

May 2009

Dear Incoming Eighth Grade Students and Parents:

In keeping with Blake Middle School's belief in the power of reading for both pleasure and educational purposes, the 8th grade English teachers would like students to read the following material prior to their first day of school next Fall.

Incoming 8th graders should:

1. Read at least one book of their own choosing. The reading material should stretch their reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and critical thinking skills, in addition to being entertaining.
2. Read all of the selections in the anthology entitled *Leaving Home* edited by Hazel Rochman and Darlene Z. McCampbell except the excerpt "On the Rainy River" by Tim O'Brien. (Students will be reading the book from which the excerpt is taken during their 10th grade American Literature class).

Students need to bring the following to their English class on the first day of school:

1. The signed **affirmation** at the bottom of this sheet,
2. The anthology *Leaving Home*

The following is a review of *Leaving Home* from *The ALAN Review*, a publication about young adult literature:

As they have in two other anthologies, Rochman and McCampbell combine here to edit stories and poems around a single, common YA theme: leaving a safe, secure home to achieve maturation. The editors bring together pieces that show many variations on that single theme, with all of the stories working individually to show the difficulties of establishing one's own identity, but also resonating with each other to show the many sides of leave-taking in different cultures. The impressive list of authors and stories includes Amy Tan's tale of a young girl's hurt and confusion as she breaks away from her family's controlling influence, Norma Fox Mazer's story of a young Jewish girl leaving Poland behind to forge a new and unexpected life in America, Tim Wynne-Jones' heartening tale of a young boy in the midst of divorce, and the concluding piece, Toni Morrison's "Recitatif," dealing with a reevaluation of the meaning of a past incident. The editors have varied the tones, the music, the voices, and the meanings of the pieces, which provide both humorous and heartbreaking stories of the meaning of adolescence.

Joe Seivold
Middle School Director

Rachel Godlewski and Eric Hansen
8th Grade English Faculty

_____ read the following book:
(Student's first & last name)

1. _____
(Any title at your reading level that your parents approve of)

(Parent or Guardian Signature)

(Date)