

# **Course/Grade Level: General English 8**aynor%20blue%20jacket

**Teacher: Christina Kotsopoulos**

**School Phone: 358-6000 Ext. 2812**

**Email: ckotsopoulos@horrycountyschools.net**

**Conference Times: 1:30-2:45 p.m.**

Dear Students and Families,

My name is Christina Kotsopoulos, and I will be your English teacher at Aynor Middle School this year. I anticipate a wonderful year of working with and learning from one another.

In order for my class to be effective and efficient, students must arrive each day with a positive, respectful attitude, prepared to learn and participate in class. Hard work and a sense of humor are mandatory in my classroom.

This will be my fourth year at Aynor Middle School, and I love working here! I moved to the Grand Strand in the early 90s, from Detroit, Michigan, and graduated from North Myrtle Beach High School. I earned my Bachelor of Arts in English and my Master of Arts in Teaching from Coastal Carolina University. I look forward to working with you and hope to inspire you to a lifelong love of learning.

In addition to working with my students, I also look forward to working with parents. I take seriously the privilege it is to educate the young people who are our future. I will use websites, a text messaging system, and other means of communication to keep you informed. You can use Power School to keep up with grades. I will be sending home Remind codes if you cannot attend Open House on Thursday, August 27, at 5:30 p.m.

Please contact me with any other questions you may have. My contact information is listed above, and e-mail is the best means for initial contact. In advance, let me thank you all for your support. I am looking forward to working with you this year. Below is the syllabus for this class. Please read and review this carefully, and do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Christina Kotsopoulos

1. **Course Description and Rationale:**

In preparation for high school and beyond, eighth grade students must have a firm grasp of skills to be a literate person in the twenty-first century. Students will read and respond to significant works of literature and examine how modern works of fiction draw on traditional themes and characters. Given informational text, students will read critically the arguments and claims, assessing whether the author’s evidence is reasoned yet addresses conflicting viewpoints. Students, working on their own and with others, will produce clear and coherent texts appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience. such as analytical responses or short research projects. Eighth grade students will build on the communication skills from earlier grades as they engage in collaborative discussions. They will probe and reflect on discussion topics and will be able to justify their own views in light of evidence presented by others. Students will also continue to acquire and accurately use general academic language and domain-specific vocabulary.

In eighth grade, students will read and analyze a range of literary texts which will be complex enough to merit close reading, deep analysis, and thoughtful discussion. By reading a wide range of literature from and about different cultures, time periods and possessing different themes, students will become familiar with a variety of literary structures allowing them to better understand analogies and allusions used in texts. Students in eighth grade will compare and contrast structures of different texts, probe the relationships between elements of a text (e.g., characters, setting, plot) and its central theme, and analyze how modern works draw from significant works of the past. They will learn to cite textual evidence that *most strongly* supports their own analysis of a text drawing from the instruction and practice in earlier grades in analyzing an author’s development of a theme or central idea.

Eighth grade students will evaluate the information, evidence, and reasons that authors provide to support central claims. They will also analyze how an author responds to conflicting evidence, the organizational structure of text, and the use of text features to convey key concepts. Students will assess the arguments and claims made in a text and evaluate the soundness of the author’s reasoning. They will also assess the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence provided in a text and be able to recognize any irrelevant evidence presented. Students will analyze two or more texts on the same topic but with conflicting information, and learn to identify whether the disagreements are matters of interpretation or fact.

In writing, students in eighth grade will demonstrate sophisticated writing skills to produce pieces that support a clear purpose, integrate textual evidence, and include a more cohesive organization of ideas from literary and informational texts. Their writing will incorporate the use of technology during development, collaboration, and production and students will demonstrate a command of the conventions of the English language. These writing standards identify three main types of writing applications—argument, informative/explanatory, and narrative—and set challenging expectations within students’ writing applications. For all types of writing, students will draw evidence from literary and informational texts to support their analyses, reflections, and research. Students will also write routinely in extended and short time frames for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Students in eighth grade will listen critically to speakers; analyze information from a variety of media; engage in collaborative discussions; and deliver arguments, narratives, and summary presentations. Students will analyze the purpose of information and evaluate the speaker’s motives while weighing the reasoning, relevance, and sufficiency of evidence. They will also participate in collaborative discussions on eighth-grade topics and texts with diverse partners and groupings (one-on-one, in groups, or teacher-led). In these discussions, students will build on others’ ideas and clearly express their own; drawing on research and reflecting on the ideas being discussed. Students will follow rules for collegial discussions and decision making by adhering to specific goals and deadlines. They will also use multimedia components and visual displays to clarify claims and emphasize key points in their presentations.

