



Dear Northwest Middle School Parents/ Guardians,

In an effort to keep our NISD students engaged in literacy throughout the summer, students are expected to read one or more novels from the following district approved grade level lists.

This novel should be read in its entirety before school starts. This will ensure that the student is well- prepared to participate in classroom discussions over their chosen book, and is ready to begin the year with the rigor and challenges of our district curriculum.

- GT and Pre-AP students are expected to read **at least** one novel in the GT/Pre-AP column from their grade level list. After at least one title is read from this list, then GT/Pre-AP students may read other titles from either the GT/ Pre-AP list OR from the On-Level list.
- On-Level students are expected to read **at least** one novel from **either** the GT/Pre-AP OR the On-Level grade level list.

	GT/Pre-AP	On-Level
6th Grade		
	<i>Belly Up</i> by Stuart Gibbs	<i>Flora and Ulysses</i> by Kate DiCamilla
	<i>Counting by 7's</i> by Holly Goldberg Sloan	<i>Found (The Missing, Book 1)</i> by Margaret Peterson Haddix
	<i>The False Prince</i> by Jennifer Nielson	<i>The Fourth Stall</i> by Chris Rylander
	<i>The Lions of Little Rock</i> by Kristin Levine	<i>Wings of Fire- The Dragonet Prophecy</i> by Tui T. Sutherland
7th Grade		
	<i>Chains</i> by Laurie Halse Anderson	<i>An Elephant in the Garden</i> by Michael Morpurgo
	<i>For Darkness Shows the Stars</i> by Dianna Peterfreund	<i>Legend</i> by Marie Lu
	<i>The Roar</i> by Emma Clayton	<i>Lincoln's Grave Robbers</i> by Steve Sheinkin
	<i>Peak</i> by Roland Smith	<i>Okay for Now</i> by Gary D. Schmidt
8th Grade		
	<i>The Book Thief</i> by Markus Zusac	<i>Bruiser</i> by Neal Shusterman
	<i>The House of the Scorpion</i> by Nancy Farmer	<i>Full Tilt</i> by Neal Shusterman
	<i>October Sky</i> by Homer Hickam	<i>Monster</i> by Walter Dean Myers
		<i>Shadow and Bone</i> by Leigh Bardugo

Story Summaries

6th

***Belly Up*, Stuart Gibbs (Mystery and Adventure)**

12 year old Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt Fitzroy has got a murder on his hands and trouble on his tail. Henry, the hippopotamus at the brand-new nationally known Fun Jungle, has gone belly up. Even though it is claimed, he died of natural causes, Teddy smells something fishy and it sure isn't the polar bear's lunch. Dealing with the zoo's top brass proves to be nothing but a waste of time. They want to see any trace of Henry's death disappear like yesterday's paper. So Teddy sets out to find the truth. With the help of Summer McCracken, a feisty girl with secrets of her own, the two narrow down their prime suspects. Was it Martin Del Gato, Fun Jungle's head of operations who hates kids and hates animals even more? Or, was it J.J. McCracken, the owner of Fun Jungle and hates animals even more? Or J.J. McCracken, the owner of Fun Jungle and Summer's father, who has more concern for the dough he's raking in than the animals in the zoo? As their investigation goes on, Teddy gets squeezed on all sides to quit asking questions or Henry won't be the only animal in the zoo to turn up dead.

Counting by 7's, Holly Goldberg Sloan (Realistic Fiction)

Willow Chance is a twelve-year-old genius, obsessed with nature and diagnosing medical conditions, who finds it comforting to count by 7s. It has never been easy for her to connect with anyone other than her adoptive parents, but that hasn't kept her from leading a quietly happy life . . . until now.

Suddenly Willow's world is tragically changed when her parents both die in a car crash, leaving her alone in a baffling world. The triumph of this book is that it is *not* a tragedy. This extraordinarily odd, but extraordinarily endearing, girl manages to push through her grief. Her journey to find a fascinatingly diverse and believable surrogate family is a joy and a revelation to read.

