

Thurgood Marshall Middle School
6th Grade Common Core Language Arts (Seminar)
2014-2015

Instructor: Mr. Lepetri
E-mail: jlepetri@sandi.net
Phone: (858) 549-5400 ex. 2231
Cell (619) 804-6828
Room B 301

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am pleased to welcome your child into my classroom. Please read and discuss this syllabus with your child. Please complete and return the information blanks on the page I sent home with your child. You will also find a copy of it on the last page of this electronic syllabus. The syllabus will remain posted on my webpage throughout the year for your reference.

Course Standards: The focus of the seminar **Common Core Language Arts** class is to deepen a student's understanding and comprehension of written language, using examples from both narrative, informational, and argumentative texts, including written texts, electronic publications and film. Students will read from a variety of fictional genres; however, the main focus of the classroom instruction will be centered on building comprehension, using a variety of nonfiction texts. This is the first year that the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are being fully implemented in all SDUSD classrooms. I encourage all parents to go to the following two websites: <http://www.corestandards.org>, and www.smarterbalanced.org. The first website contains important background information about the CCSS, and provides you with a K-12 copy of the standards. California has decided to use the Smarter Balanced testing service. The second website gives you a deeper understanding of how your student will be assessed under the new standards. After you've studied the standards, it becomes quickly apparent that these standards require students to use complex and intricate thought processes. The work will be difficult, and your student should expect to struggle and be challenged as he/she works to master the CCSS.

A certain amount of struggle and difficulty is a part of learning any new process. Please allow your student to engage in this process. Together we can enable your student to walk the fine line of gaining the ability to work through mild frustration and struggles as he/she learns, while managing to avoid overwhelming your student by giving him/her work that is too far above his/her ability level. My 6th grade seminar Common Core class is composed of five indivisible components: Independent Reading, English Language Conventions (Grammar), Advanced Word Study, Advanced Reader's Workshop, and Advanced Writer's Workshop.

Advanced Word Study/Vocabulary Development: We will use a high-level vocabulary program called "Vocabulary Plus" by Townsend Press. (*You can view part of the program by going to townsendpres.net.*) Once the students have their accounts set up, you will be able to view the entire program. This vocabulary development program is completely differentiated and 100% web-based. Students will test into an appropriate level individually and move at their own pace throughout the year. During their vocabulary studies, students will use morphology and configuration skills to obtain meaning from prefixes, suffixes and Greek and Latin roots. Students will prove mastery of new vocabulary through a series of weekly tests and accurately using newly acquired vocabulary in their writing and classroom discussions.

Writing Conventions/Grammar: Throughout the year, students will study English grammar in a sequential manner. We will use “Easy Grammar” as our main text. Students will begin with prepositions and move through parts of speech. They will end the year focusing on sentence grammar, accurately identifying and creating simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences to achieve sentence variety in their writing. Students will have unit tests/quizzes to prove mastery of grammar rules and skills. Students will also be required to use basic grammar skills while editing their own writing and when they peer edit other students’ writing.

Advanced Reader’s Workshop: Students will improve their reading comprehension skills through the mastery of Common Core reading skills such as Identifying the Central Idea, drawing conclusions, identifying supporting facts, understanding vocabulary in context and a deep understanding of the patterns of discourse including, narrative, expository, argument and poetry. Mastery of required reading comprehension skills may be measured through the following: individual reading conferences, written work that includes both short answer pieces and analytical essays, district benchmarks, testing, and by individual participation during class discussions. Our Common Core focus will employ close reading strategies, which facilitate reading with three different lenses:

Lens One or first reading: Key Ideas and Details

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Lens Two or second reading: Craft and Structure

4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Lens Three or third reading: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.*
8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Independent Reading Program: All students are required to read a minimum of 600 pages by the end of each 6-week grading period. To reach this goal, students must read a minimum of 100 pages per week. Students may count any reading, for any academic class, as part of their 100- page requirement. A minimum of 30 minutes of daily home reading time is strongly suggested, in order to provide students with enough time to meet the reading requirement. Students are also required to keep an **Independent Reading Log (IRL)**. Students must log their independent reading each night in his or her planner, which must be signed each night. Students will work toward the yearlong California State Standards for Reading which requires each sixth grade student to read and

document a minimum of 25 books, 3500 pages, a minimum of five authors, from five different genres and at least one author study.

