. In college, no one is going to remind you about your homework or if you have a paper due. Professors are not going to baby you. But when you’re frustrated don’t just say ‘forget it.’ Try to stick with it. You’re not alone.”

Tiffany Lee, Wallenberg High School ’08, U.C. Berkeley
“I’ve always loved history, but I didn’t think it would lead to an obvious career path. So, I came in as a media studies major, but it wasn’t what I hoped it would be. After talking to lots of other students on campus and enrolling in a great history class, I had a revelation: it’s better to study something you love and find a career path that fits to it than study something you don’t enjoy.”

Meet the Matrix: A New Tool to View School Data

When Kevin Truitt was a principal, he used to take out a notepad and sort through pages of data, making notes of how other schools compared to his own in order to determine who he could learn from. The tedious process not only made it difficult to compare the academic performance of schools, but it offered no easy way to see how well schools were improving outcomes for different students over time.

Today, educators and parents in San Francisco public schools have a new way to access school data and analyze how well schools are serving their students. The School Quality, Equity and Access Matrix is a first-of-its kind tool that translates data about student performance and demographics into an interactive graphic model, which allows the viewer to quickly compare schools to the district and to each other.

“The Matrix, you can compare schools’ demographics and performance in one screenshot,” says Truitt, now the Senior Executive Director of the district’s Leadership and Equity Initiative. “The Matrix also allows you to ‘play a movie,’ to see how a school’s performance and demographics have changed over the past five years.”

“The Matrix is challenging our assumptions about schools,” he adds. “A school may perform well overall, but that doesn’t necessarily mean it’s improving the achievement of all its students over time.”

The Matrix is a complement to the district’s strategic plan, Beyond the Talk, which prioritizes improving the performance of historically disadvantaged students. In the Matrix, a school is not only measured by its overall performance, but by how well it’s improving the achievement of the different student subgroups it serves (see sidebar for explanation). “The Matrix is part of a larger effort to foster dialogues about the instructional practices within our own district that are making a positive difference for students of different backgrounds,” says Deputy Superintendent of Instruction, Innovation and Social Justice Tony Smith. “If I saw a school across town with a similar student population, but with higher student achievement, I would ask ‘What are they doing there that’s working for their students?’”

“Through these discussions we want to create a compendium of promising practices that schools can share to better ensure the success of all students,” Smith says.

Tony Talarico, a parent at Sunset Elementary school said the Matrix has already spurred several discussions at recent school site council meetings. “I found the data in the SFUSD Matrix quite useful for helping identify the relative strengths and weaknesses of language arts and math achievement at our school,” he said. “After using the Matrix, I had a better understanding of the rationale behind the academic priorities for our school, and a better understanding of how I might help the school meet its goals.”

“This tool is a work in progress,” says Deputy Superintendent Smith. “We want educators, parents and students to play with it and give us feedback to make it better.”

“The Matrix can never replace the conversations needed to bring about change, but I hope it creates a sense of urgency within our community and informs the actions we take.”

Try out the tool, available on the SFUSD Web site, and submit questions and suggestions to BSChelp@sfusd.edu.

How does it work?

In the Matrix each school is presented as a bubble in a scatterplot. The Matrix allows you to compare schools by different grade levels and in two major categories: language arts and mathematics.

The Y-axis measures a school’s actual average student performance on the California Standards Test (CST).

The X-axis, or “Benchmark Gap,” is a relative measure. Each school has an individualized benchmark formulated by a statistical model which predicts how well a school would perform on the CST given its demographics and prior performance on the exam. The X-axis measures the difference between a school’s benchmark and its actual average student performance in a given year.

If a school is on the right, positive side of the Benchmark Gap, it means students are performing higher than their demographics would predict.

If a school is on the left, negative side of the Benchmark Gap, students are performing lower than their demographics would predict.

To give you a bigger picture of a school’s progress, the Matrix allows you to view a school’s performance over a five-year period.

Try out the tool, available on the SFUSD Web site, and submit questions and suggestions to BSChelp@sfusd.edu.
Five Caring Adults in the Life of Every Child

Andre, an 8th grader, says that mentoring, “keeps me motivated in school with all the problems going on at home. It helps to talk about things and get it off my chest, because then my mind is on school and I can keep up my grades.”

His mentor, David, is looking forward to visiting a college campus with Andre, “I think it’s never too early to put the idea of college into a student’s mind.”

