**Recommended Reads (By Alpha Order)**

*10% Happier* by Dan Harris Nonfiction

Dan Harris is an accomplished news anchor for ABC. Early in his career, he suffered an on-air panic attack. *10% Happier i*s his story of dealing with the stressful life that has become commonplace for so many individuals. He explores meditation from a skeptical, non-religious viewpoint backing it up with anecdotes from his own life and hard facts from modern research. Recommended by Tom New and Julia Burkel

*Alexander Hamilton* by Ron Cherno Nonfiction

A recent biography of one of the most interesting and important contributors to the United States Constitution. This book has received a recent surge in popularity due to being adapted as a Broadway hip-hop musical with a best-selling musical score. Although quite long, it is eminently readable and exhaustively researched. Recommended by Patrick Green

*All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr Fiction

This book contains two captivating stories woven together by fate and circumstance. Marie -Laure LeBlanc who loses her sight at age six, has an amazing ability to solve complex puzzles in minutes. But as life is Paris is threatened by war, Marie-Laure and her father who is a locksmith for the National Museum of Natural History must flee and protect a precious stone at the same time. Woven in with Marie-Laure’s story is that of Werner Pfeninig and his sister Jutta who are orphans in Germany. Werner has a talent with electronics and after hearing a Frenchman on the radio he increases the range and power of the radio. With War at hand, Werner is torn from his sister and faces an unclear future. This is an excellent story of two unlikely people whose lives come together. Recommended by Clare McConville

*American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang (Board Approved) Graphic Novel

Jin Wang starts at a new school where he's the only Chinese-American student. When a boy from Taiwan joins his class, Jin doesn't want to be associated with an FOB like him. Jin just wants to be an all-American boy, because he's in love with an all-American girl. Danny is an all-American boy: great at basketball, popular with the girls. But his obnoxious Chinese cousin Chin-Kee's annual visit is such a disaster that it ruins Danny's reputation at school, leaving him with no choice but to transfer somewhere he can start all over again. The Monkey King has lived for thousands of years and mastered the arts of kung fu and the heavenly disciplines. He's ready to join the ranks of the immortal gods in heaven. But there's no place in heaven for a monkey. Each of these characters cannot help himself alone, but how can they possibly help each other? They're going to have to find a way―if they want fix the disasters their lives have become. (Amazon.com) Recommended by Cher Schwartz

*Between the World and Me*  by Ta Nehisi Coates Nonfiction

This book is written in letter form from Coates to his son Samori sharing his wisdom about being an African-American man in the United States. It is a compelling and timely work that shares insightful commentary. Recommended by JoAnn Galluzzi

*Bless Me Ultima* by Rudolfo Anaya Fiction

Antonio Marez is six years old when Ultima comes to stay with his family in New Mexico. She is a curandera, one who cures with herbs and magic. Under her wise wing, Tony will probe the family ties that bind and rend him, and he will discover himself in the magical secrets of the pagan past-a mythic legacy as palpable as the Catholicism of Latin America. And at each life turn there is Ultima, who delivered Tony into the world...and will nurture the birth of his soul. (Amazon.com) Recommended by Amy Alderson

*The Body of Christopher Creed* by Carol Plum-Ucci (Board Approved) Fiction

Chris Creed grew up as the class freak—the bullies’ punching bag. After he vanished, the weirdness that had once surrounded him began spreading. And it tore the town apart. Sixteen-year-old Torey Adams’s search for answers opens his eyes to the lies, the pain, and the need to blame someone when tragedy strikes, and his once-safe world comes crashing down around him. Recommended by Brenda Smith

*Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson Poetic Non-Fiction

This is another great read for our lower readers. Raised in South Carolina and New York, Woodson always felt halfway home in each place. In vivid poems, she shares what it was like to grow up as an African American in the 1960s and 1970s, living with the remnants of Jim Crow and her growing awareness of the Civil Rights movement. Touching and powerful, each poem is both accessible and emotionally charged, each line a glimpse into a child’s soul as she searches for her place in the world. Woodson’s eloquent poetry also reflects the joy of finding her voice through writing stories, despite the fact that she struggled with reading as a child. Her love of stories inspired her and stayed with her, creating the first sparks of the gifted writer she was to become. (Amazon.com) Recommended by Cher Schwartz

