September 2016

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I would like to welcome you to 2016-2017 MYP 8th grade science course. At this time I would like to give a brief background about myself. I have been teaching since 2013 and this will be my third year with the district. Before teaching in the Pittsburgh Public Schools, I taught two years in a remote arctic village in Alaska. In Point Lay, Alaska, I gained a unique perspective on the importance of teaching life science and seeing how science affects our daily lives. I worked closely with local and federal agencies monitoring the Arctic’s changing environment. I received my Bachelors and Masters from the University of Alaska Southeast.

This course will be covering a variety of topics in many aspects of science, I welcome you to create a partnership with me for your child’s education. Having your child fully engaged, participating in class, completing classwork, and being prepared to ask questions will help ensure their success in my class. This course will help your child prepare for the Science Pennsylvania System of State Assessment (PSSA), high school science and beyond.

If you have any questions or concerns throughout this year, please feel free to contact me at jvanderloos1@pghboe.net or via phone at 412 - 529 – 8906.

Thank you,

James Vanderloos

Approved: _______ ____________________________, Principal
Course Description
This 8th grade science course lays the foundation for engagement in the scientific process while being aligned with the Common Core State Standards for Literacy in Science and the Next Generation Science Standards. Middle level grades have a brand new curriculum this year through Carolina Scientific, who has partnered with the Smithsonian Science Education Center. This course provides an inquiry-centered curriculum that will use material and labs aligned to the expectations for student understanding evaluated on the PSSA. The Carolina curriculum uses a four step process of first having the students focus on what the students already know, exploring the scientific phenomenon in front of them, reflecting on what they observed, and finally applying their knowledge to a real life task. In addition to aligning the course with the PSSA and state standards, I will be incorporating the IBMYP’s 5 Areas of Interaction (Approaches to Learning, Community and Service, Human Ingenuity, Environments, and Health and Social Education) to prepare your child for the global community. Formative assessments will be used throughout each lesson and a summative task will be given at the end of each unit.

The science themes that will be taught for student understanding during this course will include:

**Theme 1:**
Electricity & magnetism: Energy formation, conservation and transformation; energy waves; Human energy use

**Theme 2:**
The process of evolution drives the diversity and unity of life.

**Theme 3:**
The universe and the stars

IBMYP Science Assessment Criteria
The work students do during the upcoming school year will address IBMYP-specified objectives. The assessment criteria are briefly outlined below:

**A. Knowing and understanding**
Students develop scientific knowledge (facts, ideas, concepts, processes, laws, principles, models and theories) and apply it to solve problems and express scientifically supported judgments.

**B. Inquiring and designing**
Intellectual and practical skills are developed through designing, analyzing and performing scientific investigations. Although the scientific method involves a wide variety of approaches, the MYP emphasizes experimental work and scientific inquiry.

**C. Processing and evaluating**
Students collect, process and interpret qualitative and/or quantitative data, and explain conclusions that have been appropriately reached. MYP sciences helps students to develop analytical thinking skills, which they can use to evaluate the method and discuss possible improvements or extensions.

**D. Reflecting on the impacts of science**
Students gain global understanding of science by evaluating the implications of scientific developments and their applications to a specific problem or issue. A variety of communication modes will be applied in order to demonstrate understanding. Students are expected to become aware of the importance of documenting the work of others when communicating in science.
Grading Criteria
Grades are based off of weighted scale. Each assignment/assessment will be based off the district’s grading value system.

Type of assignments and weight:
Tests/quizzes 25%
Labs/Projects/ class work 25%
Homework 10%
Writing 20%
Participation 20%

There is a breakdown of each grading category,

Category 1: Assessments
Quizzes, Curriculum-Based Assessments, Chapter and Unit tests, Semester Exams

Category 2: Classwork
Projects, Presentations, Group summaries, Class discussions, Science investigations

Category 3: Homework
Section/Chapter questions, Writing summaries, Science notebook

Category 4: Writing
Lab reports, Science notebook, Summaries, chapter, section, or articles.

Category 5: Participation
Warm-ups, Group or class discussion, Lab participation

Grading scale
Grade Scale percent as per school board guidelines
A= 90-100%
B = 80-89%
C = 70-79%
D = 60-69%
Below 60 % is failing for the course

Class Rules and Expectations
1. Be on time and come to class prepared. This includes bringing all required homework and material needed for the class. I will let you know what material you need a head of time. A student will be considered tardy if he or she is not in a seat with their required material out at the sound of the bell.
2. No food or drink in the classroom.
3. No cell phones or other electronic devices in the classroom. No charging of electronic devices in my classroom.
4. Be respectful to everyone in the classroom including the teacher.
5. Follow directions and safety procedures at all times.
6. Use materials and equipment for its intended use.
7. Always do your best.
8. Homework must be handed in before the deadline or on-time. If a student fails to hand in work on time, they will receive a ZERO and will not be able to make it up.
9. NO extra credit will be given for the course.
10. Students are responsible for all make-up work. Student must have an excused absence to receive any make-up work.
11. Homework is generally assigned every night.

Supply lists:
Pencils
Pens
Notebook
Loose leaf paper
A binder
Section dividers for your binder
Calculator

Discipline policy
Step 1: A verbal warming will be given when learning or teaching becomes disrupted. A student/teacher conference may be requested.
Step 2: If a solution cannot be found then a phone call to the parents/guardians will be made.
Step 3: If the problem persists, a written referral will be submitted.
*Any serious infraction of school/polices will result in a written referral.*
Please return this paper to Mr. Vanderloos by September 23, 2016.

Student’s Name ____________________________
Please leave contact information below and indicate which method you prefer to be contacted. Note: phone calls will normally be made around 4:00pm.
Parent/Guardian Phone: ______________________________
Parent/Guardian Phone: ______________________________
Parent/Guardian email address: ______________________________

I have read the class outline for Mr. Vanderloos’ MYP 8th grade science class. I understand and accept the class policies. I understand that I am expected to apply myself to the course and that I will take responsibility for my own actions while in this class.
Student Signature ______________________________
Please Print Your Name: ______________________________
Date: ______________________________

Parent/Guardian Signature
I have read and understand the class procedure for Mr. Vanderloos’ MYP 8th grade science class. I agree that my child will abide by these guidelines, and I understand that my child is expected to apply him or herself and take responsibility for his or her own actions.
Parent Signature: ______________________________
Please Print Your Name: ______________________________
Date: __________________________________________

We are an equal rights and opportunity school district. | Parent Hotline: 412-622-7920 | www.pps.k12.pa.us