**Contact Information:**

Ms. Reilly Belton

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EMS Room #: 210 EMS phone: (540) 298-1228

**Course Description:** This is a class that stimulates creative and critical thinking skills and the development of basic problem solving skills, while providing a warm, supportive environment that promotes responsibility for oneself and others. This elective emphasizes complex, problem-based, technology driven, student-centered curricula using strategies designed especially to raise levels of thinking and learning. Inquiry and investigation are used as students address both hypothetical and relevant, real-world problems.

**Areas of Study:** The Challenges of the Mind elective is designed to meet the unique academic and social/emotional needs of adolescent gifted students. Students will complete quarterly book review projects. Although the topics are subject to change, the following units are planned for the 2015-2016 school year: Cartography and Compasses, Money Matters, Aviation, Greek Culture and Mythology, Hybrid Vehicles, Dream Home, and Biographies and Autobiographies.

**Materials:** Students will need writing utensils for classroom use.

**Assessment:**

10% Monthly Tic-Tac-Toe Assignments

10% Writing Journal Entries

20% Quizzes / Small Projects

10% Classwork / Homework

15% Quarterly Book Projects

35% Tests / Projects

**Policies and Expectations:**

Grades: Letter grades will be administered as follows:

A (90-100) Outstanding Work

B (80-89) Above Average Work

C (70-79) Average Work

D (60-69) Below Average Work

F (59 and below) Poor Achievement/Failing

Grades can be found in PowerSchool and will be current and entered on a weekly basis when there are graded assignments.

Make Up Work: After an absence, the student is responsible for making up all work missed. The student will be given one day for every excused day absent to complete missed assignments. **Therefore, students are to collect all missed work the day he/she returns to school.** He/she must make arrangements with each teacher to make up tests. (EMS Student Handbook, 2015-2016)

School Planner: Every EMS student has a school planner. This planner will be used daily in this class and time will be given at the end of the class for students to put in assignments, late work, upcoming events, and may be used for communication. *Please check your child’s planner for assignments and pertinent class information*.

Late Work: *Eighth Grade* – Late homework assignments will not be accepted in the 8th grade. Please make sure your assignments are in by the due date. Late projects will lose 10% every day it is late. One day for every excused absence is given for missed assignments. (EMS Student Handbook, 2015-2016)

Cell Phones: RCPS school board has implemented a policy allowing middle school students to have their phone with them, **but** turned **off.** Cell phones are not to be used for social reasons in the middle school. The first offense will lead to a warning, the second offense will result in the cell phone being taken to the office and 1 day of ABIP, future incidents will lead to out of school suspension and loss of cell phone being brought to school. (EMS Student Handbook, 2015-2016)

Classroom Behavior: Elkton Middle School believes that “Character Counts!” There are six “Pillars of Character”: **Trustworthiness, Respect, Fairness, Caring,** and **Citizenship**. These pillars help us interact with others, be confident, and contribute to our community. I expect these behaviors of myself and I expect them of my students as well.

Prime Time: New this year is a daily 47-minute class period (graded) that will focus on reading, remediation and relationship.

**Standards:**

1. Challenge Standards:
   1. The student will use critical thinking, creativity, and logic to solve problems.
   2. The student will understand and value their personal strengths and weaknesses.
   3. The student will solve problems and communicate information in a variety of creative methods.
   4. The student will present information in a variety of professional and creative methods.
   5. The student will demonstrate group, teamwork, and leadership skills such as responsibility and delegation, time management, cooperation, initiative, feedback, and encouragement to accomplish tasks.

**Remind:** Sign up for text messaging notifications for class assignments and due dates. Send a text message to 81010 with the message @rbelto to register.

**About Ms. Belton:** I graduated from James Madison University. I completed my Bachelor of Science in Biology and my Master of Arts in Teaching there and I now proudly wear the title of “Double Duke.” I also hold teaching endorsements in Algebra 1 and Gifted Education. Both my parents were in the Air Force so I moved around some during my childhood (Pennsylvania, Montana, and South Dakota) but I spent nine years in Idaho before my family moved out here to Virginia where I finished high school. In my years at JMU I came to love The Valley and I am very happy to be staying and be a part of the Elkton Middle School and East Rockingham High School teams!