

September 16, 2020

Dear Parents and Caregivers of 8th Grade Scholars,

My name is Donna Peruzzi, and I am the 8th grade science teacher at CSUS. I have been a science teacher in Cambridge since 2006, and am proud to be a founding member of Cambridge Street Upper School.

Things are different this Fall and despite my efforts to plan engaging virtual learning experiences, I must warn you that everything may not always go as planned. This is to be expected because we're all trying something new right now and improvement rarely happens without opportunities to learn from mistakes along the way. I look forward to learning *with* scholars how to make this work for everyone.

The 8th grade science curriculum has been streamlined to focus on key issues that are relevant to developing scientifically-literate citizens. See below for the science curriculum as well as information about Live classes, Asynchronous assignments and feedback policies. As with most new plans related to Remote Learning, I may need to make adjustments based on my observations and your feedback, but I will be sure to inform you as needed.

Now more than ever, I will need your partnership as we figure out the best way to support your 8th grader, both academically as well as socially and emotionally.

Let's make this a great year!

Sincerely,

Donna Peruzzi

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## **8th Grade Science Curriculum**

### **Unit 1: Climate Change (starting in October)**

Students analyze data to make claims about climate change using critical thinking skills. They will study weather and will explain how it differs from climate, and explore the diverse interactions of energy on Earth (including the impact of the oceans on weather and climate). Students also will investigate human activities and use evidence to explain how they might contribute to climate change.

### **Unit 2: Genetics & Heredity**

Students explore how the characteristics of one generation are passed to the next. They study the roles of chromosomes and genes, genetic factors, natural selection, mutations, asexual reproduction, and use models to explain how characteristics are handed down to offspring.

### **Unit 3: Evolution**

Students investigate changes in life forms throughout Earth's history and compare fossil and living organisms to try to explain why these changes have occurred.

As students learn content, they will also make use of important scientific practices in their work, with a particular focus on the last two:

- Asking questions and defining problems
- Developing and using models
- Planning and carrying out investigations
- Analyzing and interpreting data
- Using mathematics and computational thinking
- **Constructing explanations and designing solutions**
- **Engaging in argument from evidence**

Finally, connections will be made to current events and social justice issues in order to help students understand why scientific literacy is so important in their future as active and engaged citizens.

### **Live Classes and Absentee Policy**

There will be two LIVE Science Google Meets per week. My intention is to provide opportunities for whole class or small group discussion and peer-to-peer interaction as much as possible.

Attendance will be taken and posted on Aspen. If a scholar has a planned absence, please have them contact me directly and we will figure out how to make up that time. Scholars who are absent from Live classes are responsible for checking Google Classroom to view posted materials as well as contacting a trusted friend to discuss what was missed in class. I may assign alternate work for them to complete to ensure that they don't fall behind in their learning.

### **Independent (aka "Asynchronous") Assignments**

Two independent assignments will be posted on Google Classroom each week by Monday morning at 9am. My intention is to develop a routine around these assignments so that scholars will feel confident about completing them on their own during the "Flexible Work Time".

- The first assignment will be related to the content we are learning, either previewing or reviewing the topics that will be discussed during Live class meetings.
- The second assignment will be a self-assessment or reflection on personal progress towards learning goals. The format of this assignment will usually be a Google Form.

Both assignments will be due on Fridays by 3pm unless otherwise noted. I will update Aspen by Friday of the following week.

### **Assessment and Feedback (Grading) Policy**

Grades in science class will be based on two types of feedback: participation/effort and academic progress. You will be able to check Aspen for updates on your scholar's participation in live class activities as well as whether or not they submitted independent assignments. Academic progress will be reported based on observations, assessment data *as well as* scholar self-reflection based on their academic goals. At the end of each quarter, scholars will report the grade they believe they have earned based on evidence that they have collected. These "performance reviews" will be an important consideration when I create Progress Reports and Semester Report Cards for Aspen.