

## Entering 7th Grade Summer Reading Assignment

“The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members.” ~Coretta Scott King

Building community is an essential part of the middle school experience. Community allows us to establish a bond with others, to feel a sense of belonging, and to work with others toward common goals. With the Summer Reading, as well as with reading and work throughout the upcoming school year, students entering **7th Grade** are asked to consider this essential question:

***EQ: What creates or nurtures a sense of belonging to a community?***

### **I. ALL Students will read:**

*New Kid*, by Jerry Craft (fiction, 249p)

Seventh grader Jordan Banks loves nothing more than drawing cartoons about his life. But instead of sending him to the art school of his dreams, his parents enroll him in a prestigious private school known for its academics, where Jordan turns out to be one of the few kids of color in his entire grade. As he makes the daily trip from his Washington Heights apartment to the upscale Riverdale Academy Day School, Jordan soon finds himself torn between two worlds – and not really fitting into either one. Middle school’s hard enough without all the unspoken rules and expectations that come with being the new kid. Can Jordan learn to navigate his new school culture while keeping his neighborhood friends and staying true to himself?

**We will be working with and writing about *New Kid* for our first unit in the fall.**

**You must have a copy of this book in school.**

### **II. Students will then choose ONE additional book from the list below:**

#### **Fiction:**

*Stella by Starlight*, by Sharon M. Draper (fiction, 320p)

Stella lives in a segregated South – in Bumblebee, North Carolina, to be exact about it... One late night, later than she should ever be up, much less wandering around outside, Stella and her little brother see something that they’re never supposed to see, something that is the first flicker of change to come, change not welcome by any stretch of the imagination. As Stella’s community – her world, is upended, she decides to fight fire with fire, and learns that ashes don’t necessarily signify an end.

*Counting by 7s*, by Holly Goldberg Sloan (fiction 378p)

Willow Chance is a twelve-year-old genius, obsessed with nature and diagnosing medical conditions, who finds it comforting to count by sevens. 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.

***Kareem Between***, by Shifa Saltagi Safadi (fiction, 336p)

Seventh grade begins, and Kareem's already fumbled it. His best friend moved away, he messed up his tryout for the football team, and because of his heritage, he was *voluntold* to show the new kid – a Syrian refugee with a thick and embarrassing accent – around school. Just when Kareem thinks his middle school life has imploded, the hotshot QB promises to get Kareem another tryout for the squad. There's a catch: to secure that chance, Kareem must do something he knows is wrong. Then, like a surprise blitz, Kareem's mom returns to Syria to help her family but can't make it back home. If Kareem could throw a penalty flag on the fouls of his school and home life, it would be for unnecessary roughness. Kareem is stuck between. Between countries, between friends, between football, between parents – and between right and wrong. It's up to him to step up, find his confidence, and navigate the beauty and hope found somewhere in the middle.

***Lucky Broken Girl***, by Ruth Behar (fiction, 231p)

When Ruthie Mizrahi moves with her family from her homeland of Cuba to the bustling streets of New York, it's a lot to take in. New sights, new sounds, and a new language. But Ruthie is adjusting. She's already mastering English and has made some new friends. But then Ruthie's in a car accident, and she ends up in a body cast that stretches all the way from her chest to her toes. Just when she was starting to feel like life in New York would be okay – now she'll have to lie in bed for months and be treated like a baby again. Then all kinds of interesting people start visiting, bringing stories and gifts, and suddenly, she starts to feel like everything might be okay after all.

***The Blackbird Girls***, by Anne Blankman (fiction, 334 p)

On a spring morning, neighbors Valentina Kaplan and Oksana Savchenko wake up to an angry red sky. A reactor at the nuclear power plant where their fathers work – Chernobyl – has exploded. Before they know it, the two girls, who've always been enemies, find themselves on a train bound for Leningrad to stay with Valentina's estranged grandmother, Rita Grigorievna. In their new lives in Leningrad, they begin to learn what it means to trust another person. Oksana must face the lies her parents told her all her life. Valentina must keep her grandmother's secret, one that could put all their lives in danger. And both of them discover something they've wished for: a best friend. But how far would you go to save your best friend's life? Would you risk your own?

