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April 19, 2006

MEMORANDUM

TO: District School Superintendents
Middle School Principals

FROM: John L. Winn
Commissioner of Education

SUBJECT: “For Teens, by Teens” Recommended Reading List Database

Yesterday I launched the Just Read, Florida! “For Teens, by Teens” recommended reading list database as part of the *Shoot for the Stars: A Record Breaking Year for Middle Schools* initiative. Students in sixth, seventh and eighth grades are encouraged to submit their favorite books online and view recommendations from other students. This database will also be used as part of K-12 Public Schools Chancellor Cheri Pierson Yecke’s Summer Book Reading Challenge, the second contest in my year-long middle school reading initiative.

Middle school students struggle with reading for a variety of reasons: they have little time to practice reading, and they have little motivation to read – and, because of that, they are not developing vocabulary and background and content knowledge that they can apply in other areas. Research tells us that students who do not read during the summer may lose, on average, two to three months of skill. This interactive reading list is a great way to get kids excited about reading because it is a list of books that their peers have recommended.

Students can list their favorite books online, submit a rating and a mini-review on the Just Read, Florida! website at www.justreadflorida.com. Each submission will be reviewed for appropriateness of content before being posted for other teens to consider.

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There are plans to expand the database for all grade levels in the near future.

Please share with your teachers and encourage your students to participate. Attached is a poster that you can print and hang in your school halls and media center.

Thanks for all you do for reading in Florida!

JLW/mlo

Attachment