*Dante and Aristotle Discover the Secrets of the Universe* by Benjamin Alire Saenz Fiction

Aristotle is an angry teen with a brother in prison. Dante is a know-it-all who has an unusual way of looking at the world. When the two meet at the swimming pool, they seem to have nothing in common. But as the loners start spending time together, they discover that they share a special friendship—the kind that changes lives and lasts a lifetime. And it is through this friendship that Ari and Dante will learn the most important truths about themselves and the kind of people they want to be (Amazon.com). Recommended by Cher Schwartz

*East of Eden* by John Steinbeck Fiction

Set in the rich farmland of California’s Salinas Valley, this sprawling and often brutal novel follows the intertwined destinies of two families—the Trasks and the Hamiltons—whose generations helplessly reenact the fall of Adam and Eve and the poisonous rivalry of Cain and Abel. Here Steinbeck created some of his most memorable characters and explored his most enduring themes: the mystery of identity; the inexplicability of love; and the murderous consequences of love’s absence. (summary taken from Goodreads). Recommended by Stephanie Church

*Going Bovine* by Libba Bray Fiction

This is for those who enjoy more abstract, non-traditional storytelling. If you like weird, you will love this novel. Cam gets diagnosed with mad cow disease which causes him and the reader to question his reality. All 16-year-old Cameron wants is to get through high school—and life in general—with a minimum of effort. It’s not a lot to ask. But that’s before he’s given some bad news: he’s sick and he’s going to die. Which totally sucks. Hope arrives in the winged form of Dulcie, a loopy punk fairy with a bad sugar habit who acts as his guide through his diseased mind. She tells Cam there is a cure—if he’s willing to go in search of it. With the help of a death-obsessed, video-gaming dwarf and a yard gnome, Cam sets off on the mother of all road trips through a twisted America into the heart of what matters most. Review adapted from Amazon. com. Recommended by Cher Schwartz

*The Heart and the Fist* by Eric Greitens Nonfiction

Read the autobiography of a young man’s journey from student, to amateur boxer to Rhode Scholar to humanitarian to Navy Seal. This is a story of leadership, sacrifice, service to others and the importance of defense of the helpless. Recommended by Patrick Green

*Hole in My Life* by Jack Gantos (Board Approved) Fiction

In the summer of 1971, Jack Gantos was an aspiring writer looking for adventure, cash for college tuition, and a way out of a dead-end job. For ten thousand dollars, he recklessly agreed to help sail a sixty-foot yacht loaded with a ton of hashish from the Virgin Islands to New York City, where he and his partners sold the drug until federal agents caught up with them. For his part in the conspiracy, Gantos was sentenced to serve up to six years in prison. (Amazon.com) Recommended by Amy Alderson

*The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros (Board Approved) Fiction/Poetry

Esperanza Cordero, a girl coming of age in the Hispanic quarter of Chicago, uses poems and stories to express thoughts and emotions about her oppressive environment.(Amazon.com) Recommended by Amy Alderson

*Into the Lake of the Woods* by Tim O’Brien (Board Approved) Fiction

If you enjoyed *The Things They Carried*, this might be another good choice. Do not expect neat and clear endings because there is none of that in this novel. We follow the central character as he grapples with the disappearance of his wife. Recommended by: Sue Nielsen

*Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer (Board Approved) Nonfiction

This is the story of Christopher McCandless, the college graduate who gave away his savings, lost contact with his family, and was found dead in Alaska 3 months later. Krakauer does his research well, and presents a story that is cautionary and almost unreal. Recommended by Sue Nielsen

*Jurassic Park* by Michael Crichton (Board Approved) Fiction

If you like set-in-the-near-future science fiction page turners, look no further than Crichton’s famous thriller. While the discussion of computer coding is dated, the fractal structure of the novel itself will give special enjoyment to math lovers. Biology students will appreciate the detailed discussion of genetics (can you find the mistakes?). It is a perfect case of a good movie from an even better book. Recommended by Patrick Green

*La Linea*  by Ann Jaramillo (Board Approved) Fiction

Miguel has dreamed of joining his parents in California since the day they left him behind in Mexico six years, eleven months, and twelve days ago. On the morning of his fifteenth birthday, Miguel's wait is over.

