Dear Parents/Guardians and Students,

Welcome to 7th-Grade Language Arts! Below is an overview of what you can expect from me and what I expect from my students this coming school year.

**Simplified Course Description**

**7th Grade Curriculum Overview-**

This year, your students will embark on an exciting journey through four major units that are all tied together by a common theme of choice.

All of the texts, fiction, and non-fiction, will in some way connect back to the choices we make in life, the consequences of those choices, and how that forms our futures. By encountering a broad array of texts that explore this topic students will be able to inform themselves and generate their interpretations and meaningful themes regarding the ways that choices affect our lives. I will now briefly outline some of the major movements that we will make throughout the year; however, these descriptions cannot adequately capture all that your student will learn throughout the year.

 Our first unit will focus mostly on narrative. Students will read some iconic poems about choices and cause and effect such as “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost and “Choices” by Nikki Giovanni. Students will start to formulate opinions and viewpoints on how choices alter and determine the form that our lives will take. Students will also read a few narratives on this subject and explore the topic further. The first assessment calls for each student to write, and later revise a personal narrative about an important decision in his or her life. With modeling and guidance, students will engage in peer workshops to provide each other with detailed and useful feedback, which will later be implemented into a final draft of the narrative graded by myself.

Students will also write a process paper about the revision experience and how they successfully implemented peer feedback into the final iteration of the essay. Next, in Unit 1, students will study several myths from diverse cultures and learn about the essential characteristics of myth narratives. The summative or final assessment of the unit will be for students to integrate all of their knowledge and skills regarding narrative, for example, plot structure, dialogue, and sensory details, into a cohesive self-created myth. Students will be given guidance and support to brainstorm ideas for a myth that would be appropriate for this style of writing.

Our second unit of the year will be focused on argumentation and research. Students will learn things such as the rhetorical triangle described by Aristotle. With this students will learn to differentiate between emotional, logical, and credibility appeals an author can make to solidify an argument. Students will also learn important terms such as “thesis,” “roadmap statement,” “claim,” and “evidence.” After learning key terminology and reading exemplary argumentative texts, students will prepare to write their five-paragraph essay.

Students will be provided with excellent supports such as essay outlines and sentence frames to guide their first draft of the argument essay. The second and final assessment of this unit will be an expository research paper in which students will use their knowledge of credibility to find and gather reliable information on a topic. This information will be synthesized by students and integrated into a cohesive five-paragraph essay on the topic. Papers may be shared with students in class in small groups if the time should permit.

Although it is not specified in the Springboard, I also plan to fit in a few weeks to conduct an oral debate event before the winter break. Students will be assigned a stance on a controversial issue and will be asked to research and gather evidence for claims supporting this topic. They will instructed and shown examples of real debates, and learn how these events are moderated and orchestrated. All students will have to participate by presenting a claim and evidence to support it in a roughly 2-minute speech, and will also be encouraged to provide a short rebuttal statement for one opposing claim.

 Unit 3 is a literary unit in which students will read Edward Bloor’s coming of age novel, Tangerine.

Set in a town of the same name, Tangerine is fictional, but a semi-realistic account of a young boy moving from Texas to Florida with his brother and parents.

The narrator deals with being classified as legally blind and suffers some discrimination at school for this status.

He also deals with confidence issues and being eminently overshadowed by his older brother Eric: a football star.

The story takes some surprising twists and turns, and the reader sees how the protagonist’s choices lead him to happiness despite some unfortunate decisions made by his parents, school, and brother. Students will write a literary analysis argument essay on this novel after engaging in a rich array of activities to develop sound interpretations of the characters, plot, and conflicts. In the second part of this unit, students will engage in further research about historical figures, and produce a biographical research statement about a historical figure or author. This research will be presented to the class.

 In the final unit of the year, students will engage in activities, projects, and assignments, which connect literature to drama. Students will learn about monologues and soliloquies and encounter several famous examples of these speeches. The first assessment will ask students to write a monologue of their own, memorize the monologue, and present it to the class as a short performance piece. The final activity of the year, and likely the final for my class will be a Shakespearean scene from Twelfth Night, which will be performed before the class.

Along with extensive practice that will be conducted during class students may be asked to practice their lines outside of school to facilitate a smoother process for the final product.

**Research Papers**

Students will write two MLA research papers. Research Paper 1 due, December/January, is an analytical or argumentative scientific research paper. Similar to our WPA essays. The second research paper is a Humanitarian research paper, based on contributing to humanity or a community. Both papers are created within collaborative group settings. Research Paper 2 is due in May/June.

**Recommended Materials**

By law, teachers are no longer allowed to require materials due to concerns with equity issues. It is for this reason that I have used the phrase “recommended.” If you can provide your student with the following materials, please do so.

If you have any difficulty with obtaining these materials please feel free to contact me via email.

**The materials that are \*recommended\* for my class are:**

-A folder designated for English Language Arts (Used for homework assignments, essays, prompts, and important reference handouts).

-Several differently colored highlighters (Frequently used in class to highlight texts and make annotations)

-Pens and Pencils brought to class every day. Students should check to ensure that they come every day to class with a writing instrument for taking notes and completing in-class assignments.

-Loose binder paper used on occasion for brainstorming, gathering evidence, or another necessary class activity.

**Homework**

Homework is an essential part of the school that allows students to independently practice important skills that were built during the class. As a general rule, you can expect homework from my class 2-3 nights per week. Sometimes there may be only one assignment in a week if that assignment is an essay, or if the students are diligently engaged in a long-term project.

**Grading Policy**

All assignments and assessments are graded using the SJUSD standard grading system. Final grades are based on points accumulated for the entire semester. Extra credit assignments may be offered from time to time.

**Other Policies and Information**

1. Please contact me by e-mail at [tcarney@sjusd.org](mailto:tcarney@sjusd.org) or handwritten note. Thank you in advance.

2. Some work must be typed, printed, and/or researched electronically, which will require access to appropriate technology. The library is open after school for students without access to technology at home.

3. The best tool to help you this year is to get familiar with Google Classroom and your online textbook

4. These policies are tentative and subject to change at any time.

**Late Work**

Late Work will not be accepted, except for excused absences or extenuating circumstances. For each day absent students will have an equal amount of days to submit course work.

**Make-up Work**

My make-up work policy is fairly simple to remember. Students will receive one evening to make up work for each day absent. To clarify I will give you an example. Jenny is absent for two days, Monday and Tuesday, and returns to school on Wednesday to find that she has missed two homework assignments. Since Jenny missed two days of class she will have two nights to complete her work. As long as Jenny turns her two assignments in by Friday with “absent” marked at the top she will receive full credit for the assignments.

**Expectations/Rules**

1. Listen and follow directions.

2. Raise your hand before speaking or leaving your seat.

3. Keep hands, feet, &objects to yourself.

4. Never use hurtful comments or actions.

**Consequences**

Tier 1: gentle reminder or warning.

Tier 2: seat change or a private conversation.

Tier 3: loss of privilege or detention.

Tier4: parent contact and/or an office referral.

**Plagiarism and Dishonesty**

Plagiarism is defined as using the intellectual property, words, and ideas, of another person without acknowledging their contribution.

Strategies to avoid plagiarism such as proper quotation strategies will be taught and reviewed throughout the year.

If a student intentionally uses the words or ideas of another author without citation they will receive a zero on the assignment, and I reserve the right to write a referral, meet with the student, and make a call home. As students approach high school it is essential that they not only develop 21st-century skills but integrity and good character. Intentional plagiarism and academic dishonesty must be taken seriously to minimize these problems in the future

Thank you,

Thomas Carney