Parent Letter

Honors English I-- Mr. McAuley

Dear Parental Units,

Welcome to Gulf Breeze High School and 9th grade honors English. My name is Earle McAuley, and I am going to be your student’s English teacher this year. I am also a parent: I have four children ranging in age from 6th grade to 3rd year college-- I know exactly where you are right now.

For some of you, this is your first high schooler--for others this may be the third or beyond. In either case, we can make this a great year. One of the first things I will tell the students is that this year counts. It is much, much easier to maintain high grades than it is to pull up low ones. Another thing I will tell them is that, for the most part, high school will involve lots of hard work. What I am going to recommend to you is that you pay attention to what is going on-- especially in the beginning. Watch the grade book; watch their social habits; ask questions. This is the year that we begin to truly find our identity and establish ourselves as to whom we shall become.

Communication is paramount to success— please encourage your child to talk to you. Also do not be afraid to ask me anything you wish. I will do my best to help you. In terms of communication, I use *remind* a lot. You are welcome to sign up for it and be included—the remind posts will also be on my school website. To sign up, simply text the message @2e48d6 to the number 81010. If you want to “speak” with me directly, email is probably the best way to ask me specific questions. Please do not hesitate. mcauleye@santarosa.k12.fl.us

The next most important aspect of success is an easy one. Be here. Very, very few students with perfect or near perfect attendance struggle. Being present, on time and prepared are instrumental life skills.

In terms of the class itself, this is a challenging course. As an honors course we will be incorporating novels into our curriculum, at least one per nine weeks session, and 98.4% of them will be read outside of class: 100% of them will thematically relate to our units. We will also be doing a lot of speaking, writing and grammar.

It will not necessarily be easy, but as Theodore Roosevelt states, “Nothing in the world is worth having or worth doing unless it means effort, pain, difficulty… I have never in my life envied a human being who led an easy life. I have envied a great many people who led difficult lives and led them well.”

The rest of this letter is some of my philosophy and some of what I tell the students.

Martin Luther King, Jr. tells us, “If you can’t fly then run, if you can’t run then walk, if you can’t walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward.” Never say, “I can’t”.

You may not want to do something, but discipline yourself. Listen to others. Do your work. Pay attention. Get help when needed. Communicate—it is amazing how far that will take you. These are the habits of success. On that note, I am here pretty early each morning and will be glad to meet you or your child for tutoring if you (he/she) need some extra help/explanation. Never be afraid to question.

The late Stephen Covey (author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*) teaches us, me and you, to “seek first to understand and then to be understood.” I will always treat your son or daughter with respect and dignity; I expect the same in return for both me and the others in their sphere.

In that regard, all tests, quizzes, essays, and projects will be posted well in advance. I typically give out the reading schedule for an entire novel in advance so that if a student misses a day or two, he or she knows where we are.

To conclude, Vince Lombardi tells us, “The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of will.”

I believe that one of the great issues impeding education is a lack of rigor. Life takes work. Hard Work. Highly Successful People (HSP) are not sitting around doing nothing 50% of the day. They are organized, and they formulate a plan and then they **follow** the plan. HSP do not offer excuses for poor performance; they do not blame others. HSP are the ones you want on your team—be it sports, club, school, or business.

If I do not challenge you each day, I have let you down. We will read, write, discuss, argue, and learn from each other. If your primary goal is to do as little as possible and hope for the best, please be prepared to defend how that will help you meet your goals. I apologize in advance if a book is “not interesting” to you. This is not an excuse not to read it.

There will be times this year when you feel overwhelmed. There will be times when I feel overwhelmed as well. However, that does not mean I can shut down. You may be taking three or four honors courses and AP History. That is awesome. Colleges want you to take the most rigorous schedule available. But, you cannot shut down either.

As we begin this school year, spend a few minutes reflecting on what you wish to accomplish both short and long term, how important those goals are to you and what you are willing to do to achieve them. Now, go do it.

Here’s to a great year.

Mr. McAuley

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Remind (optional for parents, required for students): text @2e48d6 to 81010