“The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.”
– Dr. Seuss

Course Description:
This language arts class is designed to increase your communications skills through reading, writing, speaking, and the study of the English language. Our primary focus in language arts class will be mastery of different writing styles, demonstration of the rules of grammar, and the ability to express yourself effectively through various mediums of communication in direct correspondence to the Common Core State Standards. This year you can expect to read a variety of fiction and non-fiction text including novels, short stories, dramas, poetry, and essays. These writing pieces will model the different writing styles we will be working on ourselves. Writing assignments will include timed responses, journal writing, essays, critiques, and creative pieces. Vocabulary, spelling, and supplemental grammar assignments (as needed) will also be an important part of this class. Because we are a community of learners, please also expect to work periodically in cooperative learning situations and to present information to your peers in collaborative teams as well as individually.

Throughout the duration of the school year you will:

- read and respond widely and deeply to foster a deeper understanding of the human experience
- use a variety of thinking strategies to understand, analyze, and create text for personal enrichment, inquiry, and problem solving
- collect, analyze, and cite specific evidence to formulate questions, construct arguments, make decisions, and reinforce thinking
- obtain, analyze, and synthesize information from a variety of resources to express information, change perspectives, clarify thinking, and make informed decisions

Please understand that you will be expected to read outside of class as a component of our course. You will be held accountable for independent reading by various methods, which will be further explained, in a separate document. **Just understand that you should be reading a minimum of 20 minutes every night!** With approximately 180 school days in the 2015 – 2016 academic year, that’s 3,600 minutes or 60 hours of reading you will be able to complete this school year!

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS
(https://vimeo.com/51933492)

This course will focus on developing and improving your reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language skills in direct correspondence to the Common Core State Standards.

Students will read, write, listen, and speak for:

- Information and understanding
- Literary response and expression
- Critical analysis and evaluation
- Social interaction

In doing so students will demonstrate independence, build strong content knowledge, respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline, comprehend as well as critique, value evidence, use technology and digital media strategically and capably, as well as come to understand other perspectives and cultures.
TOPICS OF STUDY WE WILL COVER IN ELA

- 6 Traits of Writing (ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions) + presentation
- Effective Communication Skills (listening, speaking, and viewing)
- Elements of Poetry
- Journal Writing
- Literary Terms
- Mechanics & Standard Grammar
- Narrative, Expository/Informative (descriptive, explanation, comparison and contrast, problem/solution), and Persuasive Writing
- Parts of Speech
- Presentation Techniques (Prezi, iMovie, Green Screen, etc.)
- Reading Process
- Reading Strategies
- Research Skills
- Various Novels
  - The Lightning Thief
  - Al Capone Does My Shirts
  - The Contender
  - Number the Stars
  - The Egypt Game
  - Love That Dog
  - Boy: Tales of Childhood

  Literature Circle Options:
  - Hope Was Here
  - Ungifted
  - Stargirl
  - Nothing But the Truth
  - Out of the Dust
  - Sahara Special
  - Bridge to Terabithia
  - Castle in the Attic
  - Maniac Magee
  - Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes
  - The Devil’s Arithmetic

- Vocabulary Development
  - Greek/Latin Root Study
  - 100 Words Every Middle Schooler Should Know by Editors of the American Heritage Dictionaries
- Writing Process (prewrite, draft, edit, revise, and publish)

***This list is tentative and subject to change as needed based on the prior knowledge and readiness levels of each child. Curriculum will be in direct correspondence to the 6th Grade ELA Common Core State Standards.