Flora and Ulysses, Kate DiCamillo (Fantasy/ Graphic Novel)

It begins, as the best superhero stories do, with a tragic accident that has unexpected consequences. The squirrel never saw the vacuum cleaner coming, but self-described cynic Flora Belle Buckman, who has read every issue of the comic book *Terrible Things Can Happen to You!*, is just the right person to step in and save him. What neither can predict is that Ulysses (the squirrel) has been born anew, with powers of strength, flight, and misspelled poetry – and that Flora will be changed too, as she discovers the possibility of hope and the promise of a capacious heart. From #1 *New York Times* best-selling author Kate DiCamillo comes a laugh-out-loud story filled with eccentric, endearing characters and featuring an exciting new format – a novel interspersed with comic-style graphic sequences and full-page illustrations, all rendered in black-and-white by up-and-coming artist K. G. Campbell.

Found (The Missing, Book 1), Margaret Peterson Haddix (Science Fiction)

One night a plane appeared out of nowhere, the only passengers aboard: thirty-six babies. As soon as they were taken off the plane, it vanished. Now, thirteen years later, two of those children are receiving sinister messages, and they begin to investigate their past. Their quest to discover where they really came from leads them to a conspiracy that reaches from the far past to the distant future—and will take them hurtling through time. In this exciting new series, bestselling author Margaret Peterson Haddix brings an element of suspense that will keep readers on the edge of their seats.]

The False Prince, Jennifer Nielsen (Action/Adventure)

In this first book in a remarkable trilogy, an orphan is forced into a twisted game with deadly stakes. Choose to lie...or choose to die.

In a discontent kingdom, civil war is brewing. To unify the divided people, Conner, a nobleman of the court, devises a cunning plan to find an impersonator of the king's long-lost son and install him as a puppet prince. Four orphans are recruited to compete for the role, including a defiant boy named Sage. Sage knows that Conner's motives are more than questionable, yet his life balances on a sword's point -- he must be chosen to play the prince or he will certainly be killed. But Sage's rivals have their own agendas as well. As Sage moves from a rundown orphanage to Conner's sumptuous palace, layer upon layer of treachery and deceit unfold, until finally, a truth is revealed that, in the end, may very well prove more dangerous than all of the lies taken together. An extraordinary adventure filled with danger and action, lies and deadly truths that will have readers clinging to the edge of their seats.

The Fourth Stall, Chris Rylander (Realistic Fiction)

Do you need something? Mac can get it for you. He and his best friend and business manager, Vince. Their methods might sometimes run afoul of the law, or at least the school code of conduct, but if you have a problem, if no one else can help, and if you can pay him, Mac is on your side. His office is located in the East Wing boy's bathroom, fourth stall from the high window. And business is booming. Or at least it was, until this particular Monday. Because this Monday is when Mac and Vince find out that the trouble with solving everyone else's problems is there's no one left to solve yours. The school setting; fast-paced, cinematic, and funny story; and engaging voice make *The Fourth Stall* a perfect classroom read.

The Lions of Little Rock, Kristen Levine (Historical Fiction)

As twelve-year-old Marlee starts middle school in 1958 Little Rock, it feels like her whole world is falling apart. Until she meets Liz, the new girl at school. Liz is everything Marlee wishes she could be: she's brave, brash and always knows the right thing to say. But when Liz leaves school without even a good-bye, the rumor is that Liz was caught passing for white. Marlee decides that doesn't matter. She just wants her friend back. And to stay friends, Marlee and Liz are even willing to take on segregation and the dangers their friendship could bring to both their families.

Wings of Fire- The Dragonet Prophecy, Tui. Sutherland (Fantasy)

The story tells about a young dragon without heroic ambitions, learns that a prophecy predicted his four other dragonets demise. He decides to leave his sheltered life and fight for his and the other dragons' freedom. In this fantastic adventure, Clay and his friends leave the mountain and set the dragon world on a course that one could have predicted.

7th

Chains, Laurie Halse Anderson (Historical Fiction)

As the Revolutionary War begins, thirteen-year-old Isabel wages her own fight...for freedom. Promised freedom upon the death of their owner, she and her sister, Ruth, in a cruel twist of fate become the property of a malicious New York City couple, the Locktons, who have no sympathy for the American Revolution and even less for Ruth and Isabel. When Isabel meets Curzon, a slave with ties to the Patriots, he encourages her to spy on her owners, who know details of British plans for invasion. She is reluctant at first, but when the unthinkable happens to Ruth, Isabel realizes her loyalty is available to the bidder who can provide her with freedom.

