

Dear Students (and Parents/Guardians),

Welcome to the wonderful world of Middle School at Penn Alexander! The team of teachers, students, and parents in our Middle School family are so very excited to have you join our community. Your unique personalities, strengths, and talents will add to the vibrancy of our team. Middle School is an amazing adventure that will expand your content knowledge, equip you with essential skills and strategies for success, and extend and deepen your perspectives and values.

Along with your friends and classmates, you have a strong support system of adults cheering you on, setting high expectations for you, pushing you to think deeply and differently, and demanding the very best from you. Your parents and teachers are also your strongest advocates and mentors during this growth period. Listen to our advice, and remember to engage in conversations about your learning, your struggles, and your feelings; this will lead to growth in your critical thinking skills and your coping mechanisms. There are so many people who care for you. When you feel stuck or burdened, reach out. Remember, though, that as a middle school student, you will be expected to participate in seeking solutions to these struggles, with the support of the adults who care for you.

Now, onto the “fun stuff.” We are about to embark on a three-year journey filled with endless, engaging learning experiences. Throughout the first year of that journey, we:

- will explore characters’ identities, personalities, and motivations, all while monitoring comprehension through structured note-taking and analysis to facilitate discussion and writing;
- will engage in collaborative conversations and partnerships to equip us with the skills of communication, compromise, teamwork, and reflective processing of our own assertions and biases;
- will write narrative, argumentative and informational pieces to express and communicate our thoughts, feelings, values, claims, and knowledge;
- will learn the language and discourse of the academic disciplines that we are exploring and studying;
- will participate in cross-curricular, collaborative learning experiences and projects to deepen our understanding of the connections between academic disciplines;
- will use technology in new ways to prepare ourselves to be competent global citizens equipped with critical media and informational technology literacy skills;
- will learn about the oldest recorded civilizations, and delve into the documents that lay the foundation for our country
- take field trips to various places to extend learning beyond the classroom and remind ourselves that the skills we are learning are applicable in various disciplines

The summer reading assignment is the first step in your middle school adventure. The books were carefully chosen to engage as many readers as possible during the months when many of us want a break from certain responsibilities. It is my hope that the triumphs, challenges and struggles of the characters in the ten short stories in *Flying Lessons and Other Stories* will widen your perspectives and foster conversations with your families and classmates. Jessica Fries-Gaither's informational text, *Notable Notebooks*, will introduce you to scientists and the various methods they have used to record their observations and findings throughout history. It will also allow you to sharpen your poetic skills because it's written in verse. Plan to use this text in both literacy and science class in the fall.

Set aside 20 minutes each day to read right from the start of the summer (see the infographic). Do not wait until the week before we return. As you read, take notes in a composition book. Summarize, record your reactions and thoughts, make connections, and add comments on author's craft. This will help prepare you to engage in our September learning experiences. When you finish the required books, do not forget to read for pleasure, too. After each day's reading, be sure to enjoy your summer break: play with your friends outside, enjoy the relaxing time with your families, stay active, and explore your community. Taking the time for you will ensure that you are fully refreshed and renewed when the school bell rings on August 27th.




May your summer be filled with enjoyable experiences and amazing memories. I am looking forward to meeting each of you and learning alongside you.

Sincerely yours,

Miss Julie Mikolajewski
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*Please be mindful that a reply might take 48 hours, and that sometimes this will be prolonged in summer.

WHY READ 20 MINUTES AT HOME?

Student A Reads	Student B Reads	Student C Reads
❖ 20 minutes per day.	❖ 5 minutes per day.	❖ 1 minute per day
❖ 3,600 minutes per school year.	❖ 900 minutes per school year.	❖ 180 minutes per school year.
❖ 1,800,000 words per year.	❖ 282,000 words per year.	❖ 8,000 words per year.
		
❖ Scores in the 90 th percentile on standardized tests.	❖ Scores in the 50 th percentile on standardized tests.	❖ Scores in the 10 th percentile on standardized tests.

If they start reading for 20 minutes per night in Kindergarten, by the end of 6th grade, Student A will have read for the equivalent of 60 school days, Student B will have read for 12 school days, and Student C will have read for 3.

(Gray and Herman, 1985)

WANT TO BE A BETTER READER? SIMPLY READ.