Our first unit of study will discuss the importance of perspective in writing through an in-depth study of Chris Van Allsburg’s The Mystery of Harris Burdick and The Chronicles of Harris Burdick. Students will use the writing process to effectively produce various creative writing pieces based on the components of a picture, title, and caption from the book. This will simultaneously serve as a pre-assessment in order to better understand each child’s understanding of essential components to a story’s plot. Students will explore and appreciate the role of perspective in the stories that are told by their fellow classmates with varying outlooks by maintaining a respectful attitude when faced with differing opinions. As a culminating activity, students will create a “Missing Person” report using various multi-media sources in order to unveil the whereabouts, motive, and consequences of the disappearance of Harris Burdick. Students will then have a culminating discussion to analyze the multiple perspectives of their peers to determine the “most relevant” case explaining the disappearance.
CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS
All students will be prompt, prepared, polite and productive.

1. Be Prompt: You are expected to be in your assigned seat and ready to work at the start of class. Make sure you complete the “Daily Preview”/“Welcome Work” activity as soon as you enter the classroom! (Parents will be notified when a student has two or more tardies. If three tardies are issued a detention will be served.)

2. Be Prepared: You must bring the requested supplies to class everyday unless specified otherwise:

- One 1-inch WHITE 3 – Ring Binder with Inside Pockets and a Clear Outside Viewing Pocket
- Package of Tab Dividers for the Binder (At Least Five Tabs)
- Pocket Folder
- Assignment Notebook
- Highlighters
- Homework Folder
- Lined Paper
- Pencils

OPTIONAL:
- 8 GB USB Flash Drive
- Ear Buds
- Pencil Pouch (to clip inside binder for flash drive & headphone storage)
- 3 x 5 Index Cards

3. Be Polite: You will be respectful, considerate, and polite to all people and property.

4. Be Productive: You will come to class and use all of the resources available to learn and explore new and exciting ways to enjoy the English language.

HOMEWORK
Homework will be given on a regular basis. It is intended to support the learning done in the classroom. Homework should be completed fully and on time to allow continuity with class activities.

- Assignments must be legible in order to receive credit. I cannot grade what I cannot read. Typing is strongly encouraged.
- Always make sure that you are clear about the homework assignment and that you have recorded it in your agenda BEFORE LEAVING CLASS. As soon as you know you are stuck, contact your teacher or a “Clock Buddy” for clarification.
- All assignments are due on the assigned due date and are to be submitted at the beginning of the class period unless stated otherwise in the directions of the “Daily Preview”/“Welcome Work”.
- Homework is due the following class day unless stated otherwise.
- Any assignments not received on or before the due date are considered late. In order to receive credit for any missed assignments, students must have an excusable absence, tardy, or early dismissal.
  - When a child has an excused absence, the child has the same number of days he/she was absent to make up the missing work.
  - All students who do not have their homework at the time in which it is due will be required to fill out a Missing Assignment Notice to explain their reason as to why the assignment was not completed on time. This notice will need to be turned in with the assignment and signed by a parent or guardian if it is not made up after school on the day in which it was due.
  - Students are expected to stay afterschool the day in which their homework assignment is not turned in. If the assignment is turned in by 3:15pm on the day it is due a 10% deduction of the earned grade will be applied.
• 2 school days late = 20% deduction of the earned grade
• 3 school days late = 30% deduction of the earned grade
  • After three school days, the assignment will not be accepted and will remain a permanent zero for assignments are time sensitive and relevant to the material being learned in class. Therefore, it is the expectation that in order for students to experience optimum academic success, they must complete all assignments on time!
    o Please note that homework assignments for literature circle novels will be due in class on the day the reading is due so students are prepared for the discussion. Work after the chapter is discussed is no longer relevant and will become a permanent zero with no late penalties able to be applied.

✓ All assignments and due dates will be posted on my classroom website by 4pm each day!
✓ If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to see me to find out what notes or activities you missed.

