**Steps to Writing an Excellent Essay or Extended Response**

* **Read the prompt carefully, making sure you understand what they are asking. Pay attention to the verbs in the prompt (describe, explain, etc.)**
* **Make a paragraph plan, or outline. Do not spend a lot of time on this. Jot down key words or ideas that you want to include in each paragraph. You should have in introduction, several body paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph.**
* **Write an introduction that includes the title and author of each passage in the prompt. Use what you have learned about good leads or hooks to write your introduction.**
* **Each part of the question, or each bullet should have its own separate body paragraph. Follow the RACES format for each body paragraph. (Restate, Answer, Cite the text, Explain or Elaborate, Sum it up.**
* **If there are two passages included in your response, be sure you note from which passage your are citing the text evidence.**
* **Include a variety of appropriate transition words or phrases throughout the essay. (If you want to, highlight some of them so the reader of your paper is sure to notice them!)**
* **Write a concluding paragraph that demonstrates critical thinking. This is the paragraph where you can include your personal opinion, a personal connection, or a conclusion you were able to reach based on your reading of the text**
* **Don't forget to clearly indent each paragraph.**
* **Check carefully for spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Words in the text, as well as grade level words are expected to be spelled correctly!**
* **Do NOT begin with anything like the following:** 
  + **I am going to tell you about...**
  + **My essay will be about...**
* **Do NOT end with anything like the following:** 
  + **I hope you liked my essay.**
  + **This is the end of my essay.**