Advanced Writer's Workshop: Students will be instructed in the skills necessary to write personal narratives, research reports, persuasive essays, fictional narrative accounts, poetry, and analysis using MLA format and documentation. Students will compose analytical essays that critique a written body of work to determine the main idea or theme. Students will examine the author's purpose and determine whether or not the author's chosen genre meets that purpose. Students will become familiar with basic literary devices, and identify common examples of figurative language. Students will work on drafting and rewriting to create an edited, finished product that meets or exceeds grade level standards. Students will be assigned directed writing assignments where the topic is prescribed or a prompt is given, as well as projects that allow for total creative freedom of both the topic and the method of delivery.

There is no assigned textbook for this course. Students will use a variety of texts including newspapers, magazines, short stories, novels, and other medium.

Homework: Students should expect to receive homework each day that they attend genre studies. Homework is assigned as an extension/reinforcement of class work and activities. Late homework will not be accepted for full credit, for any reason other than an excused absence. Late projects, papers and reports may be dropped one full grade for each day that they are late. If a student is absent for any reason, it is his/her responsibility to find out what material was covered during class, and what homework was assigned. During the fall semester, work from an excused absence should be submitted within three days of the student's return to school. During the second semester, after the student returns from an absence, the student will have one day to complete all work for each day that he/she was absent. Homework should be completed at home, and be ready for submission at the beginning of the class period. All work submitted should be neat, legible, and contain the proper heading (name, date, and period in the upper right hand corner). If a student's work is not legible he/she may be asked to redo the assignment. Homework assignments are posted in the front of the classroom. Each student is expected to write the homework assignments into his/her planner. Parents should check and sign the planner on a weekly basis. Parents should also check the nightly e-mail communication or classroom website for homework updates.

Students are expected to do their own work. Any student involved in copying or plagiarizing someone else's work will receive a grade of 0% for that assignment. Please refer to the student planner for additional consequences for copying or plagiarizing someone's work.

Grading Breakdown of Content Percentages:

Homework/Class work	20%
Tests/Quizzes	20%
Projects/Papers	20%
Independent Reading	20%
Class Participation	20%

My academic grading scale is as follows: 90 – 100% is an A. 80 - 89% is a B. 70 – 79% is a C. 60 – 69% is a D. Anything lower than 60% is an F. Progress reports are issued every 6 weeks. My grades are posted online, so that you may have access to a daily progress report of your student's grades via Power School. Official grade reports occur

at the end of the semester in February and at the end of the year in June. Parents may request a grade printout at any time during the semester.

Seminar Grading Addendum:

You are enrolled in this class because you met the district GATE-Seminar criteria. You scored three standard deviations above the mean or 99.9% on the Raven Progressive Matrices test. Each written assignment and project for this course will be evaluated using the following criteria, comprising 20% of your grade on each class project, each writing assignment and your class participation.

These criteria include:

1) Deep and Complex Thinking

- making connections and seeing multiple relationships
- digging deeper into a topic or subject
- applying what you learn
- developing higher order questions

2) Innovative and Creative Thinking

- trying different ways to solve problems
- incorporating original thought
- being flexible and determined
- taking risks

3) Persistence and Grit

- learning, applying and growing from experiences
- taking your time to do your best work
- striving for accuracy and precision
- remaining productive even if student has limited interest in assigned task

4) Collaboration

- encouraging voice and choice
- working and being patient with all types of learners
- communicating with clarity
- valuing all opinions

Final Letter Grade Breakdown:

A = 90-100%

B = 80 – 89%

C = 70 – 79%

D = 60 – 69%

F = 59% and below

Progress reports are issued every 6 weeks. Official grade reports occur at the end of the semester in January and at the end of the year in June.

