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Governor Quinn, Secretary White and State Superintendent Koch Encourage Students to Use Free Reading Tool During Summer Break
‘Find a Book’ Search Tool Aims to Fight Summer Learning Loss

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Pat Quinn, Secretary of State Jesse White and State Superintendent of Education Christopher A. Koch today encouraged all students across Illinois to access free online tools designed to promote reading, maintain math skills and inspire learning outside the classroom. The state leaders agree that summer vacation should not signal a break from learning for Illinois’ two million students.

“Summer is a great break to enjoy outdoor adventures but it shouldn’t signal an end to learning,” Governor Quinn said. “With online resources and parent support, children can keep up with their studies and maintain the gains they accomplished during the school year. This free tool can make sure our students are ready to succeed right from the start when the school bell rings again in the fall.”

"Libraries in Illinois promote reading year round, and the 'Find a Book' search tool complements those efforts," said Secretary of State Jesse White, who serves as State Librarian. "I urge parents to read with their children every day to help them develop a lifelong love of reading and learning. This year I also encourage parents to enroll their 2nd through 5th graders in the summer math challenge. Practicing their reading and math skills over the summer will help ensure a smooth transition when students return to school in the fall."

The online "[Find a Book](#)" utility provides a way for parents and children to quickly and easily search books that match a child’s reading level and interests as well as locate a local library carrying each title. The summer math challenge is a free math skills maintenance program targeted to students who have just completed grade 2 through 5 and is designed to help children retain math skills learned during the previous school year. From June 23rd through Aug. 1st parents who enroll their children in the program will receive daily emails with fun activities and links to educational resources.

Research shows that struggling learners score significantly higher on standardized tests taken at the start of summer than they do on the same tests taken at summer’s end. This summer learning loss is particularly evident in reading and is most pronounced among students from low socioeconomic backgrounds who may not have access to books but it can be an issue for children of all socioeconomic backgrounds. Studies show children who read through the summer months retain more of their academic skills and are better prepared to learn at the start of the school year.

Librarians, who have long promoted summer reading, are also encouraged to use “Find a Book.” Library staff can assist parents and students with the “Find a Book” utility and Lexile measures to help them find appropriate books.

The "Find a Book" utility at lexile.com/findabook uses a student's reading score, reported as a Lexile® measure, from state standardized tests, including the ISAT, to provide a Lexile range and corresponding list of texts within that range. The Lexile range for a reader is from 50L above his or her Lexile measure to 100L below. If a student attempts to read material above their Lexile range, the text may challenge

the student and his or her ability to construct meaning from the reading experience may decrease. Likewise, material below a reader's Lexile range will provide him or her with little comprehension challenge.

The Lexile® Framework was used in the development of the reading standards for the new Common Core State Standards, which schools across the state are in the process of implementing. The new standards replace the outdated Illinois State Learning Standards and ensure students leave high school ready for college and careers.

Users of the "Find a Book" search tool can also find appropriate books without a Lexile measure through a search using the child's grade level and comfort with the typical reading materials at that grade level. The search utility will produce a starting Lexile range that can be further refined.

"Good reading habits and a love of learning begins at home," said State Superintendent Koch. "Parents are their children's first teachers and they can help their children develop strong reading skills by using the 'Find a Book' site to find age-appropriate materials that will keep their students engaged and excited about learning. Likewise, they can incorporate the summer math challenge into their summer activities."

"Find a Book" also offers a Spanish option that allows users to search all of the titles with Spanish Lexile measures. More information on Spanish Lexile measures is available at lexile.com/about-lexile/el-sistema-para-leer.

State officials urge school administrators, parents and librarians to promote summer reading with letters and informational flyers posted online at the State Board of Education's summer reading website: isbe.net/find-a-book.

They also encourage parents and educators to participate in *Illinois Reads*, a statewide literacy program launched by the Illinois Reading Council to encourage state residents of all ages to read books by Illinois authors. Secretary of State White serves as honorary chair of the program and more information, including recommended children titles, can be found at illinoisreads.org.

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