**Independent Reading Letter**



**Dear Parents and Guardians:**

A central goal of the English Language Arts department of Danny Jones Middle School is to establish a reading habit in the busy lives of our middle school students.  Through independent reading, the 7th and 8th grade English teachers want to develop reading fluency and stamina, which result in increased reading rates and thus, help students develop confidence, build vocabulary, and improve writing.  It is our hope that we can work together with parents to ignite and sustain the pleasure and passion of young readers as well as to instill a comfortable confidence in students as they build stamina for reading in preparation for college and career. Because reading for an hour or two in one sitting is a basic expectation in college and is often required in any workforce training program, we will exercise muscles soon to be strained in the coming years.

Independent reading will be based on primarily on student choice, either through a list provided by teachers, through a student’s own research, or through recommendations made by fellow students.  By choosing a book to read, students are more likely to read rather than search the internet for summaries.  By choosing a book, students can see that a good book is more than an assignment.  It can open minds and provide experiences that they would otherwise never come to know: “A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies…. The man who never reads lives only one” ([George R.R. Martin](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/346732.George_R_R_Martin)).

Students will have dedicated reading time each Friday in their reading class, but this alone is not enough. It is our expectation that our students read outside of class daily, whenever and wherever they can. Each teacher will work with their classes to establish and help students meet reading goals. Students will also be held accountable for their independent reading through verbal conferences, book talks, written questioning, and other means. Students will be expected to bring an independent book with them to class ***every day***, not just for our established independent reading days. We will be working with our students to help them push through to more challenging books as their reading endurance grows.

The best books challenge our beliefs by helping us see through different eyes – to live different lives.  One of the benefits of reading is that it allows us to confront our worst fears and live through them.  What we want is to nurture each student’s willingness to read – for pleasure, for knowledge, for understanding – so that they choose to read beyond assigned reading, beyond the goal of one independent reading selection.

Because we respect your role as parents and the traditions you hold sacred, we understand your right to more closely monitor your child’s choices this year and we encourage you to recommend books and read with your child.  If you want to know more about a book that your child is reading, please consult the  School Library Journal website ([http://www.slj.com](http://www.slj.com/) ), the American Library Association website ([http://www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org/) ), Barnes and Noble’s website ([http://www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com/) ), or contact your child’s teacher.

We also welcome guest speakers to do Book Talks who seek to share their passion for reading. We look forward to a great year working with you and your child this year as we establish and uphold a culture of reading! Thank you for your support.

With the End in Mind,

The DJMS ELA Department

**Please sign and detach this portion of your letter and return to your child’s reading teacher this week for points.**

Parent/guardian (print) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Student (print) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ signature\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Reading Class period: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_