

Grading Information for ELA Class

Dear parents,

I have the pleasure of teaching your student in English Language Arts (ELA) this year. I'm writing to briefly introduce myself, and to introduce a change I have made to our ELA classes the past few years. Please read through this lengthy explanation. When you finish, if you'd like to meet one-on-one to discuss it further, let's set a date & time.

This is my twenty-fourth year of teaching - my seventeenth year teaching in District 25, and my tenth teaching ELA. In addition to my years at TMS, I taught for seven years as a teacher for the deaf and hard-of-hearing. I have tried on many hats at TMS, including yearbook editor, reading specialist, and department head. I am also National Board Certified (renewed in 2016). More information about me and our ELA class can be found at www.scholarsrm239.weebly.com.

In an effort to encourage a more student-centric learning environment and to better replicate an independent learning style encouraging **lifelong** learning, I have implemented a different grading system in your child's ELA class. This will be the third complete year of implementation.

There will be no points assigned to tasks, there will not be individual grades in the online gradebook, and final grades will not be determined by a computer. I will provide ample feedback (much more than typical classes) on coursework, writing prompts, and classroom participation; objective assignments (i.e. multiple choice reading checks) may include a numeric score, but will not be entered in the gradebook in a way that averages these scores. We will only use the most current evidence of student achievement.

At the end of each quarter, students and I will meet individually and look through their evidence of learning. We will assign a final grade together, and write goals for the next quarter. This process will include considerable reflection, and will help us to focus on achievement. The following categories will be taken into account:

- *quality of writing (including grammar),*
- *performance on reading comprehension checks,*
- *independent reading at home,*
- *class participation and preparedness,*
- *daily engagement in content, and*
- *the use of feedback to improve performance.*

This change was inspired by a number of researchers, who are/ were teachers first. **I encourage you to watch my video explaining the research and changes to grading in my classroom here:**

tinyurl.com/KirrGrading. Consider reading more at tinyurl.com/FeedbackBinder to get a better understanding of why I have made these changes. This system has yielded more authentic, intrinsically motivated learning. One student last year told her mom, "I might not get an 'A' in ELA this year." When asked why, she responded, "Because I'm going to have to actually **learn** something." Using feedback only deters students from "playing the grading game" at school, and helps to take the focus off of a grade that can be very arbitrary and actually misrepresentative of what has been learned throughout the year, and helps students focus on improvement.

I am thankful for support from our administration and previous parents, and am happy to discuss with you your student's progress or anything happening in our classroom at **any** point during the year. After you've looked through the resources, please contact me via email or phone with ANY questions or concerns. This is a big change for parents and students, and I'd love to continue this conversation, as I'm very passionate about it.

Respectfully,

Mrs. Joy Kirr

“Typical” ELA Grading

Vs.

Feedback System

SIMILARITIES:

Same assignments as the other ELA class on the team.
 All assignments will be in the gradebook.
 One to two polished writing pieces will be formally assessed each quarter.
 Revisions on writing assignments are encouraged.
 Reading comprehension checks may not be redone, as we review them as a class.
 Habit / behavior feedback (w/o a grade attached) will be in the comments section of the gradebook.

DIFFERENCES:

Less time-consuming for the teacher.

Less time-consuming for students.

Grades updated with each assignment - may fluctuate from day to day, depending upon activities included.

Assignments will have points/grades without feedback in the comments section.

Reading - Points on comprehension checks will be averaged. No feedback will be included in the comments section of the gradebook.

Writing - students will receive a grade based on the rubrics we use, and two pieces of feedback will be included in the document itself.

Mastery = 100% Developing = 75%
 Proficient = 90% Needs Improvement = 50%

Grammar in writing - students will receive a grade based on the rubrics we use.

Mastery = 100% Developing = 75%
 Proficient = 90% Needs Improvement = 50%

Grammar - Grades for sporadic grammar checks will be included and averaged. No feedback will be included in the comments section of each assignment.

Final Grade - will be averaged by a computer.

More time-consuming for the teacher. (Mrs. Kirr believes it's worth it, or she wouldn't try it.)

More time-consuming for students, as they look at the feedback comments under each assignment (and many use it to improve).

Grades not updated - Students and parents will need to go a step further into comments section for each assignment and update.

Assignments will not have points/grades - narrative feedback will be in the comments section of each assignment.

Reading - Points on comprehension checks and feedback for improvement will be in the comments section of each assignment and not averaged.

Writing - students will receive a link to video feedback of their writing - in the comments section of each assignment and in the document itself.

Grammar in writing - students will receive grammar feedback in the same fashion as writing feedback (see above).

Grammar - Narrative feedback for sporadic grammar checks will be in the comments section of each assignment.

Final Grade - will be determined by the student and teacher in 1:1 conference the last week of each term.

Thank you so much for reading this far! If, after watching the video suggested on the first page and discussing it with your child, you and your child do **not** want to be involved in the feedback system, you may, of course, opt out. Please send me an email to me at jkirr@sd25.org explaining that you would like for me to use “typical” grading with your child, and it will be implemented.