Sixth grader Brittany, and her mentor Jenny, talk a lot about peer pressure and problems with bullying that Brittany has experienced. Jenny was able to help Brittany get the bullying to stop.

Researchers have found that mentoring reduces school absences, improves overall academic performance, improves attitudes and behavior toward school, and improves young people’s attitudes toward elders and helping others.

In 2005, the district began an employee mentoring program at a couple schools. Now, the district’s mentoring program is thriving in 39 schools across the district and 500 SFUSD students are matched with a caring and committed adult who also happens to be a teacher, principal, counselor, school nurse, school psychologist, district administrator, security guards, or administrative assistant.

SFUSD’s mentoring program is a researched-based program where mentors meet with their student mentee weekly throughout the school year. Mentor-student match relationships are supported with professional development, group activities and problem-solving with the on-site Learning Support Professional/Mentor Program Coordinator. With the right support and practices in place, mentoring has a profound impact on students.

Joe and his mentee Jacque have been matched for two years. With Jacque about to graduate from middle school, Joe says, “I want to try and keep a connection with him when he is in high school, even after he graduates from high school; I want to help him through college.”

When the Board of Education adopted its strategic plan a year ago, one measure that it said it would use to evaluate its success would be that every child in SFUSD reported having at least five adults in their lives who cared about him or her.

There are plans to expand the program again next year to serve more students.

For more information about how you can be a mentor, contact Curtiss Sarkey (sarkeyec@sfusd.edu) or Erin Farrell (farrelle@sfusd.edu) at SFUSD School Health Programs Department.

Viewpoints

**Board of Education**

**President Kim-Shree Maufas**

There are a few areas that have bred what I’ve witnessed as a culminating “tolerance” in our school district during my tenure as School Board President.

SFUSD has ‘tolerated’ graduating thousands of SFUSD students from ethnically- and economically-challenged backgrounds into a world without options for college and/or joining the work force at a level that provides a living wage. With the A-G Course Sequence policy, the district is aligning graduation requirements so that all students, including those from low-socioeconomic and communities of color, may graduate ready for admission to any California public university. Yet, as the district begins anew for students to graduate into a future of possibilities – high achieving schools, staff, and their families lament doubts that all students might begin to play on a level field.

For years the school district has ‘tolerated’ educational inequities for immigrant children, poor children, and children of color due in part to the cause/effect of the current school assignment system. As community members watch the school board discuss what changes can help fix this system, I don’t believe that I’ve ever witnessed a greater display of venomous ‘tolerance’ of a potentially true inclusion assignment system by a predominantly privileged audience than what I’ve witnessed at committee meetings.

Now, we have the courage to say that we have been tolerating minuscule attempts to find sustainable solutions to these ills that we knew were real – our tolerance has been broken because its not good enough any more. And now, we have the courage to say that we have been tolerating inequities and injustices for years – and that tolerance is not good enough for our students any more!

**Superintendent**

**Carlos A. Garcia**

College should be a choice for every student. That’s why the district has taken major steps this year to ensure that every student graduates with the option of enrolling in a four-year college and equipped with the skills to make the most of that opportunity.

This year the Board of Education adopted new policies designed to make college a more viable option for every SFUSD student.

The first policy will align the district’s graduation requirements with the A-G course sequence, which is required for admission to any California public university. It will also require the district to realign its resources to make sure students have the academic support they need to meet these new expectations.

Another policy will set a consistent protocol across the district for student access to honors and Advanced Placement courses.

Currently, every high school sets its own criteria for enrollment in these courses. By opening enrollment, students who are traditionally underrepresented in these classes will have a greater opportunity to participate in college-level courses and earn college credit.

And we want to do more than ensure our students are eligible for college; we want to make sure they actually have the chance to go.

Through SF Promise, a partnership between the district, San Francisco State University, and the city, all SFUSD students, starting with this year’s 6th grade class, will be guaranteed a spot at SFSU and if necessary, financial aid, so long as they meet eligibility requirements.

I encourage you to learn more about these new efforts to cultivate a college-ready culture in our schools by visiting www.sfusd.edu.

Have a wonderful and safe summer. Keep learning!

The district’s mentoring program is thriving in 39 schools across the district. Currently 500 SFUSD students are matched with a caring and committed adult who works in the district. Erika and Luis, above, volunteer together.

