

Class Policies
Mrs. Radomski
2011-2012

Language Arts Grade

Students earn one grade that encompasses all of language arts for the marking period.

The following grades are averaged together:

- 30%: average of 2 reading tests /projects/reading workshop participation/conferences
- 30%: average of 2 timed writings/process pieces/writing workshop participation/conferences
- 30%: average of spelling/grammar/vocabulary
- 10%: Homework (completed number divided by total number of assignments)



Updated grades will be posted on the website about once a week. Homework will be posted with a score, and a reason will appear if it is missing. Writing and open-ended grades will be indicated by the rubric grade. Workshop participation/progress will be indicated by AP (advance proficient), P (proficient), or PP (partially proficient – needs improvement).

Organization/Materials

Students are expected to stay organized and be prepared for class daily. Any student in need of help with binder, notebook, etc. should make arrangements to stay after school for help with organization. Never mix subjects together in the language arts notebooks.

Being prepared for class:

- LA binder
- LA folder with all contents (composition book, vocabulary book, spelling page, HW)
- Independent reading book
- Agenda
- Pouch with sharpened pencils, pens, and other writing tools desired
- Post-it notes
- Writing notebook and folder will kept in the classroom but if taken home, it **MUST** be brought back each day.



Students who leave materials in the locker will not be able to retrieve them. This sets up a bad habit that repeats itself unless nipped in the bud. Students will lose workshop participation credit if unprepared with materials.

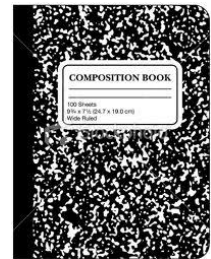
Student binder sections:

- Table of Contents for each section
 - Reading Response
 - Writing Mini-Lessons
 - Question Types
 - Notes
 - Vocabulary Lessons



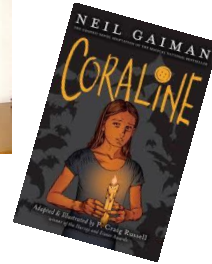
Composition notebook:

- Table of Contents for each section (use tabs to separate)
 - Academic Vocabulary
 - Grammar skills
 - Spelling practice (clip sheet each week then recycle)



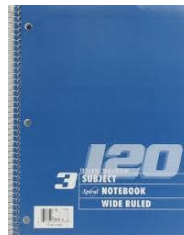
Folder should ONLY contain:

- Composition notebook
- Current spelling page
- Current homework assignment sheet
- Vocabulary book and current pages



Writing notebook (kept in class – if taken home, MUST be brought to class each day):

- Table of Contents for each section
 - Word Choice Lists
 - Ideas
 - Writing



Writing Folder (kept in class):

- Table of Contents
- Dailies Sheet
- Writing Log
- Published pieces
- Sentence Pattern envelope
- Assessment Checklist
- Benchmark Assessments
- Self-Reflections





Homework



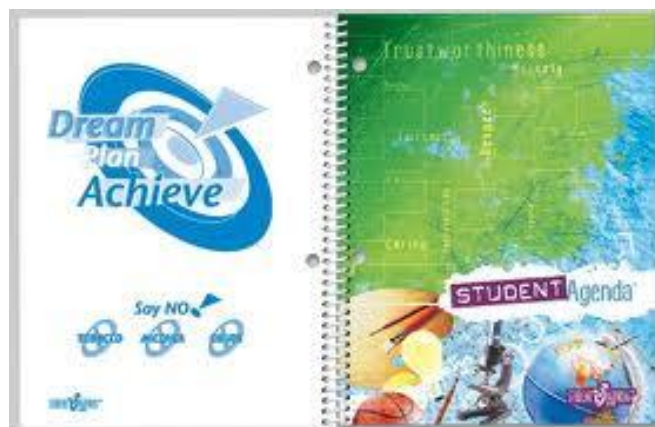
Homework counts as 10% of the marking period grade. Some assignments, such as projects, are graded and count towards the reading or writing grade as more than the 10%. Students must complete homework as assigned or it will not be accepted for credit. I post homework on the board and on my website, and often give a hand-out for an assignment. Students are expected to use their agendas and copy the assignments from the board. Students should review and study spelling and vocabulary daily.

Every student is entitled to one Homework Pass each marking period to use. This pass only works for regular homework assignments – not projects or graded work.

