

The School of Arts and Enterprise  
**9<sup>th</sup> GRADE HOUSE CLASS SYLLABUS**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

*9<sup>th</sup> Grade House* is a year-long college preparation course which meets a wide range of academic and developmental needs for 9<sup>th</sup> grade students. *House* provides a fundamental structure for students to develop key life skills, metacognitive skills, and learning habits that support academic achievement, college and career planning, personal growth, and the development of interpersonal skills. House class teaches skills like analyzing academic data, setting and reflecting upon academic and personal goals, time management, organizing academic materials, developing effective and efficient study skills, building effective communication skills, working collaboratively, and problem-solving. Assessment for this course will be based upon The School of Arts and Enterprises 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Goals, Common Core State Standards in English Language Development, and Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts.

**REQUIRED MATERIALS**

See the 9<sup>th</sup> grade materials list

**Mastery Learning and Standards-based Grading**

Mastery Learning is an instructional approach that is designed to help all students improve their learning. Some key aspects of mastery learning include:

- Learning objectives will be transparent from the first day of a unit and on each assignment.
- Students will have opportunities to track and reflect on their progress on the standards.
- Formative assessments (e.g., classwork, homework) are no longer included in academic grades because these assessments are opportunities for students to practice the standards.
- Summative assessments are the primary factor in academic grades.
- Multiple summative assessments that address various learning styles should be used.
- Behavior, attendance, participation, effort, and work habits are no longer included in academic grades.

**Standards-based Grading**

The SAE has adopted the Mastery Learning model of standards-based grading. This means that students are evaluated based on specific standards (things students need to know and be able to do), rather than on a point system. Students will no longer be given “points” towards their final grade for completing work or simply participating. A student must demonstrate their knowledge and abilities on a variety of different assessments (quizzes, oral, quizzes, discussions, tests, essays, reports, speeches, projects, presentations, portfolios) and all of the standards the students demonstrated in each assessment are evaluated separately on a 4-point rubric (**4 or 3.5=Advanced, 3=Proficient, 2.5=Approaching Proficient, 2=Basic, 1.5 or 1=Below Basic**). This allows students to easily see which concepts they understand and can put to use (Mastery of a standard) and on which concepts they need more practice and instruction. For the purpose of Mastery Learning, it is important to recognize the difference between “summative” and “formative” assessments.

**Formative Assessments** are given during the instructional process and are usually less formal in nature: quizzes, oral quizzes, discussion responses, exit tickets, demonstrations. These tell a teacher how students are progressing toward the learning goals and help students understand and track their progress as well.

**Summative Assessments** are longer and more formal in nature: tests, presentations, essays, performances. These are given at the end of the unit and course to determine what a students knows and is able to do after the main instruction has concluded.

**Common Misconceptions about Mastery Learning**

Key aspects of mastery learning can sometimes be simplified to the point of not being correct. It is important to clearly explain the concept of mastery learning to students, and to reinforce the aspects of mastery learning consistently throughout the school year. Some examples of common misconceptions about mastery learning include:

**“Only tests count toward my grade.”** – teachers will use multiple summative assessments (e.g., traditional tests, essays, reports, performance assessments, projects, oral examinations) to measure student proficiency.

**“I don’t need to do classwork or homework anymore because they don’t count toward my grade.”** – teachers are still expected to assign and provide feedback (e.g., scores) on all formative assessments (e.g., classwork, homework) to provide students with

feedback on their progress toward proficiency in the standards. These formative scores will be entered in the grade-book but will no longer count toward the final course mark once the summative assessment is given. Classwork and homework assignments should still be entered in grade books (but not count toward final grades) so parents and students can track their progress. Students who do not practice the standards (i.e., complete their formative assessments) will be much less likely to perform well on summative assessments.

**“I can turn in work late/I have as many chances as I want to re-try completing summative assessments.”** – summative assessments are the primary measure of student proficiency levels. Students who do not turn in summative assessments will be assigned ‘incomplete’ for that assignment. ‘Incomplete’ assignments are equivalent to zeros and will be changed to ‘not proficient’ (failing) grades (with values of zero) at the end of a semester. Students who complete summative assessments but earn ‘not proficient’ grades should have at least one additional opportunity (after re-teaching) to demonstrate their proficiency in the standard. Teachers may set an appropriate time period (e.g., two weeks) for students to have additional opportunities to re-take summative assessments.

**“I don’t test well, so I won’t perform well under this system.”** – students who have earned good grades in a traditional grading system have been rewarded for completing work rather than by demonstrating proficiency in the standards. Mastery learning focuses students on learning and demonstrating their proficiency in the standards. Students generally do not test well because they have been focused on completing work quickly rather than taking the time to learn the material.