Citizenship: The code of conduct for classroom behavior is fully stated in the Marshall Middle School Planner and the MMS Citizenship Rubric. Misbehavior in the classroom will not be accepted as it interferes with other students' right to learn and my right to teach. The student's effort, cooperation, behavior and interaction with other students will determine citizenship grades. For specifics please refer to the MMS Citizenship Rubric which I have displayed on my homepage. I have provided two different versions of the citizenship policy. Also, you may review the Mustang Code of Conduct, found in the planner, with your child.

Discipline Policy: Students are expected to be kind, respectful and to work cooperatively in class. The following rules are posted in our classroom:

1. Attend class regularly. Be prepared.
2. Be in your seat, with your pencil sharpened, before the bell rings.
3. Respect and be polite to everyone.
4. No candy, gum, food, or beverages are allowed in class.
5. Raise your hand to talk or to leave your seat.
6. Respect other people's property.
7. Obey all school rules.

Consequences:

First time a rule is broken:	Verbal Warning
Second offense:	Written behavior log signed by parents, returned by next class period, or student will phone parent directly from the classroom
Third Offense:	20 minute detention after school, parents are contacted
Fourth Offense:	Referral to administrator or counselor, parents are contacted

Note: The teacher may decide to skip the series of consequences for serious rule infractions. The student may be sent directly to the counselor or to the administration.

Supplies: Attending public school is completely free in the state of California. I never *require* that a family purchase school supplies. However, since our supply budget is sparse because of the current state budget crisis, it would be great if you are *comfortably able* to purchase the following basic supplies to bring class each day. If you are unable to do so comfortably, just let me know through email, and I will make sure that your student has what is needed.

One 1 ½ - 2" binder (3-ring) with subject dividers
Notebook paper
Sharpened pencils (at least 2) with a white eraser
One red, blue, black, and green ink pen (multicolored is fine)
Planner (provided by the school)
Novel or other appropriate reading material (Available in classroom /school library)
One 5 ½ in portfolio
One flash drive (1G recommended)

Your student must bring the following items to school each day:

1. Planner (provided by the school)
2. Three-ring binder with all handouts provided by teacher
3. Novel or other appropriate reading material (Free books are available from the classroom, school, and public library.)
4. The above-mentioned school supplies.

Driving Questions: My language arts course is organized around four driving questions. You will notice that these questions are imbedded in my curriculum through the year.

Driving Questions:

Who am I?

What do I believe? What do I value? What are my learning styles? What are my strengths and talents? Who are my role models?

Who are we?

What is human nature? Who are we as primates? What does it mean to be a mammal?

What are our shared values? Who are our cultural heroes?

Where are we going together?

What are the consequences of our culture? What should our shared goals be? What needs to change? What are the obstacles to change?

How can I lead?

What does it mean to lead? How can I use my strengths to lead? Where do I fit in? Whom can I partner with?

Syllabus Verification and Contact Information

In an effort to reduce paper, toner and energy, I have posted my syllabus, pacing chart, supply list, and program information on my school-sponsored web site. To access this information, go to marshallmiddle.org, choose staff, search Joseph Lepetri, and look for the class info files. These are posted in Word document format, so they may be downloaded and printed.

Please complete and date this page to indicate that you have researched, read, and understood the policies explained in the course syllabus. Please return this page with your child tomorrow.

Class Title

(Circle One) Seminar Language Arts 1/4, Seminar Language Arts 2/6, Video Production 5

Student's Name _____

Student's Signature _____

Parent's Name(s) _____

Parent's Signature _____

E-mail address _____

Work Number _____

Home Phone _____

Cell Phone _____

Date _____

Please note that I will be setting up an e-mail grouping for each class. If you have more than one e-mail address that should be included in the nightly contact, please use the space below to add the contact's name, relationship to the student, and the additional e-mail addresses.

Warmly,
Mr. Lepetri