**Independent Reading Parent Letter**

Dear Parent or Guardian,

 One of my main goals is to establish a reading habit in the busy lives of all of my students. I am hoping that we can work together to recapture the pleasure and passion of reading within your child. This letter is long, but so important. Please take the time to read this and understand my approach to independent reading before signing.

 The best books challenge our beliefs by helping us see things through different eyes—they allow us to live a different life. For instance, *The Book Thief,* by Markus Zusak, was very popular last year, but it is about a girl growing up during World War II. Although my students did not grow up during this time period, by reading this book they are able to better understand the fears and struggles of a young adult growing up during this very difficult time in history.

 I will not know the details of every book that students read this year, and I will not remember the details of every book I recommend to students. What I want for all my students is for them to always be reading something that they **want** to read. This interest in the materials they are reading will lead them to reading well over the 250 - 500 pages I require them to read each grading period. This has tremendous benefits. Such as:

* **Reading Relieves Stress.** Middle School is a stressful time for students. Reading takes you out of the present and into another place and time; it is a perfect escape.
* **Reading Builds Stamina** to prepare students for high school. Reading for 30-60 minutes in one sitting is a basic expectation in high school.
* **Reading Expands Vocabulary.** The more students read the more unknown words they come into contact with in context. The more unknown words they become familiar with the better vocabulary they will have.

However, these benefits will only occur if a child is reading something they **want** to read. There is a lot of talk in the media right now saying that “students today don’t read.” I think the problem is that students are substituting other distractions (TV, Video Games, etc.) because they feel no passion for the book they are being told to read. In my experience, students who claim to dislike reading will become quite passionate about reading when they find the **right book.**

Independent reading is an important focus in our classroom. I have designed a way for students to accumulate rewards by taking comprehension tests on books they have read. **Each nine weeks** the students will be required to read a minimum of **6** age- appropriate books. Each book is worth 10 points if student has read & tested with a minimum of 80% grade. This means that an average student who reads everyday at school and home should be able to meet or exceed that goal. Please make sure your child stays on track! Also, this activity will consist of one test grade per nine weeks. All individual test grades will be averaged together to make up one major grade.

**Students will be expected to ……**

* Check out a book each week or bring one from home
* Be conscious of age-appropriate books (nothing under a 5th grade level)
* Put effort toward meeting their goal
* Read at home 5 days a week or at least 30 minutes each day
* Read the book during silent reading time in class
* Take book test immediately after they complete books at school
* Meet or exceed the 100 point goal

I have listed below a list of rewards for each goal:

20 pts - Chew gum in class

50 pts - No homework pass for Mrs. Williamson’s class with automatic 100% on participation grade

80 pts - Drink & candy bar of choice

100 pts - Pizza Party with free time (End of nine weeks)

Also, if you are inclined, please consider donating books you no longer need to my classroom library. One person’s trash is another person’s treasure and the book you donate could spark a passion for reading in one of your child’s classmates.

Now that you have a better understanding of my independent reading expectations, I ask that you fill in the information below and have your child return a signed copy of this letter to me. Thank you so very much for your support. If you have any questions do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Williamson

Student Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, am aware that my child will be given the opportunity to choose their own independent reading book for all independent reading this school year. I understand that by signing this form I am taking the responsibility of monitoring my child’s independent reading selection & goals.

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 (parent signature) (date)