



# Bits 'n Pieces Summer 2011

For use by School Leaders

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## Just the Facts

### Did You Know?

- The United States ranked 40<sup>th</sup> out of 40 countries in innovation.
  - Minnesota ranked 16<sup>th</sup> in the country in technology and innovation.
  - The cost of doing business in Minnesota is 23<sup>rd</sup> in the nation.\*
  - The Quality of life in Minnesota is 8<sup>th</sup> in the nation.\*
  - Minnesota's education system is ranked tenth in the nation.\*
- \*Taken from CNBC Special Report, America's Top States for Business 2011.*

### Taxes

- Americans are paying the smallest share of their income for taxes than at any time since 1958. – *USA Today*, May 6, 2011
- The corporate tax rate in Minnesota is 9.8 percent.\*
- The largest employers in Minnesota are Target, Best Buy and Supervalu.\*
- The total tax burden for all federal, state and local taxes has dropped to 23.6% of income. – Bureau of Economic Analysis.
- If the tax rate were the same as in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s we would have \$500 billion of extra taxes today or one-third of the \$2.5 trillion federal deficit this year.
- Government spending is slightly below last year as a share of the economy.
- Since 1990 incomes have grown; tax payments haven't when adjusted for inflation.

### Summer Gaps

- According to nearly 100 years of research, most kids score lower on standardized tests in the fall than they did the prior spring.
- Summer loss is most pronounced in math facts, computation, and spelling.
- During the school year, low income children's skills improve at close to the same rate as those of their more advantaged peers. During the summer, their learning loss is greater.
- Most students lose about two months of grade level equivalence in mathematical computation skills over the summer months.
- Low income students lose up to 3 months of grade-level equivalency during the summer.
- Middle income students lose about 1 month of grade-level equivalency over the summer.
- A family's socioeconomic status affects children's achievement scores most when school is closed.
- Middle-class students make slight gains in reading achievement over the summer months while low-income students stay at the same level or lose ground.
- Two-thirds of the ninth-grade achievement gap between lower and higher income youth has been explained by unequal access to summer learning opportunities during the elementary school years.

### Balance

- When examining the amount of time that children or families should spend on activities, homework, together or apart, or playing or working, one needs to identify individual needs, development and personality.
- Not all families are able to make the same choices about time or access the same opportunities, but they are all able to influence—for better or worse—the individual and collective lives of one another.
- Some kids may require more structure and stimulation in their lives while others may need more calm and time to appreciate themselves and to engage their own creativity.

### **Tips for families and kids of all ages**

- Limit and monitor screen time
  - There is a definite relationship between the amount of time kids spend watching screens per day and a range of physical, cognitive and educational problems later on. – Dr Aric Sigman, psychologist
  - Children under two should not view any screen entertainment at all, American Academy of Pediatrics
  - Among 8- to 18-year-olds, Asian Americans logged the most media use (13 hours, 13 minutes a day), followed by Hispanics (13 hours), blacks (12 hours, 59 minutes), and whites (8 hours, 36 minutes.)
  - Research indicates that among all groups, computer playtime far outweighs computer use for homework in the 8- to 18-year-old age range; only about 16 to 20 minutes a day can be chalked up to school-focused activities.
- Make family time a priority.
  - "Protect family meal times. We know this to be very important for a child's development," Eleanor Mackey, a clinical psychologist with Children's National Medical Center in Washington, D.C.
  - The Search Institute lists "Family Support" and "Positive Family Communication" as essential developmental assets for kids of all ages.
  - The statistics are clear: Kids who dine with their families are healthier, happier and better students, which is why a dying tradition is coming back. – Michael Elins, Time Magazine, CNN
  - Studies show that the more often families eat together, the less likely kids are to smoke, drink, do drugs, get depressed, develop eating disorders and consider suicide, and the more likely they are to do well in school, delay having sex, eat their vegetables, learn big words and know which fork to use.
  - Kids who eat most often with their parents are 40% more likely to say they get mainly A's and B's in school than kids who have two or fewer family dinners a week.
  - For young children, meal time at home is a stronger predictor of academic achievement and psychological adjustment than time spent in any of the following activities: school, studying, sports, church/religious activities, or art activities. For teens, having regular dinners with parents is a strong predictor of academic success, psychological adjustment, and lower rates of alcohol use, drug use, early sexual behavior, eating disorders, and risk for suicide." – Doherty, W. J., *Putting Family First: Successful Strategies for Reclaiming Family Life in a Hurry Up World*, 2002
  - Kids from families that don't have family meals together report more tension among family members, and are much less likely to think their parents are proud of them than kids that frequently share mealtime with family members.

- Provide and/or encourage activities that will develop social skills and personal character (i.e. volunteer, learn about those in need, join a team or group that encompasses interests) The Search Institute identifies areas of activities that are associated with kids that thrive and avoid risky behaviors including:
  - Creative Activities. Young person participates in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
  - Youth Programs. Young person participates in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in community organizations.
  - Religious Community. Young person spends one hour or more per week in activities in a religious institution.
- Appreciate quiet time.
  - Work with your child to find a time each day they can have a personal quiet time.
  - Set an example by having quiet time for yourself.
  - Ask your children about their quiet time. Show an interest in what they are learning and doing. – Lois Graham, BuildingBlocks4life

## Quotes and Quotables

### Values and Variables

- "There are as many ways to live as there are ways to love, and each family has its particular rhythm, its own way of doing and being." *Katrina Kenison, author*
- "People travel to wonder at the height of mountains, at the huge waves of the sea, at the long courses of rivers, at the vast compass of the ocean, at the circular motion of the stars; and they pass by themselves without wondering." – *St. Augustine*
- "It is about paying more attention to the life you already have, about taking your own life back as you protect your children from the pull of a world that is spinning too fast." *Katrina Kenison, author*
- "Everyone is using too much media across the board. There are only so many hours in the day. They're going to miss out on a lot of important things, especially face-to-face contact." – *Eleanor Mackey, clinical psychologist Children's National Medical Center, Washington, D.C.*
- "It's clear that, overall, American youth spend an enormous amount of time with media, but minorities spend most of their waking hours with media." *Ellen Wartella, Director, Center on Media and Human Development, School of Communication at Northwestern University.*
- "A meal is about civilizing children. It's about teaching them to be a member of their culture." – *Robin Fox, anthropologist, Rutgers University*

These materials are provided by:  
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