

Summer 2017

Dear Sixth Grade Families and Students,

My name is Blake Beckett and I will be the English Language Arts Teacher in sixth grade this year. I have been teaching third grade for the last four years at P.K. Yonge and am looking forward to this new adventure in my career. My work will be informed by the following three aspects of my life: I grew up in a house with a writer for a mother, Shelley Fraser Mickle; I have taught public elementary school for twenty years during which I focused my professional studies on literacy; and my own son just completed sixth grade at P.K. Yonge during the last school year.

I would like to encourage you to enjoy your summer, while I challenge you to make reading part of that enjoyment. To me, reading has a broad definition which includes newspapers, magazines, comics, audiobooks, how-to manuals, as well as irresistible novels, picture books, and nonfiction texts about science, history, and anything you wish to learn more about. This summer, you can get books at the P.K. Yonge front office and at our many wonderful public libraries around Gainesville.

Parents, focus on what your child is interested in, whether video games, sports, history, or science and point them in a direction to read about those interests. Also, remember your own areas of interest now *and* when *you* were entering sixth grade. Reread your favorite books from back then with your child and read a book your child has recently enjoyed, even if it has underpants, wimpy, dork or Minecraft in the title.

While there is no specific summer reading requirement for my class, I would like you to consider the following information:

Reading as a leisure activity is the best predictor of comprehension, vocabulary and reading speed.

- The Power of Reading, Stephen Krashen, Libraries Unlimited, 1993

Regardless of ethnicity, socioeconomic level, or previous achievement, children who read four or more books over the summer fare better on reading-comprehension tests in the fall than their peers who read one or no books over the summer.

- Summer Reading and the Ethnic Achievement Gap, Jimmy Kim, Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 2004

Having reading role-model parents or a large book collection at home has a greater impact on kids' reading frequency than does household income.

- The Kids and Family Reading Report™ 4th edition conducted by Harrison Group and Scholastic, 2012.

I look forward to working with you all this year. When we begin our work together in the fall, I can't wait to hear about all of the audiobooks listened to on long trips, novels read *just for fun*, and new knowledge learned from newspapers and magazines.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Blake Beckett