**Ms. Snow | Language Arts 8 | 2018-19**

**Salt Lake Center for Science Education**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Welcome to Eighth Grade Language Arts! The curriculum is designed to help students understand, communicate, and enjoy the English language. They will review and expand skills in reading, writing, inquiry research, and presenting. Through my own experiences teaching and learning, I have adopted some core understandings that I wish to give to my students for this year and beyond:

1. ***“Words are my matter.” –Ursula K. Le Guin.***

They should be your matter as well. We have a great ability to use our words to communicate, question, critique, and uplift one another. My expectation is that we should strive to always speak constructively, thoughtfully, and with respect. We all know for better or worse the full power of words, so be mindful about what you say to peers, teachers, and staff.

1. **Become comfortable with answering wrong until you get it right.**

Life is full of trials and errors. I guarantee that every adult you know has raised their hand to answer a question, and gotten it completely wrong. It can be uncomfortable and sometimes embarrassing. The truth is that it’s human to get things wrong at first. Remember, these are great learning opportunities, so embrace them, and support those around you who are learning as well.

1. **I don’t know everything.**

How often are you going to hear a teacher admit that? Teachers are never the ultimate keepers of knowledge. We facilitate and provide what we do know, and students build on it in ways that allow us to revisit what we thought we knew. It is a very rewarding process to learn from students.

1. ***“Always pass on what you learn.” –Jedi Master Yoda***

If you couldn’t tell already, I find quotes to be very useful. This one in particular doesn’t simply apply to school. As you move through life, you’ll have others that look to you for guidance. During our time together, I encourage you to actively seek opportunities to help teach others well and often.

A detailed description of the Language Arts Core is available at: <http://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/langartsec/>

**COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

* Assist students in becoming effective communicators and citizens by developing reading, writing, speaking, listening and thinking skills.
* Support the learning of peers in a respectful manner.
* Build up comprehension and appreciation for advanced texts and terms.
* Teach critical thinking and questioning skills through text analysis.
* Emphasize higher order thinking through open-ended questions, argument, inquiry and reasoning.
* Integrate the knowledge and interests of students towards their learning.
* Develop writing skills with increasing complexity.
* Increase word knowledge through vocabulary building and study of word stems.

**COURSE MATERIALS**

A “text” is anything that can be accessed, read, and analyzed. We’ll be working through a variety of mediums in class to enhance reading and writing.

**Potential texts:** works of art, poems, essays, online blogs, tweets, editorials, historical speeches, academic articles, video clips/movies, and novels.

**Potential authors:** Bradbury, Erdrich, Davis, Sheinkin, Lowry, Oliver, Poe, Shakespeare and others.

\*This list is subject to change in order to follow students’ areas of interest as the year unfolds. Literature varies from class to class. Since students will have access to a number of authors for literature circles, a separate complete list of those SLCSE texts are available upon request.

**PROCEDURES AND FORMAT**

In our class, students will have countless opportunities to read great literature so they can explore the breadth of literary contributions over time. Through their reading, students will find the ability to write, think, question, and create more deeply. Class structure includes explicit teaching of literary strategies, reading, writing and discussion of text, analyzing and modeling of writing skills and mechanics, student practice and incorporation of skills in student writing.

Classroom activities range from independent, partner, and cooperative group work as well as regular class-wide activities and discussion. Any additional procedures and expectations will be determined by the unique needs/wants of the students.

**DAY-TO-DAY PROCEDURES**

* Students are asked to be in their seats, on time and prepared.
* Students are asked to be genuinely “present,” not just a warm body in a chair.
* Thoughtful in-class participation (constructive comments and insightful questions) are encouraged and rewarded. Students also agree to show respect to their peers, teacher, and learning environment as outlined by SLCSE’s expectations.
* Cellphones: While they have become an integral part of our lives, I have no plans to integrate cell phones into my classroom. Students should keep their phones in their lockers, or we have a previous arrangement with office staff to have it turned in and safeguarded until the end of the day.

**HOMEWORK**

* Independent Reading Logs: 30 minutes (minimum) reading at home will be done Monday through Friday, from an age appropriate book of their choosing. Students may consider using their literature circles novel for their independent reading time. They will track their pages read/duration on a log that is due every Monday morning (adjusted for Holidays/non-school days). Any additional time read, such as on weekends will count as extra credit!
* Literature Circles: Students will be assigned to literature groups first organized by the teacher to discuss a novel they’ve agreed to read and respond to. Responses are to be completed at home and are due Thursday mornings**.** Their responses will be recorded on a sheet provided in class with in-depth question & answer opportunities. This will allow students to self-organize, collaborate, and facilitate meaningful discussions about great young adult (YA) literature!
* Other work will include the completion of all writing assignments, projects and activities and test preparation as assigned.

**GRADING AND ASSESSMENT**

Grading will be based on completion and quality of work, projects and presentations, writing assignments, tests, quizzes and participation in class activities. Tests will include, District Writing Tests, quizzes in vocabulary, reading comprehension, grammar and editing exercises. Grades will be earned according to the following percentages:

A = 90 – 100%; B = 80 – 89%; C = 70 – 79%; D = 60 – 69%; Failing grades will be those under 60%.

In addition to the academic grade, a citizenship grade will be given based on attendance, tardies and classroom behavior. These grades are: H=Honors, S=Satisfactory, N=Needs improvement, U=Unsatisfactory.

\*No late work is accepted unless there are extenuating circumstances and/or prior arrangement is made.

\***Make-up work** is allowed for excused absences or under special circumstances with agreement of the teacher. Upon returning to school, it’s the student’s responsibility to see me before or after school to get missed work. Students will have three school days to turn in late work. For extenuating circumstances, a conference with the parent/guardian is required. Grades and current assignments may be accessed using the Salt Lake City School District Power School program on line.

\*Please note that lack of attendance may impact grading/make up for in-class discussions and activities, as these are not easily reproduced.

**\*Plagiarism:** Defined as coping or stealing someone’s ideas and presenting them as you own. Any work that falls into this category will be given a zero (0) and not be available to make-up. Please get in touch with me if you are struggling with an assignment. Plagiarism is never the answer!

SIGN/DATE, AND RETURN THIS PAGE FOR YOUR FIRST GRADE IN OUR CLASS

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Class Expectations:**

**1. Be Ready -** Have homework done, have your notebook, library or assigned book and materials ready to work each day. Listen fully to instructions and lectures, pay attention to examples and modeling of work. Ask questions if you don’t understand something.

**2. Be Responsible -** Take ownership of your learning, strive for excellence, and always turn in your best quality work. Participate fully in class discussions, group and partner work. Use every opportunity to learn and grow.

**3. Be Respectful -** Treat others with thoughtfulness, kindness and consideration. Be part of a positive learning environment in the classroom. We are a community that helps each other grow and develop.

**Student: I have read and understand this disclosure. I will honor the listed expectations and responsibilities.**

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**Parents: My child has discussed the disclosure with me. I understand it and will support it.**

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