This paper is made possible with the support of The Examiner
District Closing the Loop in School-to-Home Communication

Early Results Look Good
Parent Lorraine Woodruff-Long, whose son attends Aptos Middle School where School Loop was piloted this year, is a fan of the new system. “The daily email I signed up for has helped alert me to problems and, as a result, helped my son better understand his own grades,” says Woodruff-Long. “It’s such a simple and efficient way to connect with his teachers and, I hope, a better use of the teacher’s valuable time.”

Long says that in just three weeks, School Loop helped her to be more involved with her son’s school work and her son has become more organized. “He checks his status online daily - I’m sure in anticipation of what he knows I’ll be getting in my own email,” says Woodruff-Long. “Just yesterday he called me to say he’d just checked his School Loop, and he’s brought up all his grades.”

Teacher Eric Cuneo at Ida B. Wells, where the program was also piloted this year, says he found that his classes’ websites meet several of his organizational needs in one place. He also discovered that the sites can let him be creative. “I’m having fun with my sites,” says Cuneo. “There are a lot of ways School Loop allows us to make things more interesting for teachers and students.”

School staff have been receiving training this year on how to use the new system, and an orientation for parents will be available throughout next year.

For more information about School Loop, please visit www.sfusd.edu.

Keep Children Learning

imated, boring or expensive. In fact, can be a fun opportunity for children to exercise their creativity and for families to share some quality time.

Here are a few simple ways for children of different ages to make learning a summer habit, courtesy of four SFUSD master teachers:

Oliver Glover, 2nd grade teacher at Lakeshore Alternative School
Over the summer, visit your neighborhood library to check out books on architecture, bridges and other structures. Using these sources for inspiration, children can plan and design on grid paper their ideas for building projects. They can strengthen their measuring skills by using a ruler to explore the concepts of height, width and depth. Have them label the various details. Next, they can use Legos or other building blocks to bring their design to life. Children may choose to photograph or illustrate their completed projects and then discuss how their structures differ from their original plan. Finally, they can write descriptive paragraphs to go with their photographs and illustrations. This project helps them exercise their math, art and writing skills, as well as their eye-hand coordination.

Lianne Donovan, 3rd grade teacher at Cleveland Elementary School
Keeping an interactive journal is a great way to make a habit of writing over the summer. It’s also an activity that can be fun and validating for children. Together, agree that your children will write three to five times a week over the summer, preferably at the same time every day, like before lunch or dinner. They can write about anything they like. If there is a day that they don’t feel like writing, they can draw or do a design. After they compose three to five entries, you can respond to them. Let the grammar and spelling go, so children don’t feel like the exercise is tedious. This can be an opportunity to communicate things that you may not usually talk about. Share your own feelings, encourage them and let them know you’re proud of them.

Debbie Fergin-Mavaega, kindergarten teacher at Bret Harte Elementary School
A great summer activity parents can do with kindergarten-age students is practice letter identification. You can do this in many ways. Driving down the street, ask your children to identify letters on billboards. When you are reading to your children, ask them to pick out letters in the text. You can also make flash cards and play games to match capital to lower case letters. Towards the end of kindergarten, I have my students use playdough to shape letters and numbers—an activity that helps to develop fine muscle coordination. This is an exercise you can easily replicate at home with this recipe for playdough: combine 3 tsp. Cream of tartar, 3 cups flour, 1 ½ cups of salt, 2 lbs. oil, 3 cups of cold water. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly until you reach the desired consistency. Knead and add food coloring as it cools.

Eleanor Dong, 5th grade teacher at Alice Fong Yu
Time management and organization are important skills to practice over the summer, especially for 5th-graders transitioning to the middle school level. Make a family calendar, plotting out everything that needs to be done during the week. Talk with your kids about the schedule of activities that happens before an event. For example, if your children are going to a birthday party, discuss what days the store is open, when should they buy a present, how much time will they need to wrap it. Often, when I tell students a book report is due, they may remember the due date, but they won’t think about the timeframe for finishing the book or starting the paper. The more opportunities they have to see calendar planning, the better they will be at managing their time. Plus, having a family calendar is a good way to encourage everyone to work together.

As master teachers, these contributors have more than 50 years of teaching experience, combined, and they often guide other teachers on best practices. To hear more about their tips for preventing summer learning loss and to see a list of tips, visit www.sfusd.edu.