



**The Bellmore-Merrick Central High School District**  
**Grand Avenue Middle School**  
*Summer Reading Program*

June, 2019

Dear Parents/Guardians of Incoming 7<sup>th</sup> Graders:

The English Department at Grand Avenue Middle School is pleased to present its selections for the 2019-2020 Bellmore-Merrick Central High School District Summer Reading Program! We welcome you and your child to choose among these three critically-acclaimed texts or choose an alternate text of equal merit. It is our hope that offering choice in these selections will allow each child to select an interesting book to read at his or her “just-right” reading level.

The three contemporary texts below are thematically linked our Grand C.A.R.E.S. philosophy. As your child is welcomed into the middle school community, we look forward to incorporating lessons from the books’ common themes into classroom discussions.

Please select one:

***Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus*** by Dusti Bowling (2017)

***Restart*** by Gordon Korman (2017)

***The Parker Inheritance*** by Varian Johnson (2018)

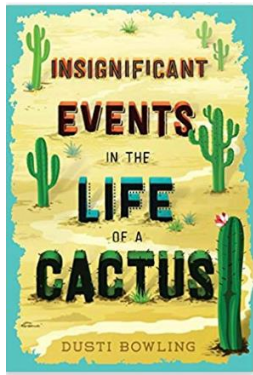
-or-

Select a book of equal merit that is thematically linked to the qualities of our Grand CARES philosophy: *Compassion, Accountability, Respect, Equity, and Strength.*

Please see the reverse of this letter for more details about these texts and guidance on how to choose a “just right” text with your child. We also invite you to visit our GrandREADS website at <http://grandreads.weebly.com>, which is where you will find a number of resources and links related to this Summer Reading Program.

We hope that you and your child enjoy this summer with one or more excellent books!

### **Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus by Dusti Bowling**



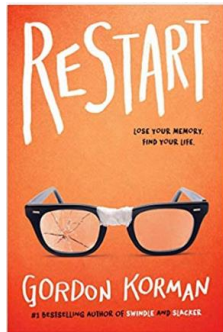
"Aven Green loves to tell people that she lost her arms in an alligator wrestling match, or a wildfire in Tanzania, but the truth is she was born without them. And when her parents take a job running Stagecoach Pass, a rundown western theme park in Arizona, Aven moves with them across the country knowing that she'll have to answer the question over and over again.

"Her new life takes an unexpected turn when she bonds with Connor, a classmate who also feels isolated because of his own disability, and they discover a room at Stagecoach Pass that holds bigger secrets than Aven ever could have imagined. It's hard to solve a mystery, help a friend, and face your worst fears. But Aven's about to discover she can do it all . . . even without arms." (Publisher summary)

#### **Why we love it!**

This story teaches lessons about the importance of understanding and acceptance. Two of the main characters have disabilities that set them apart from most of their peers. Aven's parents raised her to believe that she can do anything that she wants to do, but that doesn't mean that she is never self-conscious or embarrassed. This story shows how she and Connor struggle to manage their disabilities in the context of school and their daily lives. Readers will see how the main characters build the confidence to quiet their own personal anxieties as well as the negative reactions of others in order to achieve their goals. The book is ideal for developing readers aged 8-12. *Please note: There is an adoption/birth parent subplot that might take readers by surprise, but we feel that the author managed it well.*

### **Restart by Gordon Korman**



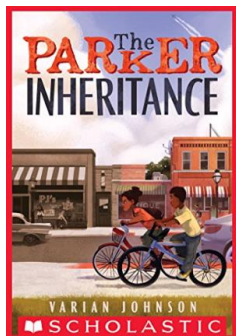
"Chase does not remember falling off the roof, in fact he does not remember anything about himself, and when he gets back to middle school he begins to learn who he was through the reactions of the other kids--trouble is, he really is not sure he likes the Chase that is being revealed, but can he take the opportunity amnesia has provided and restart his life?" (Publisher summary)

#### **Why we love it!**

*Restart* was selected by Grand Avenue students for the first annual Schoolwide Community Read in 2018-2019. It tells a story about bullying, regret, and forgiveness from various perspectives through chapter-by-chapter shifting narrators. Seven students tell their side of Chase's story from their own point-of-view as victim, perpetrator, up-stander, or bystander.

Readers will inevitably learn how our actions and attitudes can impact the lives of others around us, and they will also learn that it is possible for bullies to see the error in their ways and take positive steps forward to become better people. The book is ideal for all readers aged 8-12.

### **The Parker Inheritance by Varian Johnson**



"When Candice finds a letter in an old attic in Lambert, South Carolina, she isn't sure she should read it. It's addressed to her grandmother, who left the town in shame. But the letter describes a young woman. An injustice that happened decades ago. A mystery enfolding its writer. And the fortune that awaits the person who solves the puzzle.

"So with the help of Brandon, the quiet boy across the street, she begins to decipher the clues. The challenge will lead them deep into Lambert's history, full of ugly deeds, forgotten heroes, and one great love; and deeper into their own families, with their own unspoken secrets. Can they find the fortune and fulfill the letter's promise before the answers slip into the past yet again?" (Publisher summary)

#### **Why we love it!**

This book is a combination of realistic fiction and historical fiction, appealing to fans of both genres. It also provides a sincere viewpoint of our nation's racist past, particularly in the southern states prior to the civil rights movement. Readers will be able to critically examine and reflect on our nation's shared history. The book is ideal for mature readers aged 10-12. *Please note: There is an age-appropriate LGBTQ subplot that may necessitate follow-up discussion with a supportive adult.*

