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Welcome to my eighth grade language arts class! I believe that everyone in this class is unique and that you all have something important to contribute. I promise you that you will learn a lot this year, but that most of it won't be very painful. You may not even realize how much you are learning at the time, but trust me, if you do your work, you will be prepared for high school! The following is a brief overview of what will be happening in my class this year.

To begin with, there will be homework every night, Monday through Thursday, and occasionally on Friday when the class work does not get finished. Homework is a BIG part of my class. To get the grades you want, you will need to be consistent about doing your homework every night.

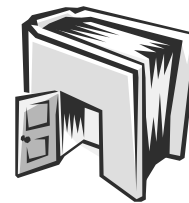
I believe in the well-rounded student, so we will be doing a lot of reading (in class, on your own, in groups, etc.), and we will be doing a lot of writing (paragraphs, poems, essays, and stories). We will also be using our oral skills during various speech projects, and we will work on grammar, punctuation, usage, and capitalization with our daily warm-ups (DOL). We will do some vocabulary and spelling units, but research shows that students learn most of their vocabulary and spelling from extended practice with reading and writing (see S. Krashen or R. Allington).

Our writing projects will include...

First-hand biography,
Poems,
Friendly and Business Letters,
Persuasive Essay,
Evaluation or Review,
Speech,
Research paper, etc.

Here's a list of our class novels:

The Witch of Blackbird Pond,
Freak the Mighty,
The Call of the Wild,
The Giver,
Lincoln: A Photobiography,
Dragonwings,
Walk Two Moons.



In addition to the above, you will also be able to choose your own independent novels and writing topics. Parents, please discuss with your child which independent books you do and don't want him or her to read. Some parents allow romance, horror, books with violence, Stephen King, Danielle Steele, etc., and others don't, so I'd like your student to be very aware of what your guidelines are. In general, I feel that any reading is good reading, but I know there are times when some kids are not ready for some subject matter.

Every week I will be checking grade-sheets. These yellow forms will come home on Mondays for parents/guardians to look over and sign. They are due on Wednesdays and are worth 25 points a week! Expect these forms every week, and look for my stamp that shows your child is getting credit. In addition, I will send home grade print-outs when a parent or student requests them, and everyone will receive a grade print-out at least once about four weeks into each semester.

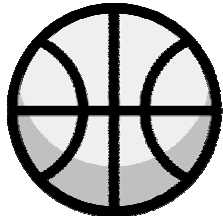
We will be using the nine computers in my classroom as much as possible, along with ten AlphaSmart keyboards, an LCD projector, and a digital camera. If any of you students are experts at technology, let me know your area of expertise, and I may be able to put you to work on special projects!



Absences should be avoided as much as possible. Statistics show that students who miss school generally have substantially lower grades than students of the same intelligence who do not miss school. Of course, if you have an excused absence, you can make up the work, but most students who have missed school get overwhelmed by all that they need to do to get caught up, and they fall behind.

If you are ever absent, be sure to check the Absent Student Binder when you return. It lists our daily agendas and includes handouts and assignments you missed. Make up notes by borrowing a friend's to copy. Make up DOL by picking up a handout from the back wall. Check with me to arrange a day and time for making up quizzes or tests.

You may have heard about Learnball from previous students, so let me explain a bit about this program. It is a classroom management tool that helps me organize my classroom and students into two teams that compete to be the best at cooperating, at finishing tasks, at listening carefully, at helping out! This competition is not for a grade, but it does have a lot of other advantages.



First, the students get to experience leadership roles, since the teams elect presidents, vice-presidents, team managers, etc. Second, my students work harder than most classes so they can earn more team points and shoot hoops for the last few minutes of class. Third, this program gives my class a structure that most students appreciate; they know what to expect and how to be successful. Fourth, students can participate and earn points in a variety of ways, including volunteering to read, being quiet, following the rules, cleaning up, etc. Shooting hoops is just one way to earn

points, and it is optional. No one is required to do it!

Finally, I support and enforce school rules, including the following:

- 1.) Remove hats when entering a building,
 - 2.) Leave non-academic items at home (toys, photos, pagers, etc.),
 - 3.) Dress in appropriate attire,
 - 4.) Don't use profanity or any language that harasses others,
 - 5.) Avoid all rough-housing, pushing, hitting, running inside, etc.,
 - 6.) Don't chew gum or eat in class,
 - 7.) Be in your seat when the bell rings.
- (Your third tardy will result in a detention.)

I hope that if you ever have any questions or concerns, you will feel free to approach me, either in person or in writing, and that goes for both parents and students. (Parents: If you visit the school, please check in at the office first before coming to see a teacher.) I know that all of this information can be overwhelming, but don't worry! Follow my rules; ask questions when you need help; be honest, respectful, and hard-working; and we will have a great year!

Thank you for your time!

Ms. Hawksworth-Lutzow

Please sign and return this paper. It will be returned to you for your reference.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Print Student's Name: _____