



MRS. BRITTANY SAWYER'S
6TH GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS
SURVIVAL GUIDE
REAGAN MIDDLE SCHOOL
2016-2017

www.sawyers6thgradeshenanigans.com

Dear 6th Grade Scholars,

Welcome to 6th Grade! You are entering middle school, and you should explore all your options this year! You may feel a bit scared, unsure, excited, ready, or maybe a combination of all these emotions as you leave elementary behind and enter into the world of adolescence. The next three years are going to be a breeze, right? I hope that you find it that way, but chances are, you are going to be challenged by the intensity and scope of your work this year. Of course, none of it is beyond you, unless you let it become so.

Over the course of the next year, you are going to stretch your mind and expand your mind in ways you never thought you could. If you work with me, you will come out of this year more thoughtful, better able to understand what you read, with a mind that is sharper and with the confidence to use it well. I want you to find success this year. Most of all, I want this year in Language Arts to be a milestone, turning point, or springboard for you. Years from now, I would love for you to remember this year and say, “That’s when I stopped being a student, and became a Scholar.”

Your scholarship and success this year and into the rest of your life is my goal. This handbook will lay the framework in which we’ll accomplish all the stuff I’ve just mentioned.

I’m glad you’re here!



What will we Study?

Scholar, our literary study will include

(but not limited to):

- 1. Vocabulary, Vocabulary, Vocabulary!**
- 2. Literature: Novels, Fiction, Poetry, Expository, Nonfiction – GREAT STUFF!**
- 3. Major Research Projects**
- 4. Grammar & Parts of Speech**
- 5. Adventures in Technology! (Multimedia Projects, Web Tools, and Discussion Forums, Oh My!)**
- 6. Writing Assignments: Journals, Timed Writing, Narrative Essays, Expository Essays, SAQs, and much more!**

S.O.S.

(Steps of Success)

So let's say you are lost, confused, clueless, or otherwise freaked out about an assignment we're working on in class. Maybe you got

your vocabulary quiz back...and the grade? Not so sweet. Have no fear! This is where S.O.S. comes in. Not only is S.O.S. a distress signal indicating that help is needed, it's what we call Mrs. Sawyer's tutorials!

I am available during posted tutoring times to help you in any way I can. If you cannot make it during regularly scheduled hours just **ASK** and we can figure out a time that works for both of us! During tutorials, skills for the week can be reviewed and time spent re-teaching any lessons from class as needed.

STEPS OF SUCCESS:

- If your grades are slipping, come to S.O.S.!
- If you're confused about vocabulary, come to S.O.S.!
- If you don't have a clue how to do a writing assignment, come to S.O.S.!
- If you're lost in the literature lesson for the week, come to S.O.S.!

S.O.S. is 100% optional – it is there if you need it, but you are not required to attend, unless otherwise told. Be sure to sign up with me & obtain a pass if you plan to attend, so that plans can be made and materials prepared for you.

-NOTE-

Please make sure you have a pass for morning tutoring or you will not be permitted down the hall. If you forget the one that I have supplied you with, a parent note that is signed and dated will work!

LITERATURE STUFF

Literature is the transfer of information from the author to the reader by means of some sort of story or written work. That's all

it is, really. Our task this year will be to read a variety of different literary works and figure out what the authors thought was so important to communicate, and what things they did to make it (hopefully) interesting. Now, some authors are a little better than others in keeping our attention, or getting us involved in the story, and there are some who, it seems, cannot write a story to save their lives. We're going to decide who's who and what's what.

There are a lot of things that go into creating and reading good literature. We're going to explore and learn those things, too. The skills you will gather in this class will serve you well in your high school courses and beyond in your lives beyond high school. I want you to be prepared to receive these communications and interpret their importance.

I expect you to read the stories, chapters, essays, and novels I assign. Most are fairly concise and interesting. If you find they are not, read them anyway. My class requires that your brain be present and prepared!

The Four Occupations:

Adults are expected to work. Little children are not. You are traveling now from one stage to the other. Adults no longer see you as little children (which is the good news) and they expect you to start working (which for

some of you is the bad news). If this is all news to you, then wake up now.

In this class (and in this stage of life in general) you have four jobs to occupy you:

#1 OBEY your Authorities!

You must do what I ask of you without hesitation or question, unless I direct you to do something immoral or unethical (which, by the way, I would never do). You are involved in a course of study that I have designed for your benefit, and I demand your full cooperation. I will know that you are responding cooperatively to a request when I hear you say, "Yes, ma'am." (Or "Yes, sir," if the situation dictates). Approach those in authority respectfully and express your opinion in a mature tone of voice. I have great things planned for your experience and education, and to realize them we must have a healthy working relationship.

