

Welcome to the start of a great year!

Course Overview:

As we build our community of readers and writers, we will work on writing in multiple genres, skills for effective reading, critical thinking and discussion skills, interpretation of informative and narrative text and grammar and usage within writing.

Reading: Students will be reading a book of their choice daily during class. They will at times, be asked to ponder and respond to prompts about their book to further their ability to talk and write about what they have just read with their peers. Students will also be taking notes on whole class activities related to reading in their interactive notebook. I look forward to conferencing with students throughout the year to check on their progress as readers. It is expected that students, as on-going homework, are reading at home and progressing through books throughout the school year.

Writing: As we are reading different genres in class, we will apply that knowledge in a variety of writing assignments. Students will write personal narratives, argumentative, and informational essays. We will also do quick-writes to collect ideas, make lists, write poetry, discuss writing techniques and most importantly share our thoughts with one another. Most of this will be done in class, but there may be times when your student will need to work on their writing at home. Students will be asked to write one page per week on topics of their choice as well as teacher directed topics as homework. This will be a great tool for me to see how your student views the world, what they really care about and who they are as a person. I also will be conferencing with students throughout the year and encouraging and instructing them to push themselves as writers.

Grading: Final grades for this course is based on how well your student meets the eighth grade reading, writing, and language standards as evidenced through various formative and cumulative assessments. Classwork and homework will be worth 20% of a student's overall grade. This work is considered reading/writing practice, and it is essential to developing skills. Assessments will be worth 80% of a student's overall grade.

- Each standard will be assessed twice in class at different times to show retention of knowledge of that standard. The second assessment will be weighted more heavily than the first.
- If a student needs more than two opportunities to show mastery of a skill, they can set up a time to reassess with the teacher only after they have increased their knowledge of that skill through

some type of intervention such as seeking help after school, additional at home practice, etc. The score of the first opportunity will not be replaced. The third or fourth opportunity will replace the second score only.

- There may be a summative assessment that covers multiple standards at the end of a unit of study and/or at the end of the semester. The summative assessments may only be taken once and scores cannot be replaced.

The grading scale for standards based assessments is as follows (partial points may be assigned):

Letter Grade	Assessment Grade (4-point scale)	Levels of Proficiency	Percentages
A	3.50-4.00	Advanced	87.5% - 100%
B	2.76-3.49	Proficient	69.0% - 87.4%
C	2.01-2.75	Basic	50.1% - 68.9%
D	1.51-2.00		37.7% - 50.0%
F	0-1.50	Below Basic	0% - 37.6%

- Extra credit is not offered.
- Semester grades will be cumulative and will not start over each six weeks.

A note to parents: As students encounter new material they may initially receive lower scores as they work through the learning curve. Please try to think of your student's ongoing grade as a helpful progress report while they continue to learn. Their final grade in the class will be an accurate reflection of their mastery of the standards, but that takes time to reach. If their grade seems low, the most important question to ask is, "What don't you understand yet?" rather than "What can you do to get your grade up?" Then either you or the student can communicate to me the point of confusion, and I can reteach to clear it up, then reassess. It is common for students' grades to drop mid-unit as we engage in more challenging work. Students who engage will rise to meet this challenge.

Late or Redoing Work:

Students will be able to turn in some classwork/homework late, but will not be able to turn in their weekly writing or their weekly reading assignments late unless they are absent on the date this is collected. Consistently turning in late work will affect their work habits grade and most likely their understanding of what we're covering in class. I try very hard to enter grades in a timely manner so Parent/Student VUE should be a helpful tool.

Citizenship/Work Habit Grades: As 8th graders, I expect my students to be leaders in and outside the classroom. The classroom is a place that should be safe and where all students are able to learn. Each of my periods I view as a team; working together to become better readers, writers and people. My students understand that I hold them to high standard in order to grow and become better. However, if there is a concern, I will contact you to figure out how best to support your student so they can reach their highest potential.

IEP/TAG: These student groups have their own unique needs and I will work very hard to meet them where they are in their learning. I will be reviewing IEP files the first couple weeks of school and will be in close contact with the LRC staff to ensure I am providing ways for students to learn. TAG students may work in small groups, have individual assignments, or go at an accelerated pace. Please see the attached TAG plan for this course.

Contact information: The best way to reach me is by email:

[Stephenson Lauren@salkeiz.k12.or.us](mailto:Lauren@salkeiz.k12.or.us). I do my best to answer emails same day. I would be happy to answer any further questions you may have about this course. I look forward to a successful and exciting year!

Lauren Stephenson

P.S. Homework assignment for parents below☺

I am writing to ask you to help me become a partner in your child's education. I will be spending an hour a day with your child, and I know that is a position of responsibility and trust. To be good at my job, I need to know your child well as soon as possible. To help me with that, I am asking you for your input regarding who your child is. Would you please take a moment to write to me about your child? What are the things that you, as a parent, know that would be important for me to know? What are his or her interests, learning style, and goals? Feel free to handwrite your letter and send it back with your child or e-mail me your response.

Thank you!

Lauren Stephenson

Salem-Keizer Public Schools
Secondary Talented and Gifted (TAG) Course Plan
Grades 6-12

The following assessments will be used to determine level and monitor rate:

1. Writing work samples
2. Reading tests/essay questions
3. Student portfolio

Step II: Differentiated Instructional Strategies

Show what differentiation will take place in this course (check all that may apply).

- Acceleration – materials and instruction at a quicker pace or at a deeper level than standard instruction and materials.
- Independent Study/Project – Designed to allow a student to proceed independently and at his/her own rate.
- Assignment Modification – The regular assignment may be modified to meet the needs of the student.
- Cluster/Small Grouping – Grouping students with similar needs, interests, and/or abilities in the same classroom.
- Enrichment – Activities that add or go beyond the existing curriculum.
- Compacting – Student demonstrates what he/she knows then spends the time participating in enrichment activities.
- Tiered Assignments – Providing assignments that reflect the individual level of the student's knowledge content.
- Flexible Grouping – Student are grouped together to receive appropriately challenging instruction.
- Contracting – Student pursues an area of special interest.
- Multiple Intelligences – Incorporation of strategies into instruction that allow students to use areas of strength.
- Learning Styles – Different approaches or ways of thinking, i.e., auditory, tactile kinesthetic, and visual.
- Higher Level/Critical Thinking – Higher order thinking skills to gain understanding of complex problems or ideas.

There are many options available to TAG students to make sure their needs are met. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Thank you!