

Summer Reading List (Grades 6-12 Students and Educators)



***Chop Wood, Carry Water: How to Fall in Love With the Process of Becoming Great* by Joshua Medcalf**

Medcalf, and his sometimes-writing partner Jamie Gilbert, have written several simple books about self-development, transformational leadership, goal achievement, and other topics. The books are short, the chapters shorter, and their arguments easy to process and learn. High school and many middle school students would be able to take something away from this book.

***The Hard Hat and The Energy Bus* by Jon Gordon**

Jon Gordon is the author of many books that provide simple lessons in leadership or personal development. Each book is formatted as a parable. His stories are short, exceptionally simple, and the lessons clear and evident. High school and many middle school students could read and appreciate these

books. The Hard Hat and The Energy Bus were the most highly recommended of his work.

***The Happiness Advantage: How a Positive Brain Fuels Success in Work and Life* by Shawn Achor**

Most of us live by the formula, “if I work hard, I will be successful, and if I’m successful, then I will be happy.” In *The Happiness Advantage*, Achor argues that this formula backward; happiness fuels success, not the other way around. Achor writes that when we are positive our brains are more creative, engaged, and productive, which ultimately leads to success. He provides several strategies that can help train our brains to look for the positive in our lives and enjoy a happiness advantage. This is a very easy read and could be enjoyed by students and adults alike.

***Smart and Good High Schools: Integrating Excellence and Ethics for Success in School, Work, and Beyond* by Matt Davidson and Thomas Lickona**

Based on a significant research initiative and report, *Smart and Good High Schools* not only reveals the data from the study, but illustrates the best practices used by schools to teach and practice character with high school students. This book is intended for educators, and would probably not be meaningful to most students. A free digital copy of the book can be found at: <https://www2.cortland.edu/centers/character/high-schools/SnGReport.pdf>

***Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* by Carol S. Dweck**

One of the most widely read cited books of the last decade, Dweck’s *Mindset* argues that everyone has either a fixed mindset or a growth mindset. A fixed mindset is one in which you view your talents and abilities as unchanging. On the other hand, a growth mindset, is one in which you believe that you can grow and improve. The good news, is that mindsets can be changed. This book is a scholarly work, but approachable and readable. Select high school students may enjoy the book.

***Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance* by Angela Duckworth**

According to Duckworth, grit is the demonstration of passion and perseverance towards a long-term goal, and her research argues that one's grit is an important predictor of success, more so than talent, IQ, and other indicators. Duckworth is a professor and researcher, but her book, like *Mindset*, is not a difficult read. Select high school students may enjoy the book.

***Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us* by Daniel Pink**

In his book, *Drive*, Daniel Pink argues that much of what we believe about motivation is wrong. The carrot-and-stick approach used by many schools, businesses, and individuals is, Pink argues, is flawed for the 21st century. Instead, real motivation comes from:

- *Autonomy—the desire to direct our own lives

- *Mastery—the urge to get better and better at something that matters
- *Purpose—the yearning to do what we do in the service of something larger than ourselves

This book is primarily written for those in leadership in positions: teachers, coaches, managers, parents, etc. This may not be the best book for students.

***InSideOut Coaching: How Sports Can Transform Lives* by Joe Ehrmann**

Joe Ehrmann's book provides a persuasive argument for the power of transformational coaching. Ehrmann is a former football coach and NFL player, and thus his writing sometimes focuses on males (his work focuses on developing boys into men). However, the principles of transformational coaching can be applied to students of either gender. Like *Drive*, *InSideOut Coaching* is written for those in leadership positions and may not be as meaningful to students.

Learn more about character education.