#2 Be KIND to Those Around You.

You must treat your fellow scholars (and your wise, fashionable teacher, of course) with kindness. This class works best when the scholars are free to express their thoughts or opinions without fear of ridicule or derision (go ahead and look it up). Learning and true fun occur when the class is unified and without "sides," cliques, or divisions. Look for opportunities to help each other succeed rather than ways to wound each other. I will not tolerate any abuse of one scholar by another. In this class and in life, kindness goes a long way.

#3 LEARN as Much as You Can!

The State of Texas provides you a thirteen-year span of time in which the taxpayers (your parents and me, among others...) will pay for your education. After that, it's up to your wallet. During that span, teachers work to help you understand and use the knowledge that humankind has amassed in the thousands of years before you were born. Sounds pretty serious, doesn't it? Your job is to learn, understand, comprehend, assimilate and master as much of that stuff as you can before your "free" time is up. Your chance began several years ago, and continues today. However, no one can make you learn anything. Some of you may already know this firsthand. You must do it, if it's going to be done. Your parents, relatives, teachers, and I are willing to help you but, in the end, it's all YOU. You must decide every day to absorb as much knowledge and gain as much wisdom as you can lay your hands on.

Be prepared. Be diligent. Participate.

#4 Have as Much FUN as You Can!

There is so much fun to be had; you should be pursuing it with great abandon, with everything you've got. Your job is to enjoy life and this class to the fullest! Squeeze mirth from every slice of time you have! Laugh as often as possible! Play to your heart's content! Follow this rule whenever you ever can!

BUT... (And this is a big but...)

Occupation #4 CANNOT override Occupations #1-3.

**YOU MAY NOT IGNORE THE FIRST THREE TO FOLLOW
THE FOURTH.**

That's how things begin to fall apart, in this class, in your life, and in society.

Policies & Procedures

AKA: The Way We Roll

A. GENERAL CLASS RULES

1. Be prepared for class when the bell rings. That means **DO NOT** be tardy and come with all necessary supplies **EVERYDAY**.
2. Follow all instructions the first time they are given.
3. Talk only at appropriate times.
4. Respect yourself, others, property, and your school.

B. DISCIPLINE

Behavioral indiscretions will not be tolerated & will result in consequences. Consequences include:

- Teacher/student conference, change of seating, parental contact, teacher D-Hall, school D-Hall, office referral
- I may write a D-Hall any time student behavior warrants it; however, serious infractions will be referred to the office immediately.

C. ENTERING OUR CLASSROOM

- You are expected to enter the classroom respectfully; it is a place of learning.
- Take your seat, and look at the board. Every day you will find the day's assignments listed there. You **MUST** copy them down into your **agenda** and then **immediately** begin the warm-up. There is often valuable information there for you: due dates, reminders, etc. I will take a grade on your agenda entries every nine weeks, so be diligent!
- Once you enter the classroom, stay in the classroom. This is important because you will often have warm-up activities and your time is **VERY** limited.

D. A HEADING FOR YOUR PAPERS

In the top right corner of your paper, neatly write your heading:

Your Name (first and last)

(Your Class Period)

The Day's Date (Spell it out!)

Assignment Title (in the center)

PLEASE NOTE:

Assignments without a name on them
WILL BE DISCARDED.

E. WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'RE ABSENT

- When you return to class after being absent, check the "Ketchup Work" folder to see what assignments you missed. Copy those assignments into your agenda for the days you were absent. If there was a handout, it will be in the folder labeled "Ketchup Work". Hopefully, this will save a diligent scholar the time it would take for him/her to come and ask me personally for the work that was missed! Please be aware that if you happen to miss out on all the fun we had, it is ultimately **YOUR** responsibility to get the work. Don't wait until it is too late & your work can no longer be made up!
- If there was a test or quiz, **YOU** will need to arrange a time to make the quiz up. I will most likely not remember, and if it comes time for me to enter grades, you'll get a zero for the test or quiz unless you've taken the responsibility to make it up.

F. MAKE-UP WORK/LATE WORK POLICIES

- Our fabulous district policy allows scholars one day to complete the work for each day of absence. I won't remind you to get your make-up work. I expect you to remember to do it yourself. Don't hesitate or procrastinate! The late work policy applies to make-up work, too!
- In my classroom, we follow the districts late work policy. PAP/GT students are expected to turn in their work on the date due. I **DO NOT** accept late work.

