Summer Brain Gain:
The Boys & Girls Club strategy to mitigate Summer Learning Loss

What is Summer Learning Loss?

- The loss of academic skills by students over the summer, particularly by students from low-income communities.
- In these communities, children and teens lose an average of 2.6 months of grade equivalency in math achievement and a 2-month loss in reading achievement.
- Watch this video for a clear representation of summer learning loss for our Club members: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jEDsjkRLKh4

What can Clubs do to mitigate Summer Learning Loss for their members?

- Create a positive Club environment.
  - Observe your staff and offer feedback on what is going well and how they can improve the Club experience for youth.
  - Provide opportunities for youth to be part of the design process for your summer program.
  - Build a Club Collaborative to gain commitment from staff and members to this positive Club environment. (See details: BGCA.net/Programs/Pages/ClubClimate.aspx.)
- Take youth out into their community through carefully planned field trips that expose them to new experiences and opportunities for growth.
- Invite guest speakers and presenters to share about their personal journeys and inspire youth to seek out new challenges.
- Provide opportunities for academic skill development with project-based activities that allow for authentic inquiry and problem solving. Using Summer Brain Gain will get you started.
  - Summer Brain Gain was first developed in 2013 and has been found to effectively address Clubs’ need for academic activities that are engaging but also helpful in building academic skills.
Summer Brain Gain: A Quick-Start Guide

- Keep the 5 Key Elements for Positive Youth Development in mind as you plan the structure of every session with youth.
  - Always begin with a community builder activity. This is especially important during the summer when youth spend so much time together. If you need ideas to get started, check out YD Toolbox app for your smart phone. You will find many options and ideas to build connection and add energy to your time with youth.

- Summer Brain Gain is built on the principles of active learning. Prepare with these ideas in mind:
  - Select topics of interest to youth.
  - Engage in activities that are adaptable to a variety of challenge levels.
  - Give youth opportunities to succeed and to fail (in a safe setting) at a variety of tasks.
  - Ask open-ended questions that build problem solving and creativity.
  - Provide hands-on learning that builds connections to members' school work and to the things important in their lives.

- Select the curriculum modules most suitable for your Club.
  - Summer Brain Gain is the most comprehensive of the summer learning materials; a curriculum unit usually includes activities for the gym, gamesroom and art room.
  - SBG READ is a slightly lighter approach and is focused primarily on the Learning Center/Education room.
  - SBG STEM has thematic activities that can be substituted for one of the Summer Brain Gain modules or used to provide extra weeks of programming.

- Prepare for your week.
  - Each module contains activities to be delivered over a one-week period.
  - Driving questions provide the organizing approach and are listed in the introduction to each module.
  - A full list of needed materials can be found at the beginning of each module; individual material lists are also included with each activity.
  - Plan on 30 minutes of daily preparation, with more time needed for the sharing events.

- Weekly celebrations:
  - Each module ends with an opportunity for youth to share what they have learned and created during the week.
  - Adjust the audience as needed. Presentations could be for other Club members, parents, your board members or the community at large. You could invite local school staff. Celebrations could happen at a local library or coffee shop or could simply be a display by the Club's front door for parents to view as they arrive to pick up their children.