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TO: District Superintendents of Schools,
Superintendents of Public Schools,
Principals, and English Language Arts Department Chairs of Public Schools

FROM: Anne Schiano *Anne Schiano*

SUBJECT: Guidance on Locally Required Summer Reading Assignments

The Commissioner of Education has addressed several issues relating to locally required summer reading assignments. This document sets forth guidance and suggestions to assist administrators and teachers in developing acceptable required summer reading assignments.

The New York State Education Department has long encouraged students to read during the summer. Summer reading provides an excellent opportunity for students to stay connected to literature and to enhance literacy skills developed throughout the school year. Studies show that reading for enjoyment is a practice that helps all children increase their vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. In addition, a locally required summer reading assignment, if used in conjunction with other reading instruction strategies, is important for students who receive Academic Intervention Services (AIS).

<http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/part100/pages/topics.html>

The New York State Library's Statewide Summer Reading Program is an example of an effective voluntary summer reading program. It is planned and implemented collaboratively with local public libraries and helps students maintain and improve their reading levels over the summer while enjoying reading. There is no cost to students or their families. Educators and school administrators are encouraged to become familiar with the State Library's Statewide Summer Reading Program and other programs offered by their local public libraries and to share information about these programs with students, parents, and teachers. To review the program, please go to <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/summer/>

A board of education may distribute suggested summer reading lists, permit extra credit assignments over the summer, or require students to read books over the summer in preparation for discussion after school begins.

Some districts/schools have begun to develop locally required summer reading assignments that generally require students to complete the following:

- Read one or more specific works from a list of books prepared by the school; and
- Complete an assignment for credit when school resumes in the fall (e.g., an oral presentation, a book report, a media or electronic presentation, or a test that will count as part of the student's grade).

Where a district/school chooses to require a summer reading assignment, it must comply with the following:

- If books are to be used as part of a mandatory assignment, a school district must ensure that they are reasonably available to all students at no cost. Although a school district may indicate that books may be purchased, students cannot be required to purchase any books.
- Class grades should reflect work done under a teacher's direction and supervision. There must be sufficient opportunity for students to obtain teacher guidance and instruction before completing a graded assignment. Teacher guidance and instructional support may be accessed by email and telephone or in person, as necessary.
- Where students are unable to access the instructional support provided by the school district over the summer, they should be permitted to complete the assignment without penalty upon returning to school, while under the direction and supervision of the teacher.
- Assignments should be designed to meet the learning needs of all participating students.
- Students with disabilities, students who have limited English proficiency and students who are English language learners must have an equal opportunity to complete a locally required summer reading assignment.

The State Education Department also suggests that:

- Any locally required summer reading assignments be integral to the school district's existing curriculum.

- Parents(s)/guardians be encouraged to review the reading list to be aware of the titles and authors and to encourage and help guide their children's reading.
- Students should have a choice among one or more required readings.
- Options should be provided to students for demonstrating completion of the assignment (e.g., a book report, an oral presentation, or a media or electronic presentation).
- For students who will be away on vacation, all the necessary materials for their summer reading assignment should be provided to them before school ends in June.
- If assignments are given to determine placement in Advanced Placement (AP) courses or as part of the body of work required for the AP course, the district/school should have appropriately trained teachers available to the students for guidance and assistance over the summer, as well as make all necessary materials available.

Decisions of the Commissioner relating to required summer reading assignments are available at <http://www.counsel.nysed.gov/Decisions/home.html>. Scroll down the page to the Volume Numbers. Volume and Decision Numbers are listed below. Click on the Volume Number, then click on the Decision Number to view the decision.

- Appeal of Curran, Volume 44, Decision No. 15,235
- Appeal of Ciotti, Volume 44, Decision No. 15,162
- Appeal of Lahm, Volume 41, Decision No. 14,662
- Appeal of Lease, Volume 39, Decision No. 14,219

Please check this website periodically for any future decisions of the Commissioner of Education regarding summer reading assignments.

I trust that you will find this guidance useful. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact emscurric@mail.nysed.gov