

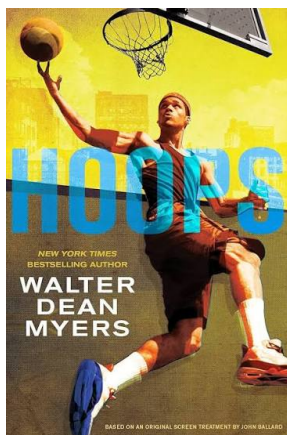
Dear Middle School Families,

Thank you for your patience as we finalized our summer reading plans. We apologize for not sending this information home sooner. We appreciate your understanding and hope your child enjoys this year's selections. We are excited to introduce our Summer Reading Program and this year's reading choices: *Hoops* by Walter Dean Myers and *Elsewhere* by Gabrielle Zevin.

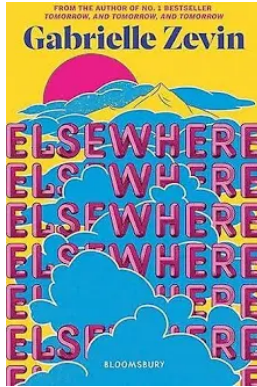
At Wheeler, we believe that reading should be both engaging and meaningful. One of the most important factors in developing lifelong readers is providing books that capture students' interest. We intentionally select high-interest novels that encourage students to read for enjoyment while also inviting them to think critically about the world around them.

Literature provides a unique opportunity for students to step into the lives of people whose experiences may be very different from their own. Through these stories, students develop empathy, broaden their perspectives, and consider complex issues in a thoughtful and supportive way. We also choose books that introduce age-appropriate challenges and difficult concepts that encourage meaningful reflection. When students return in the fall, teachers will guide discussions and activities that allow them to explore the themes, characters, and important questions raised in each novel.

About the Books



Hoops by Walter Dean Myers follows Lonnie Jackson, a talented high school basketball player navigating family responsibilities, friendship, ambition, and difficult choices. The novel explores themes of perseverance, integrity, and overcoming obstacles while highlighting the realities of urban life.



Elsewhere by Gabrielle Zevin tells the imaginative story of fifteen-year-old Liz Hall, who must come to terms with her unexpected death as she begins a new existence in the afterlife. The novel thoughtfully explores grief, loss, acceptance, family relationships, and what it means to live a meaningful life.

Parent/Guardian Information

Because these novels explore authentic life experiences, families should be aware of some mature themes so you can support your child at home in whatever fashion you deem appropriate.

- **Hoops** takes place in Harlem, and contains references to poverty, crime, drugs and alcohol, sex, and violence, and includes some offensive and outdated references to gay and Black characters. These elements are presented in service of the story's realistic portrayal of the challenges faced by its characters.
- **Elsewhere** is more of a fantasy-type setting and begins with the death of a teenage girl on Earth, and includes discussions of death, grief, and the afterlife. While these topics are handled with sensitivity and hope, they may prompt important conversations at home.

We encourage parents and guardians to read alongside their children and/or discuss the books together. These conversations can be a valuable opportunity to explore the themes and questions that arise while reading. **Should you not want your child to read either of these selections please reach out to Kristen St. Germain or Melissa Mowry for an alternate suggestion. Honestly, the purpose of this is to get students reading, so if you have your own suggestion for your child we welcome that too!**

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To celebrate our summer readers, students who complete their reading will be eligible for prizes and special recognition when school begins in the fall. We hope these incentives encourage students to dive into the books and arrive in September ready to participate in engaging discussions with their classmates. Activities are posted in their Google Classrooms to help students engage more closely with their chosen novel.

Thank you for your continued support in fostering a love of reading. We look forward to welcoming students back in the fall and exploring these stories together.