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Dear Parents of 2009-2010 Grade 6 Gideon Welles Students,

“I hungered for books, new ways of looking and seeing. It was not a matter of believing or disbelieving what I read, but of feeling something new, of being affected by something that made the look of the world different.” – Richard Wright, from *Black Boy*

If you are a lifelong reader, you doubtless remember the wonderful promise of summer – time to read and read, endless hours to pass away, the time when you got to see the world through the magic of the written word and its power to transport you. In the waning weeks of the school year, you would anticipate long summer days, hammocks and summer breezes, or even hours in a car or plane, freed from the daily demands of the school year, on your own to read what you chose.

In my childhood, summer reading was a weekly two mile walk to the public library to load up on books to carry me through a week of endless days, unprogrammed with formal sports or trips, marked only by two piles: what I finished reading, and what I discarded because I wasn't enjoying it. Back to the library again for a new pile!

Today, few kids are on a “walk to the library” regimen, and many simply reload their iPhones, or Kindles, and choose reading materials that arrive via the internet. The world of print (and non- print learning) grows exponentially and daily. Newspapers, some say, are showing signs of becoming a quaint artifact in a museum. Who knows how the textual world will be defined in ten, or even five years?

Therefore, our job has changed as well. Today we have to help children to navigate their way through the information explosion and make good choices. In addition, we have to mediate the world of technology with our own print experiences. As educators, we work to find the points of intersection between the core skills and standards we want to teach, and the new ways in which our children's brains are wired to learn. But the core experience of reading for pleasure, for escape, for transport into different worlds (or ways of looking at the world) will always be at the heart of a lifelong love of learning.

And so, once again, the Glastonbury English Departments and the Library Media Specialists are making a special effort to convey the importance of reading by asking all incoming students of grades six through twelve to participate in summer reading. We ask you to help us encourage the habit of reading by supporting the summer reading requirement. We trust that you share with us the desire to develop in our students a lifelong love of reading for pleasure and for information. We invite you to read the titles your children choose so that you can discuss them together. This is a great way to make your child's reading even more meaningful.

This year, at Gideon Welles, we will repeat the new approach we piloted last year, as sixth grade teachers report a very positive response from their students. In an effort to appeal to a wider range of interests, to encourage thoughtful reading of nonfiction, and to develop both the desire and interest in independent research, we are asking students to do the following:

- **First, read one fiction book.**
- **Explore one topic within the fiction book in a non-fiction source.**
- **Upon returning to class in the fall, students will complete a simple writing assignment explaining how the non-fiction source added to the understanding or enjoyment of the fiction book.**

Attached are some suggestions for the kinds of fiction and nonfiction connections readers might make, but the sky is the limit. Elementary library media specialists and fifth grade teachers will be helping their students to consider a wide range of choices before summer begins. But if families are on vacation and choose to venture into new reading categories, topics, or genres, in different libraries or bookstores, this assignment should be adaptable to reading anywhere.

The attached suggestions and assignment will be available on www.tomahawks.org and on the Gideon Welles Library Media Center portal page which is <https://www.glastonburyus.org/schools/gideon/librarymedia/Pages/default.aspx>

We believe that this assignment will help children to expand their reading worlds in a way that will help to sustain a lifelong habit of reading for both information and pleasure. Thank you for your help in making this program successful.

Sincerely,

Catherine Buchholz, Director
Language Arts & Reading