Late/incomplete homework will only be accepted for half credit if submitted within one week. I will not remind students about late/incomplete homework. Homework without a proper heading or format will be considered incomplete. Any homework left in locker, at home, etc. is considered late. Any time a student is missing a homework assignment, he/she must complete a Missing Homework form (students who are absent also complete a form for my record purposes but it will not count as late). I will collect a paper from everyone in class – either the assignment or the form. I will post the reason for your missing homework on your website grades page. Students will receive a detention for any combination of three late, incomplete, or missing homework assignments. If a student is missing a project or graded assignment, the student will receive detention until the project is complete regardless of any previous missing homework.

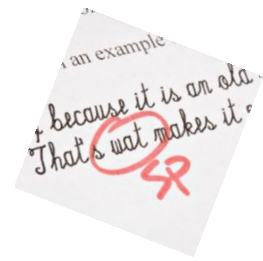
If a student does not understand an assignment, the student should do the following:

1. Ask a classmate.
2. Ask a family member.
3. Look on my website for resources.
4. Look up any unknown words in the dictionary.
5. Email me.
6. Attempt homework with written explanation of confusion (which words, what part, etc. NOT “I don’t get the question”) and describe steps taken to figure it out.





Spelling



Students are always encouraged to attempt advanced words even when unsure of spelling since word choice is an essential component to effective writing – ferocious Rottweiler vs. mean dog. However, learning the conventions of spelling is important for effective communication as well. No student will be penalized for misspelling a word the first time in written work, but will lose points for repeated errors.

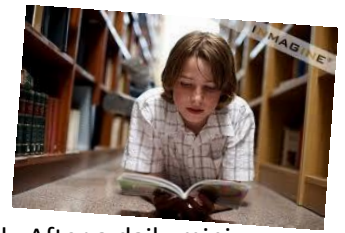
Students receive one spelling grade each marking period. All students begin with 100 points. Each time a student misspells a word in any writing or a student asks how to spell a word, the word will be added to the student's "Spelling History." If a student misspells that word again in any written work, one point will be deducted from 100 (down to a minimum of 50). One point will also be deducted for each word misspelled in written work that was included on the initial pretest.

The student will receive an updated Spelling History page about once a week to clip into their composition notebooks. While no tests will be given and no spelling homework will be collected, students are expected to log, review, and study their Spelling Histories in their composition books in order to maintain 100 points. Strategies and mnemonic devices for studying spelling patterns will be reviewed in class. The Spelling History page should be used as a spelling resource when writing. The teacher reserves the right, in collaboration with the student, to add spelling words to Spelling Histories on an individual basis, such as if a student is not submitting enough written work to collect words, a student is using only basic, elementary vocabulary in writing to avoid making errors, or a student is an advanced speller who may need more challenging words to grow as a writer. Homophones and contractions will count as spelling errors if used incorrectly or if an apostrophe is missing. In addition, word choice lists will be posted each week on the board and website for students to use to enrich writing. Students will add these words into their composition notebooks to use as a resource.





Reading Workshop



During Reading Workshop, students will read self-selected books in and out of school. After a daily mini-lesson in a literacy skill, strategy, or concept, students will complete response activities and confer with me to demonstrate proficiency. While there are no strict deadlines or timelines due to variations in reading ability, book length and difficulty, and extenuating circumstances, in general I expect students to finish at least one book every two weeks with school and home reading. I am challenging students to read 40 books this year.

Students will select books independently based on interest and reading level with the help of teachers and parents. Books can be found in the classroom libraries, school library, public library, or bookstore. Students are also able to read electronic versions on e-readers or other devices. Parents are strongly encouraged to monitor the content of their children's books. Many high-quality, award-winning books at the middle and high school levels may contain mature language or situations that some parents may find objectionable. This is a subjective area that requires parent involvement. Parents should discuss these expectations with their children.

Use the 5 finger rule to determine if a book is at the appropriate reading level. Open a book to any page. Start reading the page. Hold up one finger for EVERY word that you do not know or have trouble pronouncing.

0-1 Fingers The book is too EASY.

2-3 Fingers The book probably a good fit.

4 Fingers The book is at the Challenge level. You can try it ~ be sure it makes sense.

5 Fingers The book is at the Frustration level and is not a good choice for now.

If a book seems boring, give it a two-chapter-chance before abandoning it. You do not have to trudge and suffer through it.

While book selection is based on student choice, students should read a variety of genres to have a balanced reading diet. You might not know you like science fiction if you always avoid it. Students will read at least two selections from the following genres during the year. The remainder of books will be in the genre of choice.

