

23 May 2006

Dear Parents/Guardians,

It is with great pleasure that I write to you regarding this year's summer reading activities. The students have worked very hard this year and certainly deserve the change of pace that accompanies the summer season. In preparation for the summer reading assignment, I encourage you and your student to utilize the school's website (www.fairviewschools.org), which provides a link to and description of the district's summer reading requirements.

During the summer months, the students' summer reading assignment asks them to read some rather fine works of literature that the district does not carry in bulk. Do not interpret this as a misstep on the part of the district. On the contrary, I have selected contemporary works that fit the purpose played by summer reading in the course. As a result of the titles' contemporary and annually changing nature, the students will need to either purchase copies for their own use or access the works through the district and/or public library system. The library, through its agreement with Waldenbooks, will offer the titles for approximately 25% off the retail price.

Even though I am a proud supporter of our public library system, I do feel that there are some advantages to owning books. First, the students can practice and reinforce their close reading skills through marking in the book. I encourage you to read the "How to Mark a Book" link on the course summer reading website. The practice of having a pen or pencil in hand while reading is a skill that will serve the students well as they approach the AP exam and academic life outside of Fairview. Second, the students will have access to the books whenever they may need them. In addition to the role the titles play in the summer, the books can also be used throughout the course for other assignments and/or college essays. Lastly, there is just something meaningful about owning your own book. The introduction to the summer reading assignment addresses the idea of becoming a life-long reader; acquiring an interest in all parts of books (their textures, smells, sense of ownership) is an important step toward becoming a reader for life. I realize that this last portion sounds a bit intangible, ambiguous, and touchy-feely; however, its inability to be measured does not diminish its role.

Finally, I would like to invite you, the adults, to take part in our summer book discussions. I think the students and the discussion itself would greatly benefit from your perspectives, insights, and reflections. Granted, your performance will not be assessed and evaluated, but I think the students would nonetheless truly benefit from the experience. I understand the hours for meeting are somewhat inconvenient, but they were the only way they fit into my summer work schedule. Basically, I just wanted you to know that your presence and contributions are more than welcome.

Thank you for all of your help, time, and commitment.

Sincerely,
Matt Lane