



Welcome to 7<sup>th</sup> Grade English Language Arts and to the Transformers Family!

**I am here to help you.** I am here to support you so you can succeed and discover your strengths and interests in this classroom and beyond. This means that I will ask you (and expect you) to be aware of and communicate with me about what you like and feel successful about, and also to be aware of and communicate with me when you are confused, struggling, or just plain bored. **You are the key to your own academic success**; I am here to help you build skills and create habits -- including curiosity and thoughtful questioning -- so that you can achieve that success.

**What will we be doing this year?** We will be doing all the things that it takes to make sure that you are ready to be a “step ahead” next year. That means mastering the **7<sup>th</sup> Grade ELA Standards** and becoming **independent learners** who know how to participate in a classroom community.

We will read at least two novels as a class this year, **The House on Mango Street** by Sandra Cisneros and **House of the Scorpion** by Nancy Farmer. If we have time, we'll read more. You are also expected to have an SSR book **AT ALL TIMES**, which you *read from start to finish*. No switching books every day! SSR will be part of one of your core class grades. We'll also read short stories, poetry, news articles, and many other types of texts.

We're also going to write four types of essays this year: a narrative story, argumentative essays, a Response to Literature, and a Research Paper. In addition, you'll get lots of chances to journal, free-write, and write poetry.

Finally, all of the ELA classes at Edna Brewer will include ***Blended Learning***, which means that you will spend part or all of English class learning **targeted skills** through a computer program. In addition to whole class instruction in all aspects of literacy, you will also participate in smaller group instruction (with Ms. Nolan AND on a computer) for more focused intervention. EVERY student will have access to a laptop in our classroom and our work will help build **21st century skills**, such as **computer literacy** and **digital citizenship**, while also building their reading and writing skills. Brewer is one of a few schools in OUSD **piloting** blended learning through a three year **grant** written by Brewer teachers.

**Who is my teacher?** My name is Ms. Nolan. I grew up in the Bay Area and went to Woodside High School. After high school, I went to Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts -- it's the oldest all women's college in the country. I moved to New York after college and worked as a writer and editor until I decided to move back to California. Everyone in my immediate family has worked in education at some point in their lives, and one of my earliest memories is of going to a football game at the high school where my father taught in the Special Education department. I live in the East Bay with my husband and our son.

**How am I expected to act in this class?** As a member of the Transformers family, there are specific procedures and policies that you will be required to follow. These procedures will cover everything that we do in class, including asking for help, working with partners or in groups, entering and leaving class, out-of-class passes, and consequences for misbehavior. These policies and procedures will be covered in depth in each of your core classes: English, Science, Math, and History.

In addition to those family procedures, you are expected to show PRIDE in all Edna Brewer spaces.

1. Be **P**ositive
2. Be **R**espectful
3. Be **I**ndependent
4. Be **D**etermined
5. Be **E**mpowering

I plan to give PRIDE tickets for excellent academic behavior, and we will have monthly raffles where you can redeem those tickets.

**What materials do I need for this class?** – For this class you should *always* have the following:

- **Your Binder (with dividers for each of your core classes)**
- **Plenty of pens (with ink) and/or pencils (with lead and erasers)**
- **Plenty of lined paper**
- **Your Panther Planner**

**When and how can I get in touch with Ms. Nolan?** Students and parents can feel free to email me anytime. I will be less likely to respond after 9:30 pm or before 7:30 am. My email address is [sarapnolan@gmail.com](mailto:sarapnolan@gmail.com). I will have office hours from 3 - 4PM every Thursday when students can feel free to drop in to discuss work or classroom issues.

**What will I be graded on?** Your grade will be based on points. You will be graded on your homework and class work, as well as on tests and quizzes, essays, and other projects. You will be able to track your grade using TeacherEase (**Parents:** Please be aware that your student should have a Progress Report with updated grades that they receive in their Advisory class **every Wednesday** that will let you know how they are doing in each class; you can also check TeacherEase at any time to check on their progress or communicate with me).

- **Homework:** You will have homework regularly, but not every night. Unless otherwise stated, you will be expected to turn the homework in the next day, and I will check it off on my grading sheet, or sometimes collect it. I will put in your grades for homework at the end of each week. Homework will usually be worth 2 points if fully complete. 1 point will be given for partial completion and 0 for missing. Overall, Homework will be 15% of your grade.
- **Classwork:** Just like homework, classwork will be graded on a scale of 2, 1, or 0 points, and overall, will be worth 25% of your grade.
- **Tests/Quizzes/Essays:** These will be worth the MOST in the class and overall, will make up 60% of your grade. Each marking period will have at least one quiz and one test and/or essay. Make sure you study hard for these and turn in all essays on time.

**Can I turn in late work?** If you have not completed, did not pick up, or would like to redo an assignment, ask Ms. Nolan where you can find the missing assignment (it will most likely be near the front of the classroom). It's *your responsibility* to pick it up and to turn it in by the due date Ms. Nolan gives you. *Ms. Nolan may require a phone call or email from your parent/guardian before accepting late work.*

*If you feel like you're having an issue with an assignment or with meeting a deadline, you can always come and talk to me. Don't wait until the day the assignment is due!*

**What should I do if I am absent?** First, I need to sign your pink slip for you to give to the Attendance Clerk. Then, on the day you return, ask Ms. Nolan what work you missed and where you can find it. Pick up the missing work and turn it in by Ms. Nolan's designated deadline.

**I look forward to having an amazing year with all of you!**

Sincerely,

Ms. Nolan

**Please sign and return the section below NO LATER THAN FRIDAY, August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013.**

I have read this letter and I understand the policies and procedures for Ms. Nolan's ELA class.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date