EXPECTATIONS FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENTS
Middle school students write for a variety of purposes with a focus on formal or “polished” writing. Typical writing assignments for middle school students include argumentative, informative, narrative, an introduction to research paper writing, and an in depth research skills-based writing project. It is unrealistic and impractical for student work to be hand written due to the number of times we will be modifying the contents of each piece. Students are expected to type all polished writing including the first draft for editing, revised draft for review, and final copy for assessment. Students will be involved in formal writing for three middle school years, so there is a consistent expectation across the three grade levels for typed work as requested. Students have a variety of options for meeting the expectation for typed work. It is encouraged that students utilize a memory stick/USB Flash Drive, to move their work from school to home, or home to school until they become familiar with the Cloud-based Office 365 Program. Students may also use e-mail as a backup, to send their work as an attachment. Please note that students who do not have access to a computer or word processing software at home are not excused from typing assignments. Students may download the software using the licensure provided by the school (if a computer is available at home) or they may make arrangements to utilize a school computer before, during (a study hall), or after school. In these cases, students should make me aware of their special circumstances so that every effort can be made to accommodate their needs. Due to the amount of time that will be given prior to an assignment being due, students are also not excused from typing assignments due to technical difficulties. All previous suggestions are options for getting your work from home computers to school. If some unforeseen circumstance arises, please contact me as soon as possible.

TESTS & QUIZZES
Tests will always be announced. Quizzes may or may not be announced. Tests and quizzes will vary in structure (multiple choice, short answer, fill-in-the-blank, true/false, essay questions, etc.)

GRADING
Quarterly grades are determined by adding all points earned in a marking period, divided by the total possible points. Grades will consist of homework, quizzes, projects, journals, class participation, and test scores. Grades will be available on PowerSchool throughout the duration of each quarter.

\[
\text{Total Points Earned} \div \text{Total Points Possible} = \text{Quarterly Average}
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*Extra credit assignments may be offered to all students occasionally throughout the year. However, there will be no individual extra credit assignments or last-minute projects offered to assist students in passing the course. Students must meet course requirements on a regular basis in order to pass the class.
CHEATING/PLAGARISM
Cheating and/or plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in an automatic grade of zero. This includes copying homework, classwork, test answers, talking during a test or quiz, allowing someone to copy your work, and trying to pass off someone else’s work as your own. The participants caught in the act will receive a zero for their assignment, project, or assessment. Further disciplinary action may be taken.

Copying another student’s work and giving your work to another student to copy is considered cheating also. Plagiarism is the act of stealing ideas and words of another without giving them proper credit. Plagiarism will result in a zero and parents will be contacted. Further disciplinary action may be taken.

We will discuss how to properly cite sources through the year using MLA formatting so we do not encounter these problems. If you are ever confused about plagiarism, please ask!!!!

A citation and plagiarism lesson will be taught during the first few weeks of school to help clarify questions.

SCHOOL – WIDE ACADEMIC PROBATION PROGRAM
Now that your child is part of the middle school at WACS, they will be participating in a new school – wide policy that has been put in place to encourage the pursuit of academic excellence. Beginning the week of September 28th, if your child has below a 70% average in any of their core classes (math, ELA, social studies, or science), they will receive a yellow slip the Friday before stating that they must attend Academic Probation after school from 2:30 – 3:15pm until their average exceeds 70% (at least two weeks). It is mandatory that your child stays after school on the designated day of the week in which the content area of study your child is struggling in has been assigned. English Language Arts probation days will take place on Wednesdays. I would like the students who are in academic probation to come to my classroom, Room 132, to fulfill this new requirement. This school – wide policy will be further explained in another letter you can be expected to receive on Monday, September 14th. Please note that Academic Probation is in addition to staying at 2:30pm for late homework, returning to school after an absence, or just needing help with classwork.

WESTFIELD ACADEMY AND CENTRAL SCHOOL POLICY ON STUDENT USE OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION DEVICES IN SCHOOL
The Board of Education recognizes that Electronic Communication Devices (ECDs) can be effective instructional tools and at the same time can also be detrimental to the instructional environment. This policy is established to incorporate ECDs into the educational process when determine appropriate, while placing limits for times when it is inappropriate.