#### Final Course Mark Grade Scale for Mastery Learning

Final grades are determined by the percent of standards that are mastered, not by the average grade of assignments completed. Because each assignment is evaluated using 4 points (possibly with .5 increments) the percentage scale for the final course mark then changes to more closely match that students must be proficient in at least some standards in order to be prepared to move to the next level of the course or to be college-ready (in other words, to receive a C). This is why the percentage value for a C or better begins at 55%. In order for a student to get an average of 55% or better across all the standards in the course, they must receive a 2.5 or 3 (Approaching Proficient or Proficient) on some of the standards. A student who is scoring only 2 out of 4 on all standards rubrics in the course is only at a Basic level, which means that they have not yet mastered enough of the skills or knowledge to move on to the next level of course work and/or be successful in college.

#### **Final Course Mark Percentage Bands**

4-Advanced	A	85-100%
3-Proficient	B	70-84%
2-Basic	C	55-69%
1-Below Basic	No Credit (Fail)	0-54%

The SAE does allow a D to be used as a final course mark because we are a college preparatory school and a D is not an acceptable grade for college preparatory course work.

#### A Note on Quarterly Progress Reporting for Mastery Learning

Please note that in the Mastery Learning model, a student’s grade shows the level of Mastery they have achieved on specific standards in that content area. It is NOT necessarily an indication of how hard a student is working or how well they behave in class. If a student is failing (below 55%) for the overall course at the quarter, please refer to the individual progress report or grade book entries from that teacher in the online portal to see which standards the student needs more practice or help with during tutoring. (If you have trouble accessing the online portal, please call The SAE main office for assistance.) Because the course is only half over at the quarter progress report, it is entirely appropriate that the student may not yet have a passing grade. Mastering knowledge and skills happens over time with many opportunities for application and practice. Students will have multiple opportunities to retake assessments and therefore show their mastery of skills and knowledge as the semester continues.

We know that this change is a major shift in traditional grading practices. However, this change was made because of research-based studies that show how this model hugely improves student success in high-school and preparation for college.

#### **Some important tips for parents:**

- Ask students every day about what standards were covered in their classes.
- Ask students when their next summative (end of unit) assessments will be.
- The online PowerSchool grade book will show many assignments “not counting toward students’ final grades” because those are formative assessments.
- Ask students to tell you their proficiency level on the standards for their classes.
- Ask students to review at home the standards that they are the weakest in.
- Ask students to show you evidence that they are proficient at a standard.

**Classroom Expectations:**

1. All work will be turned in on time. Late work can be made up in after school or before school tutoring. Students must start and finish the assignment in class to receive credit.
2. *Attendance:* Students are expected to be in class daily. If you are unable to attend, it is your responsibility to get the class work and homework missed. You have one day for every day you are out to make up your work – no exceptions.
3. *Tardiness: Tardy/Unexcused Absence*  
For every three times a student is tardy to class and/or absent without excuse, s/he will be required to serve one hour of detention. Students are expected to be in their seats with all materials needed and ready when the bell rings.
4. *Participation:* Students are encouraged to ask questions before, during and after class as well as participate in class discussions. No question is considered trivial. During collaborative learning activities, students are expected to contribute to the cooperative learning. Everyone must actively participate to earn credit.
5. All students' work will have the student's name, period, date of the assignment and class number on the upper right side.
6. Everyone will bring his or her class supplies to EVERY class EVERY day.

**Policies:**

1. *Assessment Makeup Policy:* Makeup assessments can only be made up within two weeks of the original assessment date or due date. They must be made up during after school tutoring sessions.
2. *Retaking Assessments:* Students will be given the opportunity to retake only summative assessments (two per semester, per course).
3. *Extension Activity Policy:* If individual work is completed early, students are expected to complete an extension activity or read an SSR book. Students are expected to have an SSR book with them each day.
4. *Late Work Policy:* Late work will only be accepted only two weeks after the original due date. Not all assignments will be accepted late. The number of late assignments is limited to two major summative assignments (such as an essay) per semester, per course.

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**Parent/Student Syllabus Confirmation**

*Parents please read the syllabus for 9<sup>th</sup> Grade House Class, sign and date, and then have your student return immediately.*

I have reviewed the course introduction, grading information, supplies needed, and classroom rules with my student. I, and my student, understand and agree to obtain the necessary supplies and abide by the classroom policies and procedures as outlined in the syllabus.

Student Name (print): \_\_\_\_\_ Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Name (print): \_\_\_\_\_ Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent Contact Phone Number: ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Parent E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_