Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s),

Think back to the last time you were trying to find a book to read—which book did you choose to read? Why did you want to read that particular book? All of us have different reading lives, and all of us enjoy reading different genres, titles, or authors. I find that to be true with my students as well, which is why I have an extensive classroom library with thousands of books available for them to check out. Since loving reading and books is one of the major goals of our year together in English, our classroom library plays a major role in the pursuit of that.

One of the things I love about teaching seventh graders is just how unique they are. The differences in student interests and maturity levels, as well as learning goals, are vast and varied. These kids are not only different ages; they arrive at school with different reading levels, different backgrounds, and different experiences that have shaped their lives in both positive and negative ways. They therefore have different needs when it comes to reading. As a teacher, I have a responsibility to serve all of the kids who come to me, and a responsibility to offer literature choices that speak to all of them.

Kids, in general, do a fantastic job of self-selecting books, and when they find they’ve picked up something they’re not ready for, they’re usually quick to put it down and ask for help choosing something else. (In fact, I encourage my students to abandon books that are not right for them at that time.) As a teacher, I’ll offer recommendations and steer kids toward books that are age and individually appropriate, however, self-selecting a book is a pillar of our reading community.

As a teacher, I respect your right to help your own child choose reading material, and ask that you respect the rights of other parents/guardians to do the same. If you object to your child reading a particular book, let me know, send it back, and I’ll help your child find another selection. I’ll put the first book back on the shelf, because even though you don’t feel it’s the right book for your child right now, it may be the perfect book for someone else’s child. I would also encourage you to speak to your child about what types of books he or she feels comfortable reading so that this becomes a part of his or her selection process as well. If I can ever be of help to you in recommending titles for your family, please don’t hesitate to ask.

Our library will have a wide range of choices for kids—to meet all of their varied needs and help them all develop an appreciation of reading. This includes our picture book selection that spans many social and historical issues. These are used for mini lessons throughout the year as a way to garner discussion and reflection on our role as human beings. Through the use of these shared read-alouds, I hope for students to love reading and storytelling. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions or would like to visit our classroom library. Finally, thank you for your involvement in your child’s education and helping to encourage reading growth and engagement.

Sincerely,

Pernille Ripp

*Adapted and modified from a letter created by Kate Messner at www.katemessner.com/heading-off-book-challenges/

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