

**Dear Parents and Guardians,**

At the start of the school year, I usually write a quite formal letter explaining how I informed students of rules and procedures, expectations, materials, and requirements for class. Yes, I did all that. However, this year I want to send home a more relaxed letter explaining my goals for your son or daughter this year in English class. Home is an important factor in the success of a student and I hope for your engagement, support, and trust as we move forward together.

My goals for your son or daughter are twofold – first to become aware, responsible, and critical consumers of information. Whether information comes from a Tweet, internet site, radio program, newspaper, or novel written one or hundreds of years ago, students must be able to handle the information and consume it responsibly. My second goal for students is for them to appreciate the power, influence, and beauty that words possess. I myself did a lot of reading this summer and one of the most powerful sentences I read was this: “Learning to read is learning that you are being written to, and learning to write is learning that your words are being read.” I truly hope to show your son or daughter this year that the topics of class lend themselves to authentic writing opportunities – blogs, Tweets, responses, visual representations, letters, and synthesis essays. I also hope to instill in my students that they should strive for their communication to be appropriate for *all* audiences, whether it’s a 140 character Tweet, a job application, a college application essay, or a research paper. Words have power – an especially important lesson we seem to be reminded of time and time again through the media.

This year is a big one for all of us. While our 9th grade students are embarking on a 4-year journey through the halls of WHS, I am celebrating my twelfth year as an educator in the district. In November of 2013, I achieved National Board certification after engaging in a rigorous year-long process which required me to think deeply, critically, and reflectively about my practice in the classroom, among colleagues, and with the community. The last exciting tidbit about me is that I am continuing my work as a Fuse Fellow through the Highlander Institute, which means that I am consulting with another district in RI about their blended learning and technology goals as those goals relate to instruction, curriculum, and assessment. I am also the Head of the English Department. As a department, we are continually making adjustments to curriculum, instruction, and assessment in our classrooms so that we can best serve each student. Though this is not a total redesign year after year, it is a process in which we must examine and question our materials and instructional strategies to be sure we are providing a rigorous curriculum that exits students who are ready for life in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

I truly hope that this year is a successful one for everyone. I pledge to you (and your son or daughter) that I will give them my best, prepare them for whatever lies ahead in their educational or career path, and assure that they complete whatever local and state requirements they must. In return, I have already asked your son or daughter for a pledge of his or her best effort and investment and I also urge you to remain involved. There should never be a day you ask your son or daughter, “What did you do in English today?” and he or she responds with, “Nothin’.” Each and every day, they should be able to articulate what they are doing and, most importantly, why they are doing it. Should you ever be curious about what we’re doing in class, asking your son or daughter to see our materials is a great first step (if they give you a hard time, contact me and I’ll share!). I operate my classroom under complete transparency, so should you need to come in or contact me, do not hesitate. I look forward to working with you this year so that your son or daughter leaves WHS confident and ready for the Real World. (I’ve attached “Mrs. DeVoe’s Top 10” as well - 10 things about me essential to understanding my classroom. It is posted on School Fusion as well, should you want to access anything that’s hyperlinked.)

Sincerely,

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