Trayvon Martin was killed on Feb. 26, 2012.

Students across the Houston area are breaking for summer, but academic experts and educators say learning never should stop.

For years, researchers have given close attention to what is called summer slide, the term used to describe a regression in learning experienced by mentally active children.

This is especially detrimental for children from low-income families. According to the National Summer Learning Association, summer learning loss accounts for about two-thirds of the ninth grade achievement gap in reading.

It’s clear that children should be mentally active during the summer, but some parents are at a loss for exactly what they should be doing.

Activities that focus on reading, writing, science — even skills related to critical thinking, leadership and technology — should be among those parents consider, educators and experts agree.

“Learning should not always be sit and go,” she said.

Instead, Hartley suggested that parents might consider embracing educational activities as a fun experience for the entire family. That way, students are simultaneously nurtured and educated.

She also emphasized that children need social interactions with their peers too. Hartley advised incorporating a structured learning activity that fosters positive interactions when children are spending time with their friends.

One of the most popular United Way supported programs was the Summer Book Club, which operated at 75 locations and attracted about 750 kids and boys in fourth-eighth grades. This year, the program will expand to 100 sites.

There are dozens of free educational websites that can help keep students mentally active when school is out. Here are 10 of them:

1. barbley.com — gives access to reference books, literature and nonfiction

2. coolmath.com — provides “cool” and “fun” math games, lessons and activities

3. funbrain.com — provides educational games in math, grammar, science, history and language

4. howstuffworks.com — breaks down subjects such as science, technology, money, culture and entertainment; provides games, quizzes and videos

5. khanacademy.org — gives access to thousands of video tutorials that explain algebra, geometry, trigonometry, calculus, statistics, finance, physics, economics and more

6. kids.nationalgeographic.com — provides facts, photos, videos and more about countries around the world

7. makemegenuis.com — includes brain games and kid-friendly videos covering a variety of subjects

8. neok12.com — provides videos, lessons, quizzes and games in subjects such as science, math, health, social studies and English

9. pbskids.org — includes favorite PBS characters, each with learning games for kids to play

10. smithsonianeducation.org — helps kids explore, science, nature, places and people, including famous African-Americans