***The Bridge Home***, by Padma Venkatraman (fiction, 187p)

Life is harsh on the teeming streets of Chennai, India, so when runaway sisters Viji and Rukku arrive, their prospects look grim. Very quickly, eleven-year-old Viji discovers how vulnerable they are in this uncaring, dangerous world. Fortunately, the girls find shelter – and friendship – on an abandoned bridge that's also the hideout of Muthi and Arul, two homeless boys, and the four of them soon form a family of sorts. And while making their living scavenging the city's trash heaps is the pits, the kids find plenty to take pride in, too. After all, they are now the bosses of themselves and no longer dependent on untrustworthy adults. But when illness strikes, Viji must decide whether to risk seeking help from strangers or to keep holding on to their fragile, hard-fought freedom.

***The Door of No Return***, by Kwame Alexander (narrative verse, 398p)

Young Kofi lives and dreams on the banks of the river Offin. He loves these things above all else: his family, the fireside tales of his father's father, a girl named Ama, and, of course, swimming. It is in the river that he feels invincible and where he thinks he can finally prove himself in a race against his schoolyard rival. But the river also holds dark secrets that Kofi will soon discover. Told never to venture there after nightfall but never told why, Kofi seeks his own answers. One night is all it takes to transform a life. As his world turns upside down, Kofi ends up on a harrowing journey that steals him away from everything he loves.

***Stargirl***, by Jerry Spinelli (fiction, 186p)

Leo Borlock follows the unspoken rule at Mica Area High School: don't stand out – under any circumstances! Then Stargirl arrives at Mica High and everything changes – for Leo and for the entire school. After fifteen years of home schooling, Stargirl bursts into tenth grade in an explosion of color and a clatter of ukulele music, enchanting the Mica student body. But the delicate scales of popularity suddenly shift, and Stargirl is shunned for everything that makes her different. Somewhere in the midst of Stargirl's arrival and rise and fall, normal Leo Borlock has tumbled into love with her. This is a tale about the fleeting, cruel nature of popularity – and the thrill and inspiration of first love.

***The Many Masks of Andy Zhou***, by Jack Cheng (fiction, 309p)

Andy Zhou is used to being what people need him to be: the good kid for his parents, and now grandparents visiting from Shanghai, or the helpful sidekick for his best friend Cindy's rebellious plans and schemes. So when Cindy decides they should try out for Movement after school on the first day of sixth grade, how can Andy say no? But between feeling out of place with the dancers, being hassled by his new science partner Jameel, and sensing tension between his dad and grandfather, Andy feels all kinds of weird. Then, over anime, Hi-Chews, and Andy's lizard-inspired artwork, things shift between him and Jameel, opening up new doors – and also new complications. No matter how much Andy cares about his friends and family, it's hard not

to feel pulled between all the ways he's meant to be, all the different faces he wears, and harder still to figure out if any of these masks is the real him.

***Red, White and Whole***, by Rajani LaRocca (fiction, 209p)

Reha feels torn between two worlds: school, where she's the only Indian American student, and home, with her family and their community. But Reha's parents don't understand. She feels disconnected from her mother, or Amma. Although their names are linked – Reha means “star” and Punam means “moon” – they are a universe apart. Then Reha finds out that her Amma is sick. Really sick. Reha, who dreams of becoming a doctor even though the sight of blood makes her woozy, is determined to make her Amma well. She becomes fixated on red and white blood cells, facing her fear, and being the daughter her parents want her to be, because she has no idea how she can go on if the moon is missing from her sky.

**Non-Fiction:**

***Becoming Kareem***, by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (nonfiction, 304p)

At one time, Lew Alcindor was just another kid from New York City with all the usual problems: he struggled with fitting in, pleasing a strict father, and overcoming shyness that made him feel socially awkward. But with a talent for basketball, and an unmatched team of supporters, Lew Alcindor was able to transform and to become Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. From a childhood made difficult by racism and prejudice to a record-smashing career on the basketball court as an adult, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's life was packed with "coaches" who taught him right from wrong and led him on the path to greatness. His parents, coaches Jack Donahue and John Wooden, Muhammad Ali, Bruce Lee, and many others played important roles in Abdul-Jabbar's life and sparked him to become an activist for social change and advancement. The inspiration from those around him, and his drive to find his own path in life, are highlighted in this personal and awe-inspiring journey.

