

September 16, 2015

Welcome, Parents and Guardians:

I am pleased that you are at Berkshire this evening for Curriculum Night, at the start of what promises to be a productive and enjoyable school year. I would like to expand on some of the information sent home in my earlier letter.

The subject of language arts is taught through an integrated program that focuses on reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary. We also will make use of techniques such as cooperative learning and journal writing, often through new technology options as part of the 21st Century Learning initiative. We will revisit and expand upon writing frameworks that your students are familiar with from elementary school, including the Six Traits and the writing process. Often, we will step outside of the text to add some variety to the classroom environment, such as with a common novel or small group activities with fiction and nonfiction. Students will have occasion to use outside reading as points of departure for class discussions and selected assignments.

The study of English is a means to *enjoyable* activities such as personal expression and skillful reading, and we will often find such enjoyment through pure reading without class work, homework, and tests.

Goals and Expectations

My goal is the creation of a comfortable learning environment in which your child will develop critical thinking, thoughtful expression, and appropriate grammatical skills. My expectation is that students come to class prepared with necessary books, supplied handouts, writing materials, outside reading, completed homework, and respectful attitudes toward themselves and each other.

Homework Assignments

Daily assignments must be completed on time in order for a student to participate fully without the need for playing catch-up. I anticipate allowing time for many homework assignments to be started during class time. As the year progresses and your child's skill level grows, less introduction will be given to assignment completion.

Regular writing exercises on a variety of topics will be assigned. I will often provide preparatory and instructional handouts for new and/or longer assignments. I will supply verbal guidelines and written instructions on the board for smaller and more familiar assignments. These should be written by students in their notebooks.

There are two types of class work and homework: practice and assessment.

- Practice work is scored for completion and timeliness, and points are given according to those criteria. This means that students who perform poorly on practice assignments can still receive full credit for the work. The philosophy behind this is to encourage practice. **The comments I put on practice work are very important in helping a student improve, as points alone will not reflect a student's progress.**
- Assessment work is scored in the traditional manner. It is an assessment of how well a student is learning material. **A student who does not take practice work seriously has a reduced chance of performing well on assessments.** Practice work is often allowed to be used as reference for assessments.

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A late assignment results in a reduced grade. I accept late assignments up to one school day past the due date at a reduction of ten percent. Assignments received after this time earn no more than fifty percent of the possible score during the first marking period, and zero points beginning with the second marking period. A parent/guardian note is acceptable to initiate a one-day extension of any assignment without penalty if the note is received when the assignment is *first* due. No explanation is necessary.

You can find homework assignments on my web site (<http://misterfisher.tripod.com>) for the first marking period only. The site also contains supplementary materials, including copies of most handouts and the link to our one online textbook. The site is updated at the start of each week, and plans are always subject to change.

Grading Scale

100 - 93 = A	87.99 - 83 = B	77.99 - 73 = C	67.99 - 63 = D
92.99 - 90 = A-	82.99 - 80 = B-	72.99 - 70 = C-	62.99 - 60 = D-
89.99 - 88 = B+	79.99 - 78 = C+	69.99 - 68 = D+	59.99 - 0 = E

I will keep you informed about your child's progress through the district's online grading system (PowerSchool) and individual contacts as necessary. I will also provide a weekly narrative of what is coming up throughout the first quarter, and most weeks thereafter as the year progresses. Most parents will receive these via email. If you have told me you require a written weekly letter, I will send it home on the second school day of each week. When you have questions, please contact me. You and your student may reach me by email (mr.fisher@juno.com).

This is an important year for your child, and I am happy to be a part of it.

Sincerely,

Dan Fisher