

"The best of a book is not the thought which it contains, but the thought which it suggests;  
just as the charm of music dwells not in the tones but in the echoes of our hearts."

*John Greenleaf Whittier*

Summer 2010

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Secaucus Middle and High Schools are introducing a new summer reading program for the 2010-2011 school year. Our teachers strongly believe that reading is an essential component in helping our students to think critically and creatively. Reading instills in them a rich vocabulary, gives them food for thought, and encourages them to seek knowledge beyond the pages of books. When reading a class novel, students experience the sharing of unique ideas and perspectives with their classmates.

With that in mind, each grade/class will be assigned one novel to read and respond to over the summer vacation. It is our hope that by having students read the same book, we can begin the new school year in a more unified way. All the books that have been chosen can be found at any library or bookstore in paperback form or ordered online. Students will be responsible for completing the novel guide that corresponds to their assigned novel (see reverse), and should be prepared for class discussions about the book when they return to school in the September. We also encourage students to read books this summer that appeal to their own individual interests, and look forward to discussing the assigned books when we see them in September.

Sincerely,

Deidre Ertle  
Principal  
Secaucus High School

Robert Daniello  
Acting Principal  
Secaucus Middle School

Christine Candela  
Summer Reading Chair  
English Department Facilitator

*Freakonomics*  
By Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner

**This assignment is due to your English teacher on September 15, 2010.**

**Section I- Quotations:**

**Directions:** As you read this novel, keep a double entry journal. On the left hand side of the page, write or type the quotations you have selected for analysis, and to the right of the quote respond to your selection. An example can be found below. Try to find at least 3-5 quotations for each chapter and reflect on their meaning; however, you are encouraged to choose as many as you would like. Your journal, when it is complete, will look like the example below—quotations on the left, and reader response on the right.

Be sure to examine all the quotations carefully, looking for any of the following to help you write your reflections:

- What is revealed in the quote that relates to the author’s message?
- What insights have you gained from the quotations about life?
- What feelings such as pity, contempt, admiration, exasperation, compassion, etc. did the quote make you feel?
- Did the quote bring forth feelings of confusion over certain issues?
- Where were there any humorous quotes/anecdotes you encountered along the way?

**Example of journal entry for quotations:**

1. “Anyone living in the United States in the early 1990s and paying even a whisper of attention to the nightly news or a daily paper could be forgiven for having been scared out of his skin.”	Watching the nightly news, with all its stories of crime, death, and disaster can evoke feelings of fear and sadness. The constant stream of negativity can sometimes affect people’s daily reactions by making them fearful of the outside world.
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**Section II- Projects (Choose One):**

In this section you will choose one of the following chapters and create a project that explains the message of that chapter. Projects for three of the chapters from *Freakonomics* are as follows (typed or written):

Chapter 1: What Do Schoolteachers and Sumo Wrestlers have in Common?

- a. Create a new Secaucus High School Handbook that lays out the code of conduct regarding cheating. This handbook should cover what the consequences would be for students caught cheating in the following areas: class work, quizzes, tests, sports (use of illegal substances), dress code violations, parking in illegal parking spots on campus.
- b. Each offense should be listed with the corresponding consequence following.
- c. Each offense can be elaborated on, depending on the variation of the crime (ex. multiple offenses or the involvement of multiple students in the same offense)

2. Chapter 5: What Makes a Perfect Parent

- a. Chapter 5 explains factors that are needed or not needed in order to be an effective parent. In this activity, you will rank the list of 16 factors in order of importance, in your opinion.
- b. Explain why you chose to rank these sixteen facts in the order in which they appear on your paper. In your explanation, consider the following:
  - i. Why did you rank these factors as you did?
  - ii. Are these any factors you would have taken out of the list? Added to the list? Why?
- c. Create your own list: After reading and ranking the factors laid out in chapter 5, create your own list of the top 20 most important factors parents should consider when raising children. Explain why you chose each one of these factors and how it relates to present day society. When creating this list, ask yourself the following:
  - i. What kinds of outside pressures would my child have to face?
  - ii. What kind of environment would best help my child be successful?
  - iii. How are my personal characteristics going to affect my child?
  - iv. How much influence will peers have on my child?
  - v. What kinds of added pressures does society (especially the celebrity influence) put on my child and how I can help prevent that stress?

3. Any chapter: Essay

Pick your favorite chapter from *Freakonomics* and consider one of the following ideas from the book:

- Incentives are the cornerstone of modern life.
- Conventional or traditional wisdom is often wrong.
- Distant, subtle, barely noticeable causes often have dramatic effects.
- “Experts” use their informational advantage to manipulate or withhold information to serve their own interests.

\*\*Any word you do not understand in the above assignment, are expect to look up in the dictionary.