



The Herald

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Why Do We Have Summer Reading at MCA?

Numerous studies have shown that summer reading helps prevent the notorious “summer slide,” or the loss in reading skills that may occur during the summer when children aren’t actively involved in academic activities. At Millennium Charter Academy, we want to help our students stay on level, and even possibly improve their reading and comprehension skills over the summer. Here are several reasons our students participate in summer reading.

Reading good literature is the hallmark of classical education. At MCA, our summer reading selections share some essential qualities that put them in the category of classical. They are well written by an author who knows his/her subject and who cares deeply about the text; they address important life issues and lessons about human nature; and, they are timeless in that multiple generations can read and enjoy them. The summer reading selections present a challenge to our students and offer new ideas and virtual experiences.

Good literature presents students with models of good character to emulate or bad character to avoid. Character development is one of MCA’s three pillars and is an inseparable, inherent dimension of our academic development of students. Our summer reading selections present students with the chance to meet characters of varying time periods, varying cultural backgrounds, and varying virtues and vices. From these selections, students experience through rich scenarios principles of life and how they work out in decisions made. Our students see the results of how good character traits make a positive difference both currently and in the future.

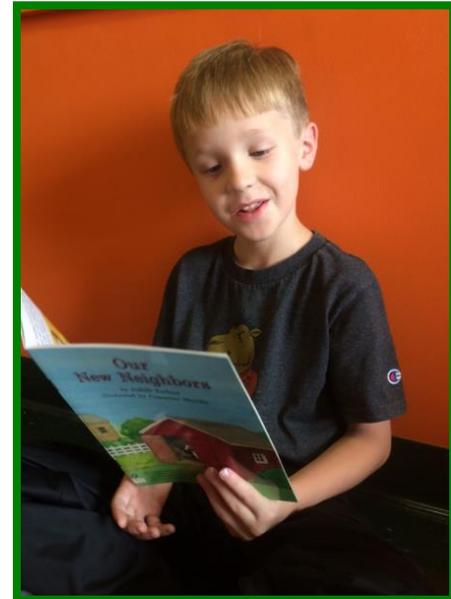
Interaction with the text allows students to think well about what they are reading. Our students not only read during the summer, but they also engage in various activities regarding their selections from simple questions to philosophical inquiries to art-based projects. This interaction helps students get a better grasp of their material and think well about what they’ve read. When school starts in the fall, students are prepared to take part in significant class discussions and expanded group activities, creating even more opportunities for learning and thinking well.

Reading and learning are ongoing processes. Reading and learning do not cease during the summer, nor should they cease even when formal schooling is complete. The MCA mission statement declares that we want to produce life-long learners. Our summer reading program helps begin the habits that lead to life-long learning. It also helps students begin to understand that that life-long learning is enjoyable and beneficial.

Summer reading builds community. When people share a common experience, relationships develop: relationships between students, between teachers and students, and between individuals and ideas. Through a shared experience, the meaning of events can be plumbed and even extrapolated to daily life. Having summer reading also prepares our student body to begin with thought-provoking lessons as soon as the school year begins, which also sets a tone for the remainder of the year.

Summer reading provides continuity between the grade levels and helps students to transition well. Studies show that students who participate in summer reading score higher on standardized testing the following year. Students who read also have an easier time of falling back into the routine of school. So, you see, summer reading benefits our students in many ways. Even though it may be the “lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer,” summer reading will help prevent learning loss over the summer, and help ensure a smart, easy transition back to school in the fall, not to mention enriching the very lives of our students.

Additionally, our faculty also reads during the summer in preparation for the fall staff development. This year the faculty may choose from Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*, Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Austen’s *Jane Eyre*, Dicken’s *A Tale of Two Cities*, Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, and sixteen others, as they prepare to think about character development and the human condition.



Finley Baird, 1st grade, enjoys reading a book about meeting new neighbors.