

OVERVIEW

Introduction to the 8th Grade Journey

Welcome to 8th grade English/Language Arts. This year is about gaining the core skills necessary to be in control of your own ideas and thoughts. We organize our program of study and learning into some major categories.

The Art of Reading

Reading is an important part of our program. We will be reading novels together and independently. In addition, we will be reading poems, short stories, essays, reports, paragraphs, diaries and narratives. You will read every day! Be ready for that with a book in class every day for those 'just in case' moments! On another note, reading has been your area of focus since kindergarten. This year that focus will begin to change to writing as we look to the high school. There is only one way to become a better reader. To acquire the art of reading, one must read. There is no other way to do it. The more you read, the better you will become as a reader.

The Art of Writing

The writing strand encompasses three areas of focus; writing for research, writing clearly and coherently, and different types of writing. Throughout the year you are expected to write essays, paragraphs, narratives, reflections, stories, poems, reports, e-mails, and evaluations. To acquire the art of writing, one must write. Please expect to write every day and be prepared for that. You will need pencils and pens **every day**. You will need **paper** every day. One of the nice things about writing is that you do not need a bunch of stuff. You only need something **with which** to write and something **on which** to write. Writing is also connected directly to reading. The more you read, the better you write; and the more you write, the better you read.

The Art of Speaking and Listening

The speaking and listening strand focuses on your ability to speak in front of groups and to work effectively within groups. This is vital!! During the school year you are expected to speak in front of an audience in a variety of ways. You will share your thoughts and ideas during class discussions each day. You will present books you have read, and poems and stories you have read and written. I expect you to ask questions, challenge author's ideas and offer your own. Together we will explore a variety of ways to give meaningful voice to our uniqueness.

The Art of Language

Writing is not a magical device. It is a process of change. Together we will learn that process and master the skills necessary to improve our writing. Good writing requires a good understanding of the language. This is our language strand. We will study and master English grammar and usage, and all its odd workings, in order to improve our writing. Further we will expand our vocabulary as we analyze all the interesting ways that our words are put together. Sometimes this can be hard work or boring work. So what? We're going to do it brilliantly!

The Art of Being a Student

What if I cannot do it? What if I miss something and mess up? I hear you! Relax. You can do it. I promise. We will have time in the morning to ask questions, to finish assignments, to get new information, to prepare for the day, and to make up work we sometimes miss. We will have time for remediation and re-learning information missed in the classroom. On announced days, I will be after school to help you study, complete assignments, make up work, get ideas, re-learn what you thought you knew so you know it and can demonstrate it. I promise you will be successful because you and I and your parents and friends are working toward your success!

Being a successful student is all about **organization**. I expect you to meet deadlines as assigned. 'Well, I forgot' is little silly by this point in your education, and to be truthful with you, I am not interested in what you do not do. I am only interested in what you accomplish. Late work will receive a letter grade deduction before I even begin to evaluate your work. Once the unit test is given, no more work from that unit will be accepted. Ouch! Here is an even bigger ouch – sometimes there are assignments you cannot hand in late! I know! I can't believe it either, but it is true. You can't hand it in late, AND you can't make it up! YIKES!! You will need to pay attention. If there are circumstances beyond your control affecting your ability to complete an assignment, then you should talk to me. I know stuff happens!! We will work together on a plan for improvement. Our goal is to produce excellent quality work in a timely manner.

On a final note, grades are important. They say a lot about you and your study habits. You will see zeroes as we go through the quarter. As long as the zero is there, you can make up the assignment. When a zero becomes a grade of 40% you may no longer complete the work. A zero is a clue that you did not turn in an assignment and can still turn it in. A 40% means you didn't hand it in. I don't give zeroes generally as they completely kill your grade. A 40% is low enough for you to realize you are in trouble without messing you up completely.

Regardless of whether you are in class, you are responsible for the work. If you are absent, go to my website lvangombos.weebly.com to find out what you missed. Check REMIND!! After you have done that ask your friends in class and ask me. For those of you who have only practiced turning in late work or no work, it is time to practice something new. As with all things in our lives, doing something new takes practice. I will help you. You will help yourselves! You will be successful.

LOOK AT HOW MUCH CONTROL YOU HAVE OVER YOUR OWN LEARNING!

I believe that it is our shared responsibility to be involved in learning. I will do my part and provide what I hope are interesting ways for you to learn. I will teach in the morning, during remediation, in the hallways, during class, after school. What will you do? Your part requires both your attention and your commitment to your own education. Together we will make it!!!

You only need to bring a few things to my class, but you need them **every day**:

- ❖ A positive attitude (not found in stores!!)
- ❖ A willingness to share ideas (even when those ideas might seem odd)
- ❖ An ability to agree and disagree in a healthy way (bring it on!)
- ❖ A school agenda – one you can purchase from the PTSA or some sort of agenda! I have a weekly one!!!
- ❖ We will read the following novels together in ELA this year. **If you can purchase them ahead of time that would be great.** I would try a used book store first. Yes, you can get the novels on your devices; however, writing and taking notes in a text is a lot easier when you have the book in your hands.
 - *The Light in the Forest* by Conrad Richter – 1st quarter
 - *My Brother Sam is Dead* by Collier and Collier – 1st quarter
 - *The Pearl* by John Steinbeck – 2nd quarter
 - *Out of the Dust* by Karen Hesse – 3rd quarter
 - We will wait on the 4th quarter
- ❖ Loose-leaf paper (If you bring in a package, we can store it in my room. It would be great if you could bring some in for the class! We use a lot of it and carrying it around gets heavy. We even need it in the 4th quarter.
- ❖ A binder to share with another subject will be excellent! This is so you will have a place to put a lot of your materials.
- ❖ A two-hundred page composition notebook – we will be handing this back and forth! This will be for all your language (spelling, grammar, vocabulary) work
- ❖ A small manual pencil sharpener (the class ones keep breaking so bring your own! Yours will probably break as well at some point so maybe you should get a spare.)
- ❖ Pencils and pens – blue or black only (I get dizzy trying to read green and pink writing and sparkles. Yes it is true. I am older than you are and so are my eyes)
- ❖ Color pencils (These are only used for editing our papers and drawing cool pictures. Actually you only need to have red, green, purple and blue for editing. However, other colors are great for cool pictures.)
- ❖ Highlighters for notes and annotations!

PLEASE COPY THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT ON PAPER AND SIGN YOUR NAME

I know that I am a great student, capable of doing all the work and getting excellent grades. I will bring my materials to class each day because I value my own learning. I will be on time and ready to go because I am focused on my future beyond school. I am committed to my own education!

Signed by: _____