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Dear Principals and Teachers,

Joyful Reading during Smart Holiday

It has been three months since the start of this school year. Christmas is around the corner – a perfect time for us to refresh and recharge. May I take this opportunity to wish you all a Merry Christmas.

Some people say holidays affect learning progress, while others think students should chill out during holidays. Whenever there are long holidays, much attention is given to how homework should be set and assigned, and how to achieve “zero homework”. In fact, there are long and short breaks in life, and the ability to manage time and make good use of leisure is an essential skill that benefits one’s entire life. In what ways can students spend a more fulfilling and meaningful holiday? Just a few days ago, I discussed the relationship between holiday and homework in my article “Smart Holiday – Some Ideas on Homework” written for “Insider’s Perspective” ([Home > About EDB > Press Release > Insider's Perspective](#)). I am happy to write again to share with you a few suggestions on homework using reading as an example.

1. Choice – let students direct their learning. Students can set their own holiday reading goals and formulate action plans based on their interests and needs. If reading tasks, whether intensive or extensive, are to be assigned by teachers, students should be allowed choices and decide on the themes, modes and quantity, so as to create learning space for students with different abilities, attributes and interests. After reading, students may be encouraged to apply the knowledge and skills learnt to present their integrated outcomes in a responsible way, such as through organising a story club, designing a book cover and producing a short video clip. In

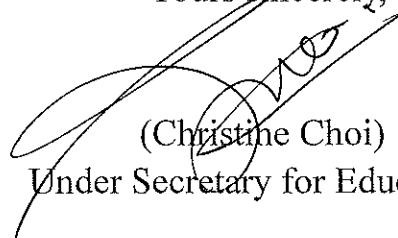
short, we should avoid quantifying the amount of homework and get rid of monotonous, mechanical drills and copying exercises.

2. Challenging – let students take responsibility for their learning. Teachers may set rules and ask students to seek treasure from the library collection freely. Furthermore, teachers may encourage students to break away from their usual preferences by reading something new, for example, a book written by an author, in a language or on a knowledge area that they are not familiar with. In doing so, students may also learn how to manage their time and progress. During the long holiday, students are expected to keep tabs on their learning and adjust their strategies to accomplish their goals. It is most satisfying if reading can help students achieve a breakthrough and unleash their potential.
3. Contributing – let students see their own improvement. Through reading, students can enhance their self-cultivation and broaden their horizons. What is more, they can turn knowledge from books into action and put reading into practice. For example, they may read recipes and prepare a nutritious and delicious dinner for their families, read books on popular science and apply STEM-related knowledge to create small inventions... All in all, students may relate reading to their daily lives. Homework is considered meaningful as long as it can lead to self-improvement. There is no need for comparison among peers or marking by teachers. We may simply let students demonstrate their learning outcomes in different forms, discuss with and learn from each other, and celebrate their achievements after the holiday.

I would like to extend my thanks to all principals and teachers for giving careful thoughts to promoting students' healthy growth and development. I hope that in this joyful holiday, everyone can slow down and take a break by doing some reading, taking a stroll, having a gathering with families or friends, or going to the countryside. In any case, please have a good rest, reset your pace and enjoy a smart holiday.

Finally, I wish all of you and your students a Merry Christmas and good health!

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christine Choi', with a large, sweeping flourish extending from the end of the signature.

(Christine Choi)

Under Secretary for Education