An Elephant in the Garden, Michael Morpurgo (Historical Fiction)

Lizzie and Karl's mother is a zoo keeper; the family has become attached to an orphaned elephant named Marlene, who will be destroyed as a precautionary measure so she and the other animals don't run wild should the zoo be hit by bombs. The family persuades the zoo director to let Marlene stay in their garden instead. When the city is bombed, the family flees with thousands of others, but how can they walk the same route when they have an elephant in tow, and keep themselves safe? Along the way, they meet Peter, a Canadian navigator

who risks his own capture to save the family.

***For Darkness Shows the Stars*, Diana Peterfreund (Science Fiction/ Dystopian)**

In the dystopian setting of *For Darkness Shows the Stars*, a genetic experiment has devastated humanity. In the aftermath, a new class system placed anti-technology Luddites in absolute power over vast estates—and any survivors living there. Elliot North is a dutiful Luddite and a dutiful daughter who runs her father's estate. When the boy she loved, Kai, a servant, asked her to run away with him four years ago, she refused, although it broke her heart. Now Kai is back. And while Elliot longs for a second chance with her first love, she knows it could mean betraying everything she's been raised to believe is right.

***Legend*, Marie Lu (Dystopian)**

What was once the western United States is now home to the Republic, a nation perpetually at war with its neighbors. Born into an elite family in one of the Republic's wealthiest districts, fifteen-year-old June is a prodigy being groomed for success in the Republic's highest military circles. Born into the slums, fifteen-year-old Day is the country's most wanted criminal. But his motives may not be as malicious as they seem. From very different worlds, June and Day have no reason to cross paths - until the day June's brother, Metias, is murdered and Day becomes the prime suspect. Caught in the ultimate game of cat and mouse, Day is in a race for his family's survival, while June seeks to avenge Metias's death. But in a shocking turn of events, the two uncover the truth of what has really brought them together, and the sinister lengths their country will go to keep its secrets. Full of nonstop action, suspense, and romance, this novel is sure to move readers as much as it thrills.

***Lincoln's Grave Robbers*, Steve Sheinkin (Mystery/ Historical Fiction)**

A true crime thriller -- the first book for teens to tell the nearly unknown tale of the brazen attempt to steal Abraham Lincoln's body! The action begins in October of 1875, as Secret Service agents raid the Fulton, Illinois, workshop of master counterfeiter Ben Boyd. Soon after Boyd is hauled off to prison, members of his counterfeiting ring gather in the back room of a smoky Chicago saloon to discuss how to spring their ringleader. Their plan: grab Lincoln's body from its Springfield tomb; stash it in the sand dunes near Lake Michigan, and demand, as a ransom, the release of Ben Boyd --and \$200,000 in cash. From here, the action alternates between the conspirators, the Secret Service agents on their trail, and the undercover agent moving back and forth between the two groups. Along the way readers get glimpses into the inner workings of counterfeiting, grave robbing, detective work, and the early days of the Secret Service. The plot moves toward a wild climax as robbers and lawmen converge at Lincoln's tomb on election night: November 7, 1876.

***Okay for Now*, Gary D. Schmidt (Realistic Fiction/ Historical Fiction)**

In this companion novel to *The Wednesday Wars*, Doug struggles to be more than the "skinny thug" that some people think him to be. He finds an unlikely ally in Lil Spicer, who gives him the strength to endure an abusive father, the suspicions of a town, and the return of his oldest brother, forever scarred, from Vietnam. Schmidt expertly weaves multiple themes of loss and recovery in a story teeming with distinctive, unusual characters and invaluable lessons about love, creativity, and survival.

***The Roar*, Emma Clayton (Science Fiction/ Dystopian)**

In an overpopulated futuristic world where all signs of nature are gone and a wall keeps out plague-ridden animals, 12-year-old Mika refuses to believe his twin sister was killed after being abducted, and continues to search for her in spite of the dangers. His search reveals some unexpected secrets.

***Peak*, Roland Smith (Fiction)**

In *After* 14-year-old Peak Marcello is arrested for scaling a New York City skyscraper, he's left with two choices: wither away in Juvenile Detention or go live with his long-lost father, who runs a climbing company in Thailand. But Peak quickly learns that his father's renewed interest in him has strings attached. Big strings. He wants Peak to be the youngest person to reach the Everest summit — and his motives are selfish at best. Even so, for a climbing addict like Peak, tackling Everest is the challenge of a lifetime. But it's also one that could cost him his life. He encounters the dangers of climbing, experiencing physical and emotional challenges that bring him to critical decisions testing his strength and maturity. Roland Smith has created an action-packed adventure about friendship, sacrifice, family, and the drive to take on Everest, despite the incredible risk. *Peak* is a novel that readers won't be able to put down.