- contemporary realistic fiction
- historical fiction
- mystery
- science fiction
- fantasy
- biography or autobiography
- survival/adventure



Reading Workshop Response Activities

| Activity | Purpose | When Completed | Where Found | Where Kept |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Log Sheet | to record each book begun (including books that are abandoned). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> when beginning a book. when completing a book. | in Reading Workshop box | in binder under Reading Response |
| Blog and Novel Response | to discuss books and converse with others about their books | at least once a week on scheduled day from home | on website (Blog and Novel Response) | on website |
| Notes/Conferences | evidence of skill or strategy to discuss at weekly teacher conferences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> during reading discussed at teacher conferences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> on post-its in book or in journal book teacher records on sheet | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> discard notes after book and conference are complete teacher keeps record in binder |
| Group discussions | to discuss, compare, and question one another about books | about twice a month or informally more often | in classroom | in classroom |
| Book Review Card | to review each book finished for others to read on the bulletin board | after completing a book | Excel document on website and shared documents on computer | print and put in pocket on bulletin board in hallway |
| Book Commercial | convince others to read your books with a video or other commercial | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> after reading a MUST READ book at least once per marking period | guidelines found in Reading Workshop box and on website | viewed in class on shared documents or on review blog on website |



Reading Workshop Participation and Progress Rubric

| | PP Partially Proficient | P Proficient | AP Advanced Proficient |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Work Habits | Rarely on-task; many teacher reminders necessary; wastes time. | Mostly on-task; some teacher reminders necessary; often uses time wisely; often independent. | Always on-task; self-motivated; uses time wisely; independent. |
| Documentation | Little or no evidence of documenting reading. | May need reminders to document on log, bookmark, etc. | Always independent and thorough with documentation on log, bookmark, etc. |
| Preparation | Little or no preparation. | Mostly prepared with book, writing utensil, post-its/notes. | Always prepared with book, writing utensil, post-its/notes. |
| Group Discussions | Little or no attempt to discuss reading. | Listens and often shares and asks questions of others. | Listens, asks thoughtful questions, shares meaningful ideas, takes lead role. |
| Notes | Little or no attempt to take/keep notes. | Takes and keeps notes; notes may be unclear; notes often reflect current strategies. | Takes and keeps quality notes independently; notes reflect current strategies. |
| Novel Response | Few entries; little insight or effort. | Entries are current and insightful; may need reminders. | Entries are current, well-written, insightful; no reminders needed. |
| Conferences | Little or no knowledge of reading. | Responds to questions, demonstrates strategies used, offers evidence. | Initiates questions, guides discussion, demonstrates strategies and offers evidence. |



Reading Practice and Formal Assessment

We will have daily instruction in different types of questions based on reading skills and concepts.

Students will keep the *Elements of Literature* textbook at home to read selections on a weekly basis. These selections are used to model and instruct literary concepts, reading strategies, and question types. Students will then answer multiple-choice and open-ended questions about the selection on the QUIA website using their usernames and passwords. If students do not have online access at home, they must print the questions from a school computer to take home to answer on paper and return by the due date.

Students will also read *Weekly Reader* magazines every two weeks in school to develop nonfiction reading skills and build important background knowledge. Students will meet in groups in class to read and discuss the news stories as well as answer questions. Periodic reading quizzes may be given based on *Weekly Reader*.

Students will take a reading test twice per marking period based on reading passages with multiple-choice and open-ended questions.

Benchmark reading tests similar to NJASK will be given three times – a pre-assessment in September, a mid-year assessment in December, and a year-end assessment in May. Data will be collected to track progress of skills and concepts.

Open-ended answers are scored according to the rubric used by the State of NJ. Links to examples can be found on my website. AP = advanced proficient, P = proficient, PP = partially proficient.

| Points | Criteria |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 (AP) | A 4-point response clearly demonstrates understanding of the task, completes all requirements, and provides an insightful explanation/opinion that links to or extends aspects of the text. |
| 3 (P) | A 3-point response demonstrates an understanding of the task, completes all requirements, and provides some explanation/opinion using situations or ideas from the text as support. |
| 2 (PP) | A 2-point response may address all of the requirements, but demonstrates a partial understanding of the task, and uses text incorrectly or with limited success resulting in an inconsistent or flawed explanation. |
| 1 (PP) | A 1-point response demonstrates minimal understanding of the task, does not complete the requirements, and provides only a vague reference to or no use of the text. |
| 0 (PP) | A 0-point response is irrelevant or off-topic. |

