

Self-Selected Summer Reading

(updated August 2021)

Rationale

When thinking about self-selected reading, teachers should ask, "What is the purpose of student choice in reading?" If the purpose of self-selected reading is to encourage students to continue reading and to facilitate their appreciation and maybe even their interest and love of reading, then the motivation that goes hand in hand with student choice cannot be ignored.

Effective literacy instruction should include suggested reading, teacher choice, as well as self-selected reading. Teachers have choice in the purposeful selection of texts from all genres throughout the year. Well-chosen and differentiated texts can facilitate the skill development and in-depth conversations that all students need to develop as critical readers and thinkers.

Since the summer of 2018 and with the guidance from their MS ELA teachers, students in grades 6-8 have explored their interests and have self-selected books for summer reading. Beginning in the 2019-2020 school year, Northside implemented the new middle school Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for English Language Arts and Reading. The following information from the new TEKS explicitly addresses independent reading and choice:

from introduction of Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for English Language Arts and Reading, Middle School, Adopted 2017

(2) Additionally, students should engage in academic conversations, write, read, and be read to on a daily basis with opportunities for cross-curricular content and student choice.

(6.4, 7.4, 8.4) Developing and sustaining foundational language skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking—self-sustained reading. The student reads grade-appropriate texts independently. The student is expected to self-select text and read independently for a sustained period of time.

District Expectations

- **Summer reading is required for Advanced ELA in grades 6-8 but open to all students.**
- Students are to self-select a fiction or nonfiction text for their summer reading.
- Incoming 7th and 8th grade students will have opportunities to research titles for summer reading prior to the end of the school year in their ELA classroom.
- **Teachers will not require summative projects to be completed in the summer.**
- Teachers may suggest a variety of note-taking/annotation strategies that students may utilize while reading their novel. Annotations/novel notes (on notebook paper, in the novel, on sticky notes, etc.) are *highly recommended* but not required.
- To value student efforts around their self-selected summer reading, suggested opportunities to continue conversations and build text connections can include booktalks, book trailers, and choice boards.
- Any summer reading work for a grade during the first nine weeks should be formative and must align with TEKS.
- **No grade associated with summer reading will be taken during the first two weeks of the first nine weeks.**

Engaging students in a culture of literacy develops students as skilled readers, writers, thinkers, and communicators. By supporting self-selected reading, MS ELA teachers have opportunities to challenge their thinking about how they engage students in learning and literacy in the classroom. Because the keys to student learning and success are motivation and engagement, student choice becomes even more crucial.

"There is massive evidence that self-selected reading, or reading what you want to read, is responsible for most of our literacy development. Readers have better reading ability, know more vocabulary, write better, spell better, and have better control of complex grammatical constructions. In fact, it is impossible to develop high levels of literacy without being a dedicated reader, and dedicated readers rarely have serious problems in reading and writing."

~Stephen Krashen, language acquisition expert and educational researcher