However, at the **END** of the nine weeks, I will drop your lowest grade. In OL, you lose 10 points each day for three days, and then you receive a zero on the fourth day if the work has still not been turned in.

I am a stickler about this.

Be prepared. Be diligent. Be responsible.

G. CORRECTING A QUIZ OR OTHER ASSIGNMENT

- Occasionally you will find the words, "PLEASE CORRECT AND RETURN" on an assignment that has been returned to you. Beside that stamp will be a date. This means that you are allowed to make & turn in corrections to that assignment (be it daily work or a quiz) until the stamped date. After that date, you're out of luck.
- Corrections can be made up to a 70 on certain assignments by coming to S.O.S., but please keep in mind that when grading corrections to an assignment, I begin grading at a 70, and any deductions for incorrect or incomplete answers will be made beginning there.

H. EXTRA CREDIT

Scholars will sometimes approach me and ask if there is any form of extra credit available. Generally, though, I'm hesitant to give extra credit opportunities to scholars on either end of the grade spectrum. If a scholar has an "A," then he/she has proven his/her effort and skills without splitting hairs over percentage points. Likewise, if a scholar has an "F," then he/she has let things go already and his/her request is likely to be too late.

However, extra credit chances DO crop up from time to time for the whole class. The scholar may collect points here or there. Keep your ears pricked, and your eyes open. *(Just so you're prepared - unless otherwise mentioned, extra credit is always, always due the day after it is assigned.)*

I. ACADEMIC HONESTY

- Cheating in any form is unacceptable. It demonstrates a lack of character and breaks down the trust between a teacher and student.
- Cheating includes any of the following:
 - a. Copying homework - in whole or in part
 - b. Copying from someone during a quiz or test

- c. Discussing the questions on a quiz or test with students during passing period
 - d. Plagiarism - the theft of an author's words or ideas without giving him/her credit
 - e. Helping someone else cheat
- Consequences for Academic Dishonesty may include a Disciplinary Referral or a zero earned for the assignment.

J. WHEN YOU GOTTA GO, YOU GOTTA GO

- If you must use the restroom or get a drink, please arrange to do so between classes or at lunch. However, since nature WILL call unannounced, I have awarded you **FOUR opportunities PER NINE WEEKS** (Waaaaaay generous, if you ask me) to leave the room during class.
- I will NOT let you go (no pun intended) if your four are used up. Be wise.
- I reserve the right to deny your request if necessary.

-NOTICE-

Leave nothing in my room after school if you value it! My classroom is not your home or your locker. Therefore, I am not responsible for anything left in my classroom after 4:00 each day. This list includes (but is not limited to):

pens, pencils, geyliner, papers, reports, book bags, Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans, Miles Austin jerseys, 80's movies posters, the complete works of William Shakespeare, tiaras, All-Star Weekend CDs, Tweets, pets, loved ones, Chick-Fil-A Chick-n-Minis, winning lottery tickets, goldfish crackers (the snack that smiles back), textbooks, unauthorized biographies, mood rings, folders, three-ring binders, crop circles, nose rings, Will Farrell bobble heads, hats, lugnuts, toenail clippers, cosmetics, power tools, toys, LOST theories, Happy Bunny keychains, boots, Sam's remote from iCarly, hybrid cars, sequined gloves, coats, guitars, posters, mortgage payments, credit cards, glossy photos of Taylor Lautner, athletic equipment, Kraft mac and cheese, Team Edward signs, any fruits and/or vegetables, carnival supplies, Purina products of any sort, Snuggies, Lindsey Lohan mugshots, Wii nunchucks, candied yams, Joker cards, seven swans a-swimming, any Dole canned fruit products, Happy Meal toys, chinchillas, cassette tapes, Purple Berri cups, comic books, copies of the Twilight saga, weight belts, Pillow Pets, kazoos, homing pigeons, Silly Bandz, spare change, toe rings, iPhone apps, Geiger counters, Zeus's lightning bolt, Smurf dolls, herbs & spices, gift certificates, Michael Jackson memorials, in-line skates, bowling gloves, Boy Band keychains, magazines, toilet paper, postage stamps, telephone directories, iPods, Beiber Fever t-shirts, pieces of the Berlin Wall, P90x DVDs, gymnastics pants, planes, imposter designer handbags, cereal straws, yoga mats, maps to the Jonas Brothers's house in Westlake, sealing wax, toupees, contestant applications for "Wipeout", caramel fraps from Starbucks, favorite blankies, llamas, earplugs, beloved childhood stuffed animals, YouTube videos of Miley Cyrus & Demi Lovato, enchiladas, widgets, secret decoder rings, Macadamia nuts or any other manner of paraphernalia..