***Enchanted Air: Two Cultures, Two Wings***, by Margarita Engle (nonfiction, 224p)

Margarita is a girl from two worlds. Her heart lies in Cuba, her mother's tropical island country, a place so lush with vibrant life that it seems like a fairy tale kingdom. But most of the time she lives in Los Angeles, lonely in the noisy city and dreaming of the summers when she can take a plane through the enchanted air to her beloved island. Words and images are her constant companions, friendly and comforting when the children at school are not. Then a revolution breaks out in Cuba. Margarita fears for her far-away family. When the hostility between Cuba and the United States erupts at the Bay of Pigs Invasion, Margarita's worlds collide in the worst way possible. How can the two countries she loves hate each other so much? And will she ever get to visit her beautiful island again?

***Girls Who Code: Learn to Code and Change the World***, by Reshma Saujani (nonfiction, 194p)  
Since 2012, the organization Girls Who Code has taught computing skills to and inspired over 40,000 girls across America. Now its founder, and author of *Brave Not Perfect*, Reshma Saujani, wants to inspire *you* to be a girl who codes! Bursting with dynamic artwork, down-to-earth explanations of coding principles, and real-life stories of girls and women working at places like Pixar and NASA, this graphically animated book shows what a huge role computer science plays in our lives and how much fun it can be. No matter your interest—sports, the arts, baking, student government, social justice—coding can help you do what you love and make your dreams come true. Whether you’re a girl who’s never coded before, a girl who codes, or a parent raising one, this entertaining book, printed in bold two-color and featuring art on every page, will have you itching to create your own apps, games, and robots to make the world a better place.

***Never Caught: The Story of Ona Judge: George and Martha Washington’s Courageous Slave Who Dared to Run Away (Young Reader’s Edition)***, by Erica Armstrong Dunbar (nonfiction, 272p)

In this incredible narrative, Erica Armstrong Dunbar reveals a fascinating and heartbreaking behind-the-scenes look at the Washingtons when they were the First Family—and an in-depth look at their slave, Ona Judge, who dared to escape from one of the nation’s Founding Fathers. Born into a life of slavery, Ona Judge eventually grew up to be George and Martha Washington’s “favored” dower slave. When she was told that she was going to be given as a wedding gift to Martha Washington’s granddaughter, Ona made the bold and brave decision to flee to the north, where she would be a fugitive. From her childhood, to her time with the Washingtons and living in the slave quarters, to her escape to New Hampshire, Erica Armstrong Dunbar, along with Kathleen Van Cleve, shares an intimate glimpse into the life of a little-known, but powerful figure in history, and her brave journey as she fled the most powerful couple in the country.

***Primates: The Fearless Science of Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey, and Biruté Galdikas***, by Jim Ottaviani and Maris Wicks

Jim Ottaviani returns with an action-packed account of the three greatest primatologists of the last century: Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey, and Biruté Galdikas. These three ground-breaking researchers were all students of the great Louis Leakey, and each made profound contributions to primatology—and to our own understanding of ourselves. Tackling Goodall, Fossey, and Galdikas in turn, and covering the highlights of their respective careers, *Primates* is an accessible, entertaining, and informative look at the field of primatology and at the lives of three of the most remarkable women scientists of the twentieth century. Thanks to the charming and inviting illustrations by Maris Wicks, this is a nonfiction graphic novel with broad appeal.

***Brown Girl Dreaming***, by Jacqueline Woodson (memoir, 337p)

Raised in South Carolina and later in Brooklyn, New York, author Jacqueline Woodson often felt halfway home in each place, and describes the reality of living with the remnants of Jim Crow

and her growing awareness of the civil rights movement. In the South, kids teased her and her siblings about their northern way of talking, and in Brooklyn, being a Jehovah's Witness meant following rules their friends didn't understand. But through all their journeying, there was always one constant – a deep family love and pride that made each Woodson stand up a little taller and shine a little brighter. Woodson's eloquent poetry also describes the joy of finding her voice through writing – something she always loved to do, despite the fact that she struggled in school.