

Standard 1 reflection: I put grades on campus on a weekly basis at the very least. To improve communication to parents and students alike, I have worked hard this year to have grades posted the same day the assignment is turned in. It doesn't always happen that way, but usually sooner than the week.

I communicate with parents more by email and Campus Messenger, and I have found it to be a good way to initiate conversations. If I feel the issue is important or too lengthy or complicated to explain in a written note, or if I feel it requires immediate attention, I still make phone calls, but I find that email or Messenger is generally a much more reliable way to communicate with parents. With few exceptions, parents seem grateful for the contact no matter which means I use.

As in previous years, I have tried to make it a point to send home positive messages to students and their parents, usually via emails I send. I always start the year off well and then slack off as the year gets busier and I have more to do. I like sending these messages because it forces me to find something good about each student in each class. I have had students and parents approach me after I've sent them. They tell me it was the first time a teacher ever did anything like that for them. I still REALLY need to work harder at this!

Inside this Standard 1 folder, you will find several rubrics that I use throughout the year. Rubrics are a great way to communicate expectations to students and I use them for writing assignments and lengthier projects all year long. In addition to hard copies I hand out, students have access to these and other assignment documents through links on my calendar (see the calendar tab on my blog -- link below). There are others that I use besides the ones I included.

Much of my students' work is available digitally. I have included a link to a [folder with some students' work](#). Other work may be viewed on my blog: <http://kaska-boom.blogspot.com> and/or my wiki: <http://kaska-boomreadingroom.wikispaces.com>. There is also a link to the wiki on the home page of my blog. Comments I have made to students may be seen on the reading wiki. Students also keep a skills list throughout the year to help them identify and work on individual strengths and weaknesses in their writing.

With Jeannine as a co-teacher, we do our best to reach the varied abilities of all our students. All of my assignments are differentiated-- or they can be if we see a need. This might mean flexible deadlines, adjusted assignments, modified graphic organizers or test structure, or choice -- whether for a final product or simply a topic of research or reading. With multiple choices for the reading they choose to do, differentiation is sort of built in to my classes. I offer choices to my students that range from using the wiki to journal responses to me, to Instagram videos for vocabulary words, to creating music, diagrams, models, and other hands-on types of projects. Some of this student work is included in the [student work folder](#) and some may be viewed on my blog.

In the past, I was a member of the Fairfield's Future team, served as the teacher liaison for the Jefferson County Education Foundation, was on the committee for beginning AIW at the middle school, and for six years in a row, I was on the SAT team. I have also been a member of the middle school Vertical Team. I enjoy being on these committees and serving in these capacities because I like getting information about our profession first hand and being pro-active -- feeling as though I'm acting and not being acted on. In recent years, I feel I have been overlooked for some of these opportunities, but I realize others may desire to fill these roles as well.

You can view my plan book from this year or any of the previous years to see that I still incorporate most of the literacy strategies we've learned over the years into my classroom as well as the formative assessments presented to us by Scott. I enjoy learning new and creative ways to present lessons, to teach, and to assess. The more I learn, the less likely I am to become bored with what I do!

The PLN I belong to has been invaluable both as a resource and as a means of collaboration. I have good intentions of reading professional materials, but as way leads on to way, many times that reading can take a back seat to other "more important" tasks. The PLN has made me accountable for that reading. It has given us an outlet for collaboration and sharing of ideas, and it has been a way to reaffirm that the job I do is a good one. There are many ideas that are in use in my room and in various units that found their way there through the pages of the books and articles we've read, from my "Quoffiti Wall" to the "Buzz About Books", to my passion for reading aloud to my students and sharing books through book talks and book conferences.

One way that I create a supportive classroom culture is through differentiation. As I have already noted, English 8 is conducive to differentiation because choice in their assignments (reading material and writing topics) is already built in to the class. Further examples can be seen in the lesson folder for this standard. I still use RAFT assignments Angela Jones and I created a few years ago for Anne Frank projects, and several "menu" items for their poetry projects. Tina Breen, Dee Ann Lantz and I work closely together for the Amazing Women biography projects, and I encourage students to use web 2.0 tools to creatively showcase other work as well, including several extra credit options which also can be viewed on my [blog](#). These lessons make it apparent just how much choice my students have in how they learn while keeping the learning required the same.

I am usually in my room by 7:30 every morning – sometimes earlier. My students know I'm there and are encouraged to come in any time they need extra help or extra time to work on assignments. Additionally, I am often in my room after school well beyond the required 4:00 time. My students know that I have high expectations for them (one of the highest compliments I've ever received was from a parent who told me that their kids thought I was "tough"), but I also have a good sense of humor which comes in handy when working with 8th graders! I pick my battles and try to handle less serious (but still important) issues with a lighthearted manner, and, as a result, my issues with students are few.

I prefer email communication with parents because it is easily accessible for me from my classroom at the moment that I need it and can be easily accessed by the parent at their convenience – no messages on a machine, but I also have come to appreciate the "old-fashioned" telephone call if email doesn't yield results, or if I feel vocal communication will serve the student better than email. Student communication is through rubrics, verbally, individual conferences, syllabi handouts, and unit expectation papers they receive at the beginning of each unit.