

# Parents, real education starts when schools close

**T**his week marks the end of school cycle for the year 2025. As schools close their doors for the holiday break this week, thousands of children are returning home. They have been in controlled environments and could be coming to open community life. To some, they will be going to relatives in town or villages. This poses opportunity and risk in equal measure.

Holidays should be a season of rest, joy and growth, yet for many young people, they are also a period of idleness, exposure to harmful influences, and habits that can quietly and slowly destroy their future. This is why parents, guardians and the community must recognise that constructive engagement during school breaks is a necessity.

Every holiday, the evidence is the same. Young people drift into gambling places spread across the country in both rural and urban areas, spend endless hours on screens watching TV or playing games on phones, or get absorbed into peer groups that could expose them to drugs, crime, or sexual risk. A child who was disciplined within the structured environment of school, especially those who have just completed their Senior Six and will be in a long vacation, suddenly becomes a young adult navigating distraction with no compass.

## **The issue:**

School holiday

## **Our view:**

Children must understand that the break is not an escape from learning; it is a different chapter of learning.

Parents must realize that their role is not only to pay school fees, but to shape their children's world view and character.

There is the issue of unfiltered content, online predators, unproductive gaming, and social media platforms that are thrown at curious, energetic, and impressionable children. If they are not guided towards meaningful pursuits, they will inevitably get lost.

Society often equates education with academic grades, exam scores, and school certificates. Yet the most enduring form of education happens outside the classroom. The skills that enable a person to thrive; discipline, integrity, responsibility, resilience, empathy, financial awareness, confidence, are built in moments when a child tries, fails, reflects, and tries again.

These competencies determine who a child becomes when no teacher is watching, when there is freedom, temptation, and real-world consequence. Holidays help to shape who the children will be when school stops and real life begins.

Constructive engagement does not mean military-style control. It means intentional exposure to activities that develop character, skills, and purpose. Some practical suggestions include reading, household chores, sports, community service in church or neighbourhoods, skills-based activities such as coding, baking, drawing, carpentry, farming, mechanics, sewing to stimulate creativity; internships and holiday apprenticeships, online courses, etc.

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As parents, we must realise that if we leave children to wander through holidays unguided, we should not be surprised when they return more distracted, discouraged or damaged. But if we use this time to help them explore their talents, deepen their values and discover purpose, they will return to school stronger, and they will face life more prepared. Holidays are the period when the most important part of education happens.