Or so he thinks. The trip north to the border―*la línea*―is fraught with dangers. Thieves. Border guards. And a grueling, two-day trek across the desert. It would be hard enough to survive alone. But it's almost impossible with his tagalong sister in tow.

Their money gone and their hopes nearly dashed, Miguel and his sister have no choice but to hop the infamous *mata gente* as it races toward the border. As they cling to the roof of the speeding train, they hold onto each other, and to their dreams. But they quickly learn that you can't always count on dreams―even the ones that come true. (Amazon.com) Recommended by Amy Alderson

*My Beloved World*  by Sonia Sotomayor Nonfiction

This is the story of Sonia Sotomayor who was raised in poverty but with significant ties to her Puerto Rican heritage. Early on, Sonia Sotomayor learned that she needed to be independent and self-reliant. These qualities helped fuel her dream to become a lawyer. Graduating from Princeton with honors and while her family made only $2000.00 per year, the book recounts Sonia Sotomayor’s beginning in the legal field as well as her rise to the Supreme Court. Once you have read this book you will understand why she could not wait until she retired from the Court to release it. Recommended by Sue Nielsen

*The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver Fiction

*The Poisonwood Bible* is a story told by the wife and four daughters of Nathan Price, a fierce, evangelical Baptist who takes his family and mission to the Belgian Congo in 1959. They carry with them everything they believe they will need from home, but soon find that all of it—from garden seeds to Scripture—is calamitously transformed on African soil. What follows is a suspenseful epic of one family's tragic undoing and remarkable reconstruction over the course of three decades in postcolonial Africa Review from Amazon.com. Recommended by Jamie Foate

*Schooled* by Gordon Korman Fiction

This is a great read for one of our lower readers. Capricorn “Cap” Anderson has been homeschooled by his hippie grandmother, Rain. When Rain is injured in a fall, Cap is forced to attend the local middle school. Although he knows a lot about Zen Buddhism, nothing has prepared him for the politics of public school. Review from Amazon.com. Recommended by Cher Schwartz

*The Secret Lives of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd Fiction

Set in South Carolina in 1964, *The Secret Life of Bees* tells the story of Lily Owens, whose life has been shaped around the blurred memory of the afternoon her mother was killed. When Lily's fierce-hearted black "stand-in mother," Rosaleen, insults three of the town's most vicious racists, Lily decides they should both escape to Tiburon, South Carolina—a town that holds the secret to her mother's past. There they are taken in by an eccentric trio of black beekeeping sisters who introduce Lily to a mesmerizing world of bees, honey, and the Black Madonna who presides over their household. This is a remarkable story about divine female power and the transforming power of love—a story that women will share and pass on to their daughters for years to come. Recommended by Brenda Smith

*Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut (Board Approved) Fiction

*Slaughterhouse-Five* is one of the world's great anti-war books. Centering on the infamous fire-bombing of Dresden, Billy Pilgrim's odyssey through time reflects the mythic journey of our own fractured lives as we search for meaning in what we are afraid to know. Description from Amazon.com. Recommended by Dustin Zubert

*Speak*  by Laurie Halse Anderson Fiction

Melinda struggles starting out her high school career after she called the cops that busted up a senior party over the summer. No one will speak to her and since she experienced a traumatic event at the party, she won’t speak to anyone anyway. The only escape available to her is her art class where she learns to heal, trust, and open up again. In the end she finds she is stronger than she thought and is able to overcome her own silence. Recommended by Cher Schwartz

*A Supposedly Fun Thing I’ll Never Do Again* by David Foster Wallace Nonfiction

This is for the most advanced readers among you. Best known for his fiction magnum opus, *Infinite Jest, A Supposedly Fun Thing* is a collection of essays that appeared in *Harper’s, The Atlantic Monthly* and other well-respected journals. Many of the essays are humorous, but all are insightful, thought-provoking and exhaustively developed. In short, I dare you to read this book, but don’t feel bad it overwhelms you. Recommended by Patrick Green