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**Dear Parents of 2009-2010 Grade 7 through 8 SMS 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 of Gideon Welles, Smith Middle, and GHS 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.

**All students who will be in grades 7 or 8 should choose any two books from the Smith Middle School list.** SMS students should reflect on their reading with a short written response as indicated on the form. This form will be handed in along with a parent's signature in September. If students would like to read a book that is not on this list, they may contact Mr. Landry via the SMS library web portal e-mail or by stopping by the Welles Turner Library.

Thank you for your help in making this program successful.

Sincerely,

Catherine Buchholz, Director  
Language Arts & Reading