

WELCOME TO LANGUAGE ARTS & WRITE ON!

JASON KAYE—ROOM A1

PIONEER MIDDLE SCHOOL

jason.kaye@pccsk12.com

[http://jk-la.weebly.com](http://jk-la.weebly.com/)

PRIDE – RESPECT – RESPONSIBILITY- ACHIEVE - LEAD

**What’s with the fist?**

No, I’m not attempting to promote pride in one’s race or ethnic roots—although there’s nothing wrong with that. Rather than separation and division, I choose to use our unique factors, interests, and skillsets we all bring to the table as opportunities to learn more about the richness of our shared cultural environment. Building a community through the celebration of our diverse circumstances, experiences, and observations is an absolute priority for the learning environment I cultivate in our classroom.

I can’t say I don’t have a political agenda, because I do. It’s of utmost importance to foster a genuine understanding of how to navigate through this rapidly changing 21st century. Our class is engaged in literacy work. My primary focus is on exploring, developing, and refining best-practice strategies for consuming and producing traditional and emerging (new) media. I take great responsibility in preparing my students to be confident, active participants in the world around them. It matters to me that they’re informed. It makes me proud when my students demonstrate a desire to make and shape meaning. Knowledge truly is currency. I’m not interested in raising passive clones; I’m here to promote the love—and necessity—of lifelong learning. We can lead in different ways, and that’s OK. I want every one of my students to possess the literacy skills to question, craft, and publish for a variety of purposes. Politically, my aspiration is for my students to be engaged and invested citizens who communicate with laser-sharp proficiency.

Guess you can say the fist represents voice, choice, and empowerment—not just of the individual, but for our community.

In our classroom—and beyond the schools walls—we will cultivate creativity. And we will convey passion through our emerging genuine voices and developing ideologies. That’s something to celebrate. Fist bump, anyone?

**What’s a workshop?**

Reading and Writing Workshop (RWW) is an authentic approach to exploring the four “strands” of language arts: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. On a daily basis, students will read and write, as well as share, collaborate, and confer with others. We will explore different types of literature and writing, emphasizing mechanics and content in both areas. Mainly, we’ll learn what great readers and writers do and add to our collection of literacy tools (skills & strategies).

Workshop happens when students practice reading and writing as the central activities in the classroom. Students will be given time to write and read, and will be expected to do so. They will also be expected to choose topics, sources, and modes for their reading and writing. The structure of RWW includes whole class instruction (where we explore new ideas and skills together), as well as *a lot* of time to apply these ideas and skills to real reading and writing experiences.

Using a scaffolding approach, I demo highly effective professional samples, prior student work, and my own ongoing endeavors to introduce the ingredients and characteristics of particular genres. From there, we navigate and discuss our process and progress in small writing groups and as a class. I write/read alongside my students and constantly use my experiences as a model for our pursuits.

**Where’s the beef?**

Your child will be challenged intellectually and emotionally through immersive experiences and relevant real-world activities.

Our literacy priorities include the continued modeling, examination, and practice of the 6 Traits of Effective Writing: 1) ideas and content, 2) voice, 3) organization,

4) word choice, 5) sentence fluency, and 6) conventions.

There will be a balance between reading and writing for expository and narrative purposes. We’re all here to improve how we interpret and create stories. Secondary to being an informed, engaged citizen through reading and writing (politics of literacy) is the ability to tell stories. We’ll explore and build story structures that represent various genres and have unique agendas. We will practice the art of decoding communication designed to inform, persuade, and entertain. Expect to witness your child strengthening their opinions and perspectives and authorial intentions and reinforcing them with supporting evidence from research.

sample of genres we’ll pursue

LA7: personal essays & commentary pieces, creative writing & the elements of fiction, opinion editorials & editorial cartoons, research, and poetry

Write On: social media (blogs, wikis, apps) and website design, which provide a platform to articulate & publish; letters (both personal and business); reviews; press releases; and hard-news journalism.

**Communication is Key!**

The 3-way relationship between the teacher, student, and family at home is critical. We need to support one another and always maintain an open line of communication. My email address and class website link are provided on the front of this form. Please use them!

If you take the opportunity to share real reading and writing experiences at home, you should notice for yourself a relative growth in literacy in your child. You can do this by talking about your own current (and past) reading and writing experiences, as well as asking about their pursuits. If you don’t see your child reading and writing at home, or find that s/he is unwilling to share with you, please email or call me.

**Redbook**

Part of our record keeping system is the school assignment notebook (Redbook). I urge you to share with your child this valuable communication tool. It can be a great opportunity to help set aside blocks of time for reading and writing that fit into an already bust schedule of other homework and outside commitments (like family, activities, sports, and friends).

**“We’re Off to See The Wizard”**

Weebly and wiki and tumblr, oh my! No, I’m not speaking gibberish. This is where we’re all headed. To help keep you informed, organized, and up-to-date, our class website is chocked full of goodies. Thanks to emerging technologies, the literacy landscape is changing rapidly. Besides the “Weekly Agenda” and the “HW Vault”, our website provides course syllabi, supplementary samples, and content-related links to reinforce the learning we’re immersed in. All assignments and projects will be listed on our class websites. Downloadable documents (including typed directions and screenshots of whiteboard notes and grading rubrics) will be posted for your convenience. I’m confident you’ll find our class website to be a helpful, informative resource.

Related to technology, student progress (grades) are entered into MISTAR/zangle. Please monitor zangle periodically, but keep in mind that assignments appearing in red that have no grade (i.e. they’re blank) *do not count against the student*. Simply, I often record the assignment/project into zangle before all of the grading is completed. I note missing assignments by placing a zero in the grade book.

**Suggested supplies for LA7/Write On!**

* composition notebook (non-perforated/stitched) or large hard-bound blank journal
* durable folder with pockets
* pens and pencils: lots of them!
* loose-leaf paper
* supply box, stocked with art essentials (scissors, glue, markers, colored pencils)
* pack of post-it/sticky notes
* pack of 100 3x5 ruled index cards
* box of Kleenex tissue

In addition, students will need books, books, and more books! Reading workshop functions on the premise that good readers choose their own books. While at times the entire class may read the same piece of writing at once, much of the time will be devoted to students reading books of their own choice. This does not mean that anything goes! I have nothing against graphic novels, magazines, and comics, but students will typically be required to read books of the same genre we’re currently exploring in class.

I’m committed to working with you and your child to make this experience exciting, informative, and productive. It’s not just my job—it’s my passion.