Writing Workshop

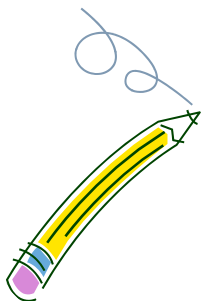
During the Writing Workshop, students craft self-selected pieces using the writing process. This creates and instills a sense of interest and ownership that allows students to grow and thrive as writers. Each piece is not expected to be published or graded. Students choose which pieces to revise, edit, and share for a grade. Each day we have a mini-lesson – a brief presentation and example of a writing technique or concept. Mentor texts, teacher examples, and student samples are used to explore different techniques. A variety of resources are available in the classroom and online. Students are expected to work independently and stay on task and complete any blog activities assigned. We explore different genres such as fictional narratives, personal narratives, expository essays, persuasive writing, descriptive writing, response to literature, and poetry. Students spend time planning, drafting, revising, editing, and sharing. Students advertise their writing strengths on business cards and engage in peer conferences to provide feedback. Teacher conferences are held to monitor progress and provide teacher feedback. My goal is not to make the writing piece better but to help the student grow as a writer. That means each piece will not be corrected by me or be perfect. Students will work on improving one area at a time.

While there are no strict timelines or deadlines, I expect students to complete at least two process pieces per marking period – one for each genre we study. There will be a three-page limit on these graded pieces. Students may work on longer pieces if the two required pieces are submitted.

Twice per marking period students will have a timed writing sample based on a prompt similar to NJASK. Students will take a pre-assessment for each tested genre in the beginning of unit as well. Data will be used to track and measure progress.

Writing is assessed with a variety of measures. The 6 Traits are helpful to analyze the qualities of effective writing.

- **Ideas/Content**: This trait addresses the writer's theme along with the supporting details that develop and enrich that theme. Regardless of the type or purpose of writing, ideas should be clear, complete, and well-developed. One clear focus should be apparent, but development and details should be thorough, balanced, and well suited to audience and purpose.
- **Organization**: This trait addresses the structure of a piece of writing including the thread of central meaning and the patterns that hold the piece together. Regardless of the type or purpose of writing, a well-thought out order of ideas should be apparent. The structure should suit the topic, with a consciously planned opening and closing, each paragraph specific to one central idea, and transitions that tie the details together.
- **Voice**: The type of voice will vary according to the purpose and type of piece, but it should be appropriately formal or casual, distant or intimate, depending on the audience and purpose.
- **Word Choice**: This trait reflects the writer's use of specific words and phrases to convey the intended message in an interesting, precise, and natural way appropriate to audience and purpose.
- **Sentence Fluency**: This trait addresses the rhythm and flow of language. Sentence structure should be strong and varied.
- **Conventions**: This trait addresses the mechanics of writing, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and paragraph breaks. It can also include proper format.



Writing is scored using the **NJ Holistic Scoring Rubric**.

AP = advanced proficient, P = proficient, PP = partially proficient.

In addition to this rubric, process pieces may receive scores based on the particular genre and techniques being assessed.

| | Inadequate Command | Limited Command | Partial Command | Adequate Command | Strong Command | Superior Command |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Score: | 1 (PP) | 2 (PP) | 3 (PP) | 4 (P) | 5 (AP) | 6 (AP) |
| <u>Content and Organization</u> | May lack opening and/ or closing | May lack opening and/ or closing | May lack opening and/ or closing | Generally has opening and/or closing | Opening and closing | Opening and closing |
| | Minimal response to topic; uncertain focus | Attempts to focus May drift or shift focus | Usually has single focus | Single focus | Single focus Sense of unity and coherence Key ideas developed | Single, distinct focus Unified and coherent Well- developed |
| | No planning evident; disorganized | Attempts organization Few, if any, transitions between ideas | Some lapses or flaws in organization May lack some transitions between ideas | Ideas loosely connected Transitions evident | Logical progression of ideas Moderately fluent Attempts compositional risks | Logical progression of ideas Fluent, cohesive Compositional risks successful |
| | Details random, inappropriate, or barely apparent | Details lack elaboration, i. e., highlight paper | Repetitious details Several unelaborated details | Uneven development of details | Details appropriate and varied | Details effective, vivid, explicit, and/ or pertinent |
| <u>Usage</u> | No apparent control Severe/ numerous errors | Numerous errors | Errors/ patterns of errors may be evident | Some errors that do not interfere with meaning | Few errors | Very few, if any, errors |
| <u>Sentence Construction</u> | Assortment of incomplete and/ or incorrect sentences | Excessive monotony/ same structure Numerous errors | Little variety in syntax Some errors | Some variety Generally correct | Variety in syntax appropriate and effective Few errors | Precision and/ or sophistication Very few, if any, errors |
| <u>Mechanics</u> | Errors so severe they detract from meaning | Numerous serious errors | Patterns of errors evident | No consistent pattern of errors Some errors that do not interfere with meaning | Few errors | Very few, if any, errors |