**II.** **Materials/Textbooks:**

SC College and Career Readiness State Standards in English Language Arts Curriculum for Grade 8

*Houghton Mifflin Harcourt* Textbook *NoRedInk*

Classroom libraries Word Mapping

MAP – Measures of Academic Progress Rubrics

HCS Consensus Map *Achieve3000*

*USA Test Prep* Technology

*LiteracyTA*

DBQs/LBQs

The following novel and full-length play have been chosen for whole-class instruction during the 2015-2016 school year:

*The Diary of Anne Frank*

*The Watson’s go to Birmingham—*Christopher Paul Curtis

\* *Any objection to a specific title should be made to the teacher so an alternative selection can be offered on an independent contract basis. Parents are encouraged to read and discuss assigned novels with students*

**III. Selection of Reading Materials**

The district provides access to a wide variety of reading materials and resources in promoting literacy for students. In selecting the materials and resources for classroom libraries and media centers, teachers and media specialist follow the general procedures that may be found on the district webpage at <http://www.horrycountyschools.net/files/_rRLbP_/906e4d377a7060e33745a49013852ec4/Selection_Policy_for_Library__Classroom_Libraries.pdf>and classroom library procedures that may be found at <http://www.horrycountyschools.net/files/_GPD6S_/d607d5236f6333913745a49013852ec4/Guidelines_for_Reviewing_Texts_Revised_5-15.pdf>

One of our schools’ primary goals is to develop lifelong learners, with literacy being a key component in this process. Reading a wide range of materials helps our students develop these literacy skills. While our school’s classrooms and media centers make every effort to provide only the highest quality reading materials, we understand that parents want to help their children make a wise choice as it pertains to what their child reads. Parents who may have questions about their child’s reading material may contact their school media specialist to request additional information regarding the title, including possible professional reviews of the title. The school media specialist will work collaboratively with parents to identify titles that will help develop a love of reading.

**IV. Assessments and Grading Scale:**

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| **Assessments** | **Grading Scale** |
| Performance-based tasks Projects  Interviews Journal entries  Diagnostic tests Formal presentations  Conferences Homework  Collaborative inquiry Observations  Class participation Quizzes  Oral and written explanations Comprehensive tests | 100-93 A  92-85 B  84-77 C  76-70 D  Below 70 F |

Each assignment or assessment will fit into one of the categories listed below, and each category will count as a percentage of your child’s final grade. The following is a breakdown of the weight for each category.

Major Assessments/Assignments: 50%

Mid-level Assessments/Assignments: 30%

Daily Assessments/Assignments: 20%

1. **Classroom Requirements:**
2. **Come to class regularly, on time, and prepared.**
3. **Listen to and respect all others in the room.**
4. **Follow all county rules, school rules, classroom rules, and teacher directions the first time given.**
5. **Cooperate to create an atmosphere that promotes learning and teaching.**

**VI. Homework Policy:**

Homework in my class is kept to a minimum to respect a student’s time and a family’s time outside of school hours. We work the whole time we are in class, but homework is still necessary at times. For that reason, when I do assign homework, I expect it to be completed by the deadline given. If deadlines cannot be met, please let me know. An extension can usually be arranged. No one will be issued a final grade of zero until all interventions and opportunities have been explored by teacher, parents, and student. However, this will require a commitment to communication throughout the year as necessary.

**VII.** **Make-up Policy:**

Consistent school attendance is critical for student achievement. If students are not present, they cannot benefit from classroom instruction. However, we understand that there are times when a student must be absent. Please see below for the AMS policy for making up work.

**Students are expected to make arrangements with teachers to make up all missed work within five school days after returning from an absence. Work not made up in this timeframe will result in a zero.** All assignments collected during an absence are to be submitted upon return. A student who misses an assigned test is expected to take the test the day he/she returns. For extenuating circumstances, contact the AMS administration.

***VII.* Communication throughRemind, Google Classroom, and Powerschool / PowerParent**

I use a program called *Remind* to send out reminders of tests, projects, or homework. This program allows me to send a message from my computer to your phone in the form of a text. Standard text message rates apply. This means if your phone normally receives text messages without charging you, this program will not charge you. Information for signing up for this program will be sent home with your child, and available during Open House.

Google Classroom will be replacing Edmodo this year as an online virtual classroom. Students will be able to access the majority of their assignments and resources from this site, at any time, and from any device that can access the internet.

Powerschool is the best way to keep up with student grades. My gradebook updates are available in real time through this site. There are links to these websites on the Horry County Schools homepage.

Please take advantage of these resources to keep up with your child’s progress in my class, and more importantly, encourage your child to do the same. One of my goals as a teacher is to promote the formation of a strong work ethic along with responsibility and accountability for work assigned. Development of these skills early in life is critical to future success. I am always available via e-mail for clarification and concerns.