If it's yours, keep it that way.

**Take it with you when you leave, or KISS IT
GOOD-BYE.**

GRADES

(The stuff that dreams are made of)

Of the work I give you this year, some will count for points and some will not; some I will collect and some I will not; some we will review and correct; some we will not.

ALL of it will have purpose.

You will have at least nine daily grades and four major grades per nine weeks. Your grade in this class consists of the percentage you earn of the points possible to earn in the work I assign:

Daily work = 50%
Major Tests/Projects = 50 %
Total = 100 %

YOU determine your success this year! Isn't that exciting? Don't you feel powerful?

NEVER EVER FORGET:

Your grades do **NOT** indicate your intelligence or worth. They indicate the amount of **EFFORT** you have put into your classwork.

(Which may only indicate something about your character...)

I've seen brilliant scholars do very poorly (even fail) for lack of effort, and not-quite-as-bright scholars work hard and do really, really well. If you want to do well, I will do most anything to

help you work hard, but in the end, it all comes down to what you are willing to do.

HOMEWORK

(After all, you shouldn't have to do all your work at school!)

"Completing homework is important for your success." You've heard that a hundred times by now, I'll bet. Still, it remains true. If you want to do well, or you just don't want to fail, you must do the work the class requires. If you don't read what I assign, we've got nothing to discuss. (How sad that would be - all of us staring at each other morosely.) I will make sure that everyone understands the assignment before class ends. It will then be your scholarly responsibility to complete it and bring it to class.

There **WILL** be a quiz for nearly every reading assignment. If you do not read, you will not do well.

Don't be afraid to ask questions or seek help, as you need it!

I am **ready and willing** to assist scholars who seek additional help with difficult concepts and assignments, and I expect that when they need my help, they will seek it **ACTIVELY**.

Remember homework is due at the beginning of class each day. Any homework turned in after the tardy bell rings will be considered **LATE** and will not be accepted.

PLEASE NOTE:

If you do not finish an assignment in class, and I ask you to take it home, it then becomes **homework** and is therefore due the following day at the **beginning** of class!

Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) **Classroom Policy**

B.Y.O.D. stands for bring your own device. Devices can be used for much more than gaming and text messaging. In our school district, we give permission to students to bring these devices to school. WiFi is now available to us in our classroom. Please read to find information about what is allowed/not allowed in our classroom.

Please Note - Students will never be required to bring your device to school, this is **optional**. If the following guidelines are difficult for students to follow (or for parents to agree to), students will still have access to technology via computer labs. Students who are unable to follow these expectations will be asked to bring the devices home.

Expectations:

1. Devices are to be used for academic purposes only. The teacher must approve game playing for academic purposes **before** playing.
2. Devices are to be 'OFF' when they are not being used. They are to be face down on the desk so the teacher can insure they are not being used at inappropriate times if brought into the classroom and/or put away during any type of quiz or test during the class.
3. Students are not permitted to share personal devices with other students at any time.
4. Any student owned device brought to school is the responsibility of the student. This includes both storage and care. The school district takes no responsibility to search for lost or stolen devices nor is there any financial responsibility for damaged, lost or stolen devices.
5. Students **must** use the school's Wi-Fi. Students may NOT use 3G or 4G at school. Students may not use their device to make phone calls, instant message or text, at any time during school hours.

If you agree to the expectations above, please sign on the line below. Students will be allowed to bring

their device once I have your signed consent.

List of Acceptable Devices:

1. Smart Phones (e.g. Iphone or Androids)
2. Tablets (e.g. iPads)
3. Laptops/Netbooks (e.g. Chromebooks)
4. eReaders (e.g. Kindles, Nooks)

Parent Signature: _____

Student Signature: _____

FOR THE RECORD...

Yes, I have read this Scholar's Survival Guide and I understand the policies within it. As a scholar, I agree to abide by these policies in Mrs. Sawyer's classroom for this school year. Next year, when I'm no longer in that class, I am no longer bound by these policies, unless I really like them, in which case I will exercise my American freedom, for which many brave citizens fought and died to earn and preserve, and carry on in that manner while promising not to write run-on sentences like this one.

Scholar's Signature

Date

ATTENTION: PARENTS OF 6th GRADE SCHOLARS!!!
PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN BY FRIDAY:

Yes, I have read this Scholar's Survival Guide, and I understand the policies within it. I will amply support, praise or admonish my scholar as necessary during the course of this school year.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Parent Email Address (es) (please print!)

If you have questions, contact me at Brittany.sawyer@gpisd.org or by phone at 972-522-7318. I look forward to a great year!