Writing Workshop Participation and Progress Rubric

| | PP Partially Proficient | P Proficient | AP Advanced Proficient |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Work Habits | Rarely on-task; many teacher reminders necessary; wastes time. | Mostly on-task; some teacher reminders necessary; often uses time wisely; often independent. | Always on-task; self-motivated; uses time wisely; independent. |
| Writing Process | Does not follow the writing process. | Uses most parts of the writing process; may need reminders. | Initiates and uses the writing process effectively. |
| Progress Towards Personal Goals | Little or no progress towards personal goals evident. | Meets several personal goals; may need reminders. | Meets or exceeds personal goals; applies new knowledge independently. |
| Progress Towards Mini-Lessons | Little or no attempt at mini-lesson techniques. | Regularly attempts mini-lesson techniques. | Regularly attempts and succeeds with mini-lesson techniques. |
| Organization | Little or no attempt at folder/notebook organization/preparation. | Attempts organization of folder/notebook; some items may be unorganized; table of contents may not be complete. | Folder/notebook well-organized; everything is in its proper place; table of contents maintained. |





Grammar and Mechanics

Grammar relates to the parts of speech (nouns, verbs, etc.), the building blocks of sentences. Mechanics consists of the rules associated with constructing written language. Many students in middle school “forget” some of these basic rules. Other, more advanced rules, develop with additional instruction, practice, and application. Common errors include:

- plurals vs. possessives
- comma usage
- end punctuation
- punctuating dialogue
- capitalization
- sentence fragments
- run-ons and comma splices
- subject/verb agreement
- noun/pronoun agreement
- consistent verb tense
- parallel structure
- punctuation : ; -- ...
- misplaced modifiers

Student writing including open-ended responses will receive a grammar grade as well as an overall holistic grade. This grade will be indicated by a slash below the holistic grade. If the same type of error is repeated throughout, it will only count once. Students must proofread all work before submitting. I will keep a log of errors and offer instruction as well as assign practice homework (*Elements of Writing* book, *Write Source* website, hand-outs, or online practice) until students demonstrate proficiency in the concept. Some concepts require prerequisite knowledge of the parts of speech which will be included in the assignments. This work will be completed in the composition notebook. Students making advanced errors will not be penalized until sufficient instruction and practice is given. Taking a risk with a semi-colon and using it wrong is better than not using one at all.

| Grade | Basic Errors |
|-------|-------------------|
| A | No errors |
| B | 1-2 errors |
| C | 3-4 errors |
| D | variety of errors |

To help students develop more sophisticated sentences, I will assign a “Sentence Pattern of the Week.” I will post this on the board and website along with examples. Students will be required to use this type of sentence three times in writing during the week. Before Friday, students will post these examples on index cards and place in their name pockets on the board. I will collect, review, track proficiency and return them to be kept in an envelope in the writing folder for future reference. Students will receive a PP, P, or AP for their sentences which will reflect correct sentence construction and word choice. The average of grammar grades, sentence patterns, and quizzes will be averaged into the final grade.



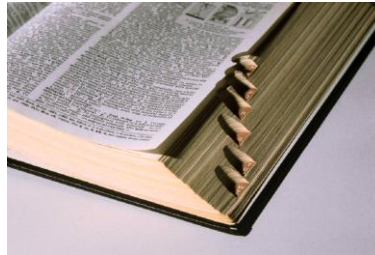
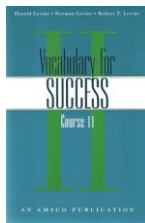
Vocabulary

Students will have several types of vocabulary: academic vocabulary related to language arts, word choice lists, and word study.

Academic Vocabulary: Each day, students will come to class and find the “Word of the Day” on the Smart Board. They will copy the page into their composition notebooks (including the table of contents). These words are based on academic vocabulary related to language arts. Students must review and master these words since they appear in questions and students will encounter them repeatedly throughout coursework.

Word Choice Lists: Each week I will provide students with a list of five words in a particular category with different nuances that can be used to enrich word choice in writing. These words may also appear in reading. Students will copy these lists along with images and examples into a section in their writing notebooks to use as writing resource.

Word Study: Students will complete a lesson in *Vocabulary for Success* books about once a week for homework. This lesson contains a list of words with exercises that involve definitions, context clues, synonyms, antonyms, roots/prefixes/suffixes, word origins, analogies, and writing exercises. After reviewing the exercises in class, students will have a test for each lesson that will be averaged together for a vocabulary grade.



Support

Students who need additional support are encouraged to stay after school for help.

Check my website for online resources and practice. www.rpsnj.org.

Click on Staff and find Mrs. Radomski.

Email me with questions or concerns aradomski@rpsnj.org.