1. It is recommended that all ECDs be left at home. Students making the choice to bring them to school do so at their own risk. The school is not responsible for lost or stolen ECDs.
2. Parents who must communicate with their children between the hours of 7:50am and 2:29pm should contact the Middle/High School Office.
3. Students may not operate ECDs between the hours of 7:50am and 2:29pm. During these hours, ECDs are to be TURNED OFF, and it is recommended that they be stored in lockers. Any student who is seen operating an ECD between the hours of 7:50am and 2:29pm will be subject to discipline engendering a progression of consequences as set forth below:

FIRST OFFENSE:
• ECD will be confiscated and retained in the Middle/High School Office, and must be picked up by the student between the hours of 2:30pm and 4:00pm.

SECOND OFFENSE:
• ECD will be confiscated and retained in the Middle/High School Office, and must be picked up by the student between the hours of 2:30pm and 4:00pm. A second offense will result in a disciplinary referral and an after school detention. Parents will be notified of second offenses because copies of all disciplinary referrals are mailed home.
THIRD OFFENSE:

• ECD will be confiscated and retained in the Middle/High School Office. A conference will be scheduled with the parent/guardian, offending student, and a school administrator, at which time the ECD will be released to the parent/guardian. A third offense will result in a disciplinary referral and an extended after school detention.

PLEASE NOTE:

A further progression of consequences will be enforced, at the discretion of a school administrator, for all students who fail to comply with the ECD Policy administrator.

DISCIPLINE

Establishing good classroom discipline is essential to each child’s success, confidence, and well-being. Every child should feel that the classroom environment is safe and secure, free from all threats of physical or emotional harm. In addition, it is important that each child learns to develop self-discipline and good work habits, to resolve conflicts peacefully, and to think independently. For these reasons, the discipline plan I have chosen has several components, which I will further explain in greater detail at open house. For the time being, please note that the behavior management system in my classroom is based on providing students with the opportunity to engage in real-life problem-solving experiences while addressing content simultaneously in order to reinforce learning in an authentic, interactive, and fun way.

SCHOLASTIC BOOK CLUBS:

If you wish to make a purchase through Scholastic Book Clubs you can always do so by turning in the provided order forms I plan to distribute on a monthly basis or through the use of Scholastic’s online ordering system. Using our classroom code (JT8JW), you can access all of the scholastic book brochures for each grade level of study.

*Please be sure to submit CHECKS made out to SCHOLASTIC rather than cash if you choose to refrain from ordering online. Thank you!

PARENT/TEACHER RELATIONSHIP

In order to maximize school success, it is imperative to establish a successful parent-teacher relationship early on in the school year. Therefore, throughout the year I will communicate with you through the contents of our classroom website, notes, telephone calls, report card comments, parent-teacher conferences, and most importantly - email. I encourage you to contact me if you have any questions or concerns at any time. You can call me at school (between the hours of 7:45 and 8:30am or 2:30 and 3:15pm), send me a note, or communicate with me through my preferred method of contact, email (adejohn@wacs2.wnyric.org). I am available for conferences regarding your child’s progress by appointment. If you are interested in helping in the classroom, on field trips, or would like to assist in the planning of culminating learning celebrations, please do not hesitate to contact me so that I may work with you to obtain permission from the school. I will post volunteer opportunities as they arise on our classroom website.

PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN THIS PORTION OF THE PAGE TO MS. DEJOHN INDICATING THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS COURSE EXPECTATIONS FOR 6TH GRADE BY:

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I have read the syllabus for the 6th Grade English Language Arts Course, and I understand the course’s grading policy, homework policy, intended units of study, and items that must be brought to class daily to be prepared. I recognize that this will be a joint effort on all our parts to make this a successful year.

Student Name (Printed): _______________________

Student Signature: _______________________

Date: ________

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed): _______________________

Parent/Guardian Signature: _______________________

Date: ________