

Dear 8th Graders,

I hope you are all having a wonderful summer, full of fun at the river, the beach, the mountains and the lake. I am so excited to begin your final year at NCSA with you. First, I will introduce myself - my name is Ron Charles, I have been a middle school teacher for about 11 years, and I love new adventures. My hope is that this year will be just that for all of us - an exciting adventure. As I am new to your school, I will be leaning on you to understand your school culture and how to make learning fun and exciting for you. With this being the last year of your time at NCSA, you will soon be moving on to the great unknowns of high school. During this year, I want to make sure that you gather all of the skills needed to thrive and be successful in this important next step of your life journey, but that you also have ample opportunity to create the memories that will be with you for the rest of your life.

One of my great loves is exploring. Throughout my life I have done quite a bit of traveling through the world. I am actually writing this letter to you from a small village on the coast of southern Thailand. I am here backpacking with my wife and son, experiencing this unique and amazing culture. I just saw a monitor lizard swim up to the beach, riding in on a wave to wander down the shore, and a group of crab eating macaques (a type of monkey) swinging from tree to tree, looking for any morsel of food they can scavenge. Along with the wildlife, the clear water and beautiful beaches, there are amazing temples, incredibly kind and friendly people, and of course the wonderful Thai food. During this year, I hope to share more stories of my travels and experiences, but also create our own stories through the experiences that we share together, in this very special culminating year.

I am greatly looking forward to meeting all of you and getting to know each of you individually. I am committed to challenge you, to inspire you, and support you in all that we do this year. As I will be teaching English and Social Studies, we will have some amazing opportunities for creativity. In learning the history of our country and using the words of our English language we will craft, explore, analyze, and create. We will begin this year by delving into the art of the short story. In studying short stories, we will examine a variety of genres and authors from a variety of cultures and traditions. We will investigate different literary techniques used by authors and learn to analyze these stories with a critical eye. We will also be spending a significant amount of time with creative writing in two very different forms - persuasive writing and poetry. Persuasive writing allows you to use your words to share an opinion or to persuade your reader through your use of words. This incredibly important skill will be a center point for much of what we will do throughout the year, honing our composition and essay writing skills into excellence, while also bringing these skills to the realm of public speaking and debate. We will also spend time with the art of poetry, exploring numerous styles and structures, from ancient to modern, from a highly structured Shakespearean sonnet, to the free verse of Walt Whitman to the rhymes and rhythm of modern hip hop. As I am a songwriter and a musician, poetry is something that I truly love and appreciate, and I look forward to creating together. Throughout the year we will also be exploring the history of this diverse country in which we live. From the American Revolution and the study of our U.S. Constitution to modern current events and what is happening in our country today, we will delve deep into the history of the USA.

Of course all of this learning will be taking place through the creative lens of art and exploration, projects and discussions, having fun and inspiring one another to observe and appreciate the wonder that is all around us.

Mr. Charles