

6/5/2026

Dear Families and Students,

As we look ahead to the upcoming school year, the English Language Arts Department is excited to introduce our Summer Reading Program for incoming 7th and 8th grade students. This program is designed to foster a love of reading, encourage curiosity, and prepare students for the engaging work they will encounter in the classroom.

Reading over the summer is one of the most powerful ways students can continue to grow as learners. Consistent reading strengthens vocabulary, improves writing skills, builds background knowledge, and increases focus and stamina. Research consistently shows that students who read regularly—especially by choice—are better prepared for academic success across all subject areas. Just as importantly, reading helps students develop empathy, creativity, and a deeper understanding of the world around them.

For Incoming 7th Grade Students:

Students are asked to select **one fiction or nonfiction book at an appropriate middle grade or young adult level** that sparks their interest. Because many of our 7th graders are joining us from several surrounding communities, this assignment also serves as an introduction to one of our core middle school practices, Sustained Silent Reading (SSR), where students read self-selected texts regularly throughout the year.

Suggested (Although Not Required) Titles:

Restart, Gordan Korman

Hatchet, Gary Paulsen

Stargirl, Jerry Spinelli

Fish in a Tree, Lynda Mulhally Hunt

The Inheritance Games, Jennifer L. Barnes

The Hobbit, J.R.R. Tolkien

The Lightning Thief, Rick Riordan

Echo, Pam Munoz Ryan

Iceberg, Jennifer Neilsen

The Benchley Riddle, Ruta Sepetys and Steve Sheinkin

The War That Saved My Life, Kimberly Brubaker

Ender's Game, Orson Scott Card

Starfish or And Then, Boom, Lisa Fipps

Crossover, Kwame Alexander

Alone, Morgan Freeman

Smile, Raina Telgemeier

A Chicken Was There, A.A. Davenport

To celebrate and share their reading, students will complete a creative “**Bento Box Book Project.**” In this project, during the first two weeks of school, students will:

- Bring their chosen book to school
- Arrange 6–8 meaningful objects around the book in a tableaux (like a bento box, with the book in the center and items surrounding it at right angles)
- Include a brief written explanation describing each object and how it connects to important elements of the book (characters, themes, symbols, or key events)

This project allows students to express their understanding in a creative and personal way while practicing the critical skill of making connections to a text. As an added bonus, students will share their projects, encouraging other students to read their book this year.

We encourage families to support students by helping them find a book that interests them, setting aside regular reading time, and discussing what they are reading. Even a few minutes of conversation about a book can deepen understanding and enjoyment.

Thank you for your support in helping students grow as readers and thinkers. We are looking forward to an exciting year of learning, discussion, and discovery.

Warm regards,

The English Language Arts Department

Northwestern Middle School

