Mr. White’s Science News

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What Will We Be Learning This Year in Science?

Recently, we started using the new science curriculum, handed down from the State of Texas. We lean heavily on the Earth sciences, but mix in some chemistry and physics.

Our curriculum for **8th grade science** includes the following:

1st 9 Weeks:

Scientific Inquiry/Method

Lab Safety

Ecology

Sun/Earth/Moon systems

2nd 9 Weeks:

Plate Tectonics/Earth Structure

Astronomy

3rd 9 Weeks:

Atomic Structure

Chemistry

4th 9 Weeks:

Force and Motion

The **EPIC** STAAR Review Games

**Supplies for Class:**

-Science notebook (spiral bound, 3-5 subject)

-Colored Pencils, markers, and a box of pencils to donate to class “pool”

-Binder with dividers

Yes, 8th graders are awesome!

My name is Todd White, and I’m excited to be back at West Ridge for my **sixteenth (!)** year. I’m a graduate of the University of Texas-Austin, with a degree in Education (minor in Geology), and 98% finished of my Master’s degree in Earth/Environmental Science Education. I spent my summer playing hockey, spent a week in Mexico working on my Spanish, cooled off in Tahoe, and worked on my golf game.

I’m always on the lookout for cool/engaging topics to share with the class. Be sure to ask your student what they did in science class today, since “Science News of the Day” tends to be a family favorite.

I have a terrific family that I talk about constantly in class, including two daughters, a senior and a sophomore at Westlake.

What’s Expected...

As usual, a major focus is on the ability to think. With the increased reliance on technology, the authentic ability to REALLY think is becoming increasingly more rare. My class goals are simple:

**Attend class** – It’s hard to succeed when you aren’t there to learn! Make up work always seems twice as hard.

**Come prepared to learn** - I do my best to keep classes entertaining, but the students need to participate as well (asking questions and joining class discussions). This also includes bringing their science materials every day.

**Be honest** – Academic integrity is **non-negotiable** in my classroom.

**Ask questions** – If you don’t understand something, or wish to know something, just ASK! Please ask your student first, and if they can’t explain things, encourage them to come talk to me. Self-advocacy needs to be learned before the chaos of high school!

**Grading Policy – 8th Grade**

**Major Tests/Projects** **60%**

**Daily Work 40%**

**The 8th grade science philosophy…** Students wishing to improve a major grade will have the opportunity to demonstrate mastery through retesting upon evidence of relearning. Students will need to see me to begin the grade recovery process. Any missing work will be entered as a zero. Any zero can be replaced upon completion of the missing assignments or a substitute assessment. If too many grades are missing, the overall term grade will be changed to an INCOMPLETE, which can make a student ineligible for extra-curricular activities.

Contact me!

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**Tips for Helping Your Child Have a Successful Academic Year**

“If you don’t invest very much, then defeat doesn’t hurt as much, and winning is not very exciting.”

-- Dick Vermeil, former Eagles coach

As teachers, we are often asked by parents, “How can I help my child succeed in school?” In an effort to help you support your child academically, we have this simple list of resources.

1. Each student will have an iPad calendar in which to write all homework assignments. Check with your child to verify he/she is writing down all assignments in the iPad calendar or organization app, and if not, encourage your child to do so. (Old school planners are available again this year for purchase through the school.)
2. If you aren’t sure whether your child has homework, check Google Classroom or your student’s Google Calendar. Classroom ties into their Google calendar and email account.
3. If your child is earning low learning check grades, ask to see the practice work that correlates with the learning checks. Review it with your child for completion as well as quality.
4. Encourage your child to attend tutoring. Science tutoring is available every Monday through Friday by at least one of the 8th grade science teachers. We are also available by appointment at lunch or during Wildcat Time.
5. Sign up for Family Access so you can check your child’s grades on Skyward. Grades are updated weekly throughout the grading period.
6. Encourage your child to meet with the teachers to develop a plan for improvement. All teachers are happy to work with the students to help them succeed.

I’m always willing to meet with parents, but I prefer to include the student whenever possible. My goal is to help the student (and parents) develop a plan for success. Planning is rarely successful without input and buy-in from the student.

I greatly look forward to working with your child this year. Expectations are high!

Todd White

8th Grade Science