



THE WASHINGTON LATIN PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

Dear Washington Latin parents,

Greetings! While I met a number of you in the spring, I hope to meet the rest of you soon. Please come by and introduce yourselves this summer.

I want to share a few thoughts about the school's developing summer reading program. Creating an excellent summer reading program--one that encourages the habit of reading and doesn't simply assign books--takes time and collaboration. You will see some changes this year, as we slowly move to a program that accomplishes our goals.

The whole point of summer reading is to encourage the life-long habit of reading. For some children, this habit is natural and easy; for others, a subtle nudge is sometimes necessary. We all develop good habits through the encouragement and prodding of others. In the summer, kids develop these habits largely through your modeling and support. If children know that their parents value reading, they will see reading as a worthwhile and enjoyable pursuit. Please join us in this endeavor.

The changes this year are mostly in the required book sections. We will be working on the offered lists in the coming years. Below are some of the principles that have guided the selection of the required books:

1. A wish to give students choice within the requirements;
2. A range of textual difficulty;
3. A commitment to books of quality;
4. Integration with another discipline in the grade level. Most of the required books reflect the upcoming history curriculum;
5. A balance of fiction and non-fiction. We are learning that students need more training in reading non-fiction;
6. A balance of cultures and time periods;
7. A balance of books that might appeal to boys and girls;
8. An opportunity for students to take on a challenge;
9. A pedagogical belief that books be taught in comparison;
10. A commitment to showing students that reading is a pleasure!

As you can imagine, it is difficult to find good books that accomplish all of these goals. We hope there are some titles in these required books that your children will enjoy; if not, please bring us suggestions for the future. The requirements for each grade level are listed in the letter to the students. **Please help us ensure that your child is reading the required books, as we will begin the year with a comparative study of these books.**



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At the end of this list, I have included a listing of suggestions for parents. During the school year, Martha and I will be running a parent book group on these titles; you will hear more about the details later, and we hope you will consider joining us. Without hyperbole, I can honestly say that there is no better gift we can give children than to help them develop the habit of daily, engaged reading. Thank you for your support in making this gift possible.

Sincerely yours,

Diana E. Smith
Assistant Head for Academics

SUGGESTED BOOKS FOR PARENTS

E.D. Hirsch, *The Knowledge Deficit: Closing the Shocking Achievement Gap for American Children*

Turning his attention particularly to the issue of reading, E.D. Hirsch argues for a content-rich curriculum as the best means for educating America's under-privileged children.

Wendy Mogel, *The Blessings of a Skinned Knee: Using Jewish Teachings to Raise Self-Reliant Children*

Drawing on the lessons of Judaism, Wendy Mogel advises parents on how to counteract the culture of indulgence and over protectiveness so prevalent in our society.

Daniel Pink, *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future*

Pink here argues that people with right-brain abilities--what he calls the capacity for design, story, sympathy, empathy, play, and meaning--will be most necessary in the economies of the future.

Nancy and Ted Sizer, *The Students Are Watching: Schools and the Moral Contract*

Grounded in the ancient but perhaps forgotten premise that education should provide a moral compass for the young, the Sizers here argue for a renewed commitment on the part of educators to develop a healthy moral climate in America's high schools.