

HOMEWORK SUPPORT

All students are working toward becoming independent, life-long, successful learners. Here are a few tips to begin practicing good habits right away.

Please support your child with their homework by: setting aside a consistent time period and an appropriate space in your home for work to be done, provide basic supplies, and a quiet environment. Discuss your expectations around these items with your child as well.

I expect students to see me if ever they have a concern or a question about homework and/or grades. Learning to communicate with teachers is an important skill to possess. Students and families should also visit **SYNERGY**, our online grading program, weekly to keep track of scores, grades, and teacher comments, as well as, my website.

Mastering organization, time management, use of a planner, and goal setting are vital parts of a student's journey toward becoming responsible and accountable for their own learning.



Ms. Wasson's contact information

If you have questions, contact me at:
School Phone: 503-916-5356
Email: swasson@pps.net
Home Phone: 503-309-5209

da Vinci's Web address is:
<http://www.pps.k12.or.us/schools/davinci>

MY CLASSROOM WEB ADDRESS IS:
<http://swasson.weebly.com>

Check grades at:
<https://parent-portland.cascadetech.org/portland>
Login short cut on front page of my website
for **ParentVUE & StudentVUE** Access.

**da Vinci Arts
Middle School**

**Ms. Wasson's
Homework Philosophy,
Criteria and
Grading Scale for
2016-2017**

**Language Arts
(Writing/Literature)
Classes**

Creative minds for
challenging times.



Welcome to Ms. Wasson's 7th/8th Language Arts Class

Questions about homework and grades are often asked at the beginning of (and throughout) the school year.

In order to inform my students and their families about the homework you can expect during the year, I have prepared this brochure. Please keep it handy throughout the school year. **On the back** you will find all of my contact information including, my home phone number. I have also provided my rationale for homework, homework guidelines, policies on extra credit, test-taking, and my proficiency-based grading system.

I have two main platforms of communication with students and families: My website and Synergy, that's it. If you're not receiving my emails, check your trash folder. I expect students to check my website and Synergy weekly. Please make sure you are familiar with the site. The information supplied on these two platforms are vital to bridging the gap between home and school. It is also useful for helping your child stay organized and accountable with school work. I am very serious about helping students and families



It is the responsibility of the student to check my website & Synergy weekly.

understand that learning, questioning, evaluating, and the grades that are associated with the work a student fulfills **IS THE STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY.** Learning the skills of self-advocacy, challenge, grit, and communication are paramount to a child's future successes. You'll hear this a lot this year.

Rationale for Homework

Portland Public Schools recommends an average of 1 & 1/2 to 2 hours of homework each night for middle school students. Reasons for this include: reinforcement of skills and concepts from the classroom, instilling study habits, and preparing students for high school when homework expectations typically increase. By building these skills, students will be better prepared to meet the new Common Core Standards & beyond.



1 1/2-2 hours of homework nightly is recommended for middle schoolers.

In my class, students are given assignments that extend classroom learning, allow for advanced effort, and develop habits of reading and writing as skills for life-long learning. Per quarter, students can expect to complete at least 2-3 major essays, several smaller writing

assignments, vocabulary work, LOTS of reading, and to be reading 30 minutes nightly (or an average of 3 hours weekly).

Work Completion Expectations

All work is expected to be turned in **on time**. I know in real world situations occur, things happen. I get it. However, in order to receive credit for a late assignment, students **must** fill out a MISSING WORK LOG and have a written note from home explaining why an assignment is late. **Unexcused late assignments will be docked 10% per day—approximately one full grade per day.** Students will work with me DAILY (lunch or after school) until the work is completed. If work is not complete after a week, it will receive a 50%. If problems persist, a discussion will take place with student and family. This gets particularly tricky at the end of grading periods. **NO late work will be taken two weeks prior to the end of a quarter.**

Extra Credit

I DO NOT GIVE IT, so please don't ask.

Focus should be on the current curriculum or theme.

EXTRA CREDIT CONT. Students should apply their energy toward staying up-to-date rather than expecting to make up points doing extra-credit and/or making up late work. See *Proficiency-based grading information in the insert of this brochure for more details.*

Taking Classroom Tests

In order to prepare **eighth graders** for high school, classroom tests will be taken **without** open notes, unless otherwise stated.

Seventh graders will have access to their notes during most tests or they may select to take the *eighth grade challenge*.

Test retakes are given **ONLY** if a student's score is lower than PROFICIENCY. Retakes must be taken within three days of the original test, unless it is absence-related, or otherwise stipulated.

Grading

da Vinci uses an online grading program called *Synergy*. Students & families can access it with the student's ID # & a password. Speak with our assistant principal regarding access questions. **I am moving from the traditional A-F scoring to that of a proficiency-based system. Please see the INSERT of this brochure for details.** Students check grades weekly. If there are questions, HAVE STUDENT CONTACT ME.