8th

***The Book Thief*, Markus Zusac (Historical Fiction)**

It is 1939. Nazi Germany. The country is holding its breath. Death has never been busier, and will become busier still. Liesel Meminger is a foster girl living outside of Munich, who scratches out a meager existence for herself by stealing when she encounters something she can't resist—books. With the help of her accordion-playing foster father, she learns to read and shares her stolen books with her neighbors during bombing raids as well as with the Jewish man hidden in her basement.

***Bruiser*, Neal Shusterman (Realistic Fiction)**

Tennyson: Don't get me started on the Bruiser. He was voted "Most Likely to Get the Death Penalty" by the entire school. He's the kid no one knows, no one talks to, and everyone hears disturbing rumors about. So why is my sister, Brontë, dating him? One of these days she's going to take in the wrong stray dog, and it's not going to end well.

Brontë: My brother has no right to talk about Brewster that way—no right to threaten him. There's a reason why Brewster can't have friends—why he can't care about too many people. Because when he cares about you, things start to happen. Impossible things that can't be explained. I know, because they're happening to me.

***Full Tilt*, Neal Shusterman (Thriller/ Fantasy/ Science Fiction)**

Sixteen-year-old Blake and his younger brother, Quinn, are exact opposites. Blake is the responsible member of the family. He constantly

has to keep an eye on the fearless Quinn, whose thrill-seeking sometimes goes too far. But the stakes get higher when Blake has to chase Quinn into a bizarre phantom carnival that traps its customers forever. In order to escape, Blake must survive seven deadly rides by dawn, each of which represents a deep, personal fear--from a carousel of stampeding animals to a hall of mirrors that changes people into their deformed reflections. Blake ultimately has to face up to a horrible secret from his own past to save himself and his brother--that is, if the carnival doesn't claim their souls first!

***The House of the Scorpion*, Nancy Farmer (Science Fiction/ Dystopian)**

Matteo Alacran was not born; he was harvested. His DNA came from El Patron, lord of a country called Opium -- a strip of poppy fields lying between the United States and what was once called Mexico. Matt's first cell split and divided inside a petri dish. Then he was placed in the womb of a cow, where he continued the miraculous journey from embryo to fetus to baby. He is a boy now, but most consider him a monster -- except for El Patron.

***Monster*, Walter Dean Myers (Realistic Fiction)**

Sixteen-year-old Steve is on trial for murder and could face the death penalty. During the trial, Steve, an amateur filmmaker, pictures all the events as if he were directing a movie.

***October Sky*, Homer Hickam (Memoir/ Non-Fiction)**

It was 1957, the year Sputnik raced across the Appalachian sky, and the small town of Coalwood, West Virginia, was slowly dying. Faced with an uncertain future, Homer Hickam nurtured a dream: to send rockets into outer space. The introspective son of the mine's superintendent and a mother determined to get him out of Coalwood forever, Homer fell in with a group of misfits who learned not only how to turn scraps of metal into sophisticated rockets but how to sustain their hope in a town that swallowed its men alive. As the boys began to light up the tarry skies with their flaming projectiles and dreams of glory, Coalwood, and the Hickams, would never be the same. Looking back after a distinguished NASA career, Hickam shares the story of his youth in a coal mining town.

***Shadow and Bone*, Leigh Bardugo (Fantasy)**

Surrounded by enemies, the once-great nation of Ravka has been torn in two by the Shadow Fold, a swath of near impenetrable darkness crawling with monsters. Now its fate may rest on the shoulders of one lonely refugee. Alina Starkov has never been good at anything. But when her regiment is attacked on the Fold and her best friend is brutally injured, Alina reveals a dormant power that saves his life--a power that could be the key to setting her war-ravaged country free. Wrenched from everything she knows, Alina is whisked away to the royal court to be trained as a member of the Grisha, the magical elite led by the mysterious Darkling. Yet nothing in this lavish world is what it seems. With darkness looming and an entire kingdom depending on her untamed power, Alina will have to confront the secrets of the Grisha . . . and the secrets of her heart.