

September 10, 2010

Dear Parents,

Welcome back to school! I hope you and your family have enjoyed the beautiful weather we had this summer and your children are well rested to begin a new school year. I am looking forward to reconnecting with familiar families and meeting new ones this year. These junior high years are an exciting, pivotal time in your child's school career, and I feel privileged to work with you to make the most of their Language Arts program.

As many of you know, I have taught in the Edgartown School for many years as a Kindergarten teacher. I first started working at the Edgartown School in 1994 and decided to return last year after two years of teaching in Colorado. I have taught everything from Kindergarten to college English, but my love has always been with Language Arts, and I hold a degree in English as well as a Reading Specialist certification in Massachusetts. It's wonderful to be back at the Edgartown School, where I truly do feel at home.

I've been working all summer taking courses, taking (and passing! ☺) state tests, planning curriculum and reading many young adult and professional books. I would like to share with you some of my plans for the Language Arts program this year...

Our ELA classroom will employ a variety of instructional techniques. We will be working with a rich variety of literature to support, engage and challenge all learners. The students will be working in small literature circles, or book clubs, as well as participating in whole group instruction, and of course independently reading. Many writing techniques and teaching strategies will be used as well. Students will be guided through the process for many different types of writing (expository, narrative, persuasive, descriptive, and more). I will also be teaching mini lessons in grammar, spelling, and vocabulary on a regular basis.

An important part of the curriculum is independent reading, and I ask that students read for 25 minutes most nights (assigned as reading journal homework) and write for 5 minutes in their reading journals. I will check in with students regularly about their reading, but I encourage you to ask your child about his/her reading. Choice is an essential component to sustained, meaningful independent reading. Books in my classroom range from elementary to advanced reading material. While I am sensitive to having appropriate reading material in my classroom, what is considered appropriate may vary from one family to another. I ask that you be aware of the books your child is reading and assist in gauging appropriateness. If you have any reading restrictions, or questions about what your child is reading, please feel free to contact me.

Attached to this letter, you will find a classroom contract, which details classroom procedures. I ask that you read, sign and return it to me. This ensures that I have clearly communicated my classroom expectations. I'm looking forward to seeing you on September 22nd at Open House. Please know that my classroom is always open to you, and feel free to email me or call me at any time. Also, please check our classroom website for updates and daily homework information.

We're off to a great start!

Sincerely,

Connie Leuenberger

7/8 ELA Teacher

connie_leuenberger@myvps.org, 508-627-3316 x249

Language Arts Requirements and Classroom Policies 2010–2011
Mrs. Connie Leuenberger

●**Preparation for Class:** You are expected to acquire the following materials and bring them everyday to class: 3 Ring Binder, dividers (6), lined paper, pencil or pen, independent reading book, reading journal (composition book), Language Arts textbook.

●**An Organized Notebook:** You need to maintain a 3–ring notebook that is divided into six sections (vocabulary, grammar, writing, journal, literature, study skills). Papers must be secured in chronological order (old to new) in the binder; there should be no loose or damaged papers. Notebooks will be graded each quarter; keep every handout, homework assignment, etc. Practicing good organizational skills, like keeping an orderly notebook, will help you to be a successful student.

●**Homework, Classwork, Writing, and Projects:** Work that is assigned as homework or classwork supports the concepts we are working on. It is important that each assignment is completed. The following late-work policies support this belief:

-**Reading Journals** receive an automatic 70% the first day they are late. They may only be made up within 5 school days from the day they were due because it is important to develop regular reading habits. If the entry is not made up after the fifth day the student will be asked to take a reading reminder home informing his/her parents of a missed reading journal, after the reading reminder is returned a zero will be recorded in the gradebook.

-**Work not turned in** will be marked missing/zero. REMEMBER TO HAND IN YOUR WORK!!!! Just because you do it, does not mean you automatically get a grade—you must turn it in! If you turn it in late, than your grade will be reduced!

-**Late homework/classwork** of excellent quality will earn a maximum of 80%, with an additional 5% taken off for each day it is turned in late.

-**Long term projects/papers** (i.e. reports, group projects, research work) which are late will be marked 5% grade lower each day.

●**Absences:** Students who are absent are responsible for checking the classroom website, contacting another student or myself (outside of class time) to find out about missed work. Remember, it is YOUR responsibility to find out your missed work! Students have five school days from their return to school to make up any missed work. Missed tests and quizzes will be made up the day the student returns to school. Projects are due on the day returned to school. Reading journals are due on the day returned to school. Of course, if a student has a long-term illness, special plans will be made.

●**Extenuating Circumstances:** As always, please feel free to contact me if you feel your family has a special circumstance that you feel needs special consideration.

●**Grading:** There are three categories which determine your average. They are:

-Tests and quizzes 35%

-Writing and long term projects 35%

-Classwork and homework (this includes reading journals) 30%

I understand the classroom policies listed above and will do my best to follow them.

Printed name (student) _____

Signed name (student) _____

Printed name (parent) _____

Signed name (parent) _____

*Please return this to class by September 17, 2010. Thanks.