WHAT HAPPENS IF STUDENT MISSES YOUR CLASS?

If ill, get well & upon your return, check your class folder for Logkeeper notes & any handouts. You have the number of days you were ill to make up work. If out due to appointment or pullout, check my website, chat with a reliable friend, or with me during lunch or after school by appointment. **If due to a vacation, SEE HANDOUT titled:**

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS WHEN AWAY FROM SCHOOL

Rationale for Proficiency-Based Grades

Fortunately, my colleagues in Math and Science have lead the way in this adventure, so many of you are already familiar with the idea and in value of this change in grading. Grades are meant as communication. They are designed to inform us about what a student does or does not understand. In a traditional system, students accumulate points based on numbers of assignments turned in and the score assigned to those assignments. In a traditional system, my gradebook might look like this:

All three students will end up with identical final grades; but their learning or understanding of assignments and skills may be vastly different. Student A has a basic proficiency in all assignments. Student B has some areas where they are highly proficient, and others where they are still developing their understanding. Student C had a rough start, but over the quarter has moved to highly proficient in the assessed skills.

	Student A	Student B	Student C
Assignment 1	75/100	40	0
Assignment 2	75/100	100	75
Assignment 3	75/100	60	100
Assignment 4	75/100	75	100
Assignment 5	75/100	100	100
Final Points	375/500	375/500	375/500
Final Grade	C	C	C

For years, I've struggled with sending home communication that I didn't feel best reflected the knowledge and understanding a student had of standards I taught. I want to be able to communicate more accurately the content your student understands, and make them greater partners in their learning. When students understand areas of strengths and weaknesses, they are able to focus their attention on areas where they need the greatest development. Students feel very comfortable with accumulating points, and understand that lots of points mean higher grades. Unfortunately, they have also been lead to believe that higher grades always means better understanding. But, as anyone who has ever crammed for a test, aced it, and then promptly forgotten everything they know can attest, this is not always the case. I want to communicate with our students the level of deep understanding they have surrounding a given standard—an understanding that doesn't disappear the moment the test or assignment is complete. In Synergy, students (& parents) will be able to see each of the standards on which we're focusing per quarter. They will also be able to see which assignments were used as evidence of proficiency for each standard. The "grades" that will be present are:

Using a preponderance of evidence where newer assignments hold more weight than older assignments, a "final grade" of one of those four levels will be given. Students will have a number of opportunities to prove proficiency, and re-doing assignments to show greater understanding will be expected. This is where I admit that this is still a new process for me. Things never go perfectly the first time. But I believe in the value that this clear feedback provides as a method to increase student engagement and learning that I'm willing to risk it. Your gentle feedback is welcome, and I will do my best to ensure that your child understands what is being expected of them.

DP	Developing Proficiency
CP	Close to Proficiency
PR	Proficient
HP	Highly Proficient

HOW DO I IMPROVE MY GRADES?

- First, make sure you're checking Synergy for missing work & my website so you can catch slippages as soon as possible.
- **Make sure you're clear on what it means to show PROFICIENCY on work we've done.**
- Assess how you're doing with organization, work completion, good faith effort, management of your time, & be prepared to discuss these with me.
- **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO END OF THE QUARTER TO ASK ABOUT IMPROVEMENT.**
- Be realistic & prepared to hear what I suggest for improvement, even re-doing work that does not yet show proficiency.

In an effort to create a more universal understanding of what it means to show proficiency, I often use the vocabulary below in my Synergy & report card comments. Please refer to these for skill & effort grades.

HIGHLY PROFICIENT (HP)

Inspired, Convincing, Insightful, Complex, Subtle, Precise, Thoughtful, Specific, Conclusive, Distinctive, Exemplary - (*highly proficient*)

PROFICIENT (PR)

Competent, Appropriate, Effective, Complete, Reasonable

CLOSE (CP)

Limited, Incomplete, Unsupported, Simplistic, Inconsistent (*close to proficiency*)

DEVELOPING (DP)

Confused, Unaware, Inaccurate, Flawed, Superficial, Unfounded, Misunderstood, Disconnected, No Evidence (*developing proficiency*)

✂ CUT HERE

Beginning of the Year Parental Acknowledgement

Parents, please review the packet of information and homework brochure with your child. Sign and return to Ms. Wasson by Friday, September 9.

Thank you, in advance, for your time.

Please don't forget to:

- Read entire *Homework Philosophy & Criteria* brochure
- Complete & return the *Parent Survey TO MS. WASSON* by **Sept. 9**
- Sign and detach the *parent acknowledgement* by **Sept. 9**
- *Student Survey* due **Sept. 2**
- Contribute any supplies
- Read curriculum outlines
- Visit my website & Synergy
- Check out books we'll be reading

Parent signature

Print student's name

- If you have questions, contact me at:
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- Email: swasson@pps.net
- Home Phone: 503-309-5209
- Website: swasson.weebly.com