WEXLER GRANT COMMUNITY SCHOOL

WELCOME PACKAGE 2014-2015

*Ms. Renkosiak*

*8th Grade Science*

Welcome!

I am so excited to be working with your scholar and you this coming school year! I will be your scholar’s science teacher for the year and I cannot wait to get started on all the fun and exciting things I have prepared for your them.

This academic year the middle school science scholars will be focused on gaining the skill set necessary to succeed and attend college. My vision for the coming year is to instill a sense of pride in each scholar, showing them that high school and college are key parts of any future dream they may have! During the past year, Wexler 8th grade scholars demonstrated an 18% increase in state science test scores, posting some of the largest gains in the district. I cannot wait to see what they will accomplish this year!

As a way to make my communications as open as possible I am sending home this letter containing an outline of the 8th grade curriculum, the class syllabus and expectations, and a brief parent survey in which I will ask you for some contact information. My hope is to build relationships with you so that I can work alongside with you, rather than separately from you, to ensure the academic success of your scholar this school year. The parent survey on the last page is your scholar’s first homework assignment and will count as a quiz grade so please do take just a few minutes to help me better understand your scholar.

This year I would like to keep parents and guardians up-to-date with our classroom projects and curriculum both via email and communications sent home with the science scholars. Prior to the start of a new unit you will receive an outline of the breakdown for that lesson, including topics we are covering, the skills we are aiming to refine, and dates for major projects and tests/quizzes.

I am always available to meet with you to discuss any questions or concerns you may have with your scholars progress. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me and I would be more than happy to schedule a meeting that fits your schedule!

Again, I cannot wait to delve into science this year with your scholar and for them to show you all the progress they will make throughout the year!

Ms. Renkosiak

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WEXLER GRANT COMMUNITY SCHOOL

8th GRADE SYLLABUS ’14-’15

This year in 8th grade, science scholars will be working on developing a number of skills, in addition to covering a significant amount of curriculum. Your 8th grade scholars **WILL** be taking the CMT for science this year and they will have to take 4 **district assessments**. Every 8th grade scholar will set their own growth goal for these assessments at the beginning of the year and they will spend the year working towards achieving that goal. I will be carefully tracking along with them to guarantee their success.

In order for us to maximize our learning time it is important that all scholars follow class expectations, come prepared for class each day with a pencil and pen, and complete all homework. **It is important for scholars to recognize that homework completion and class participation is key to success on tests and a passing grade in class! Please discuss this with your scholar!**

Below you will find a brief overview of classroom rules, expectations, and consequences.

**CELL PHONES ARE STRICTLY FORBIDDEN DURING SCHOOL HOURS!**

**Classroom Rules and Expectations:**

* 1. All Scholars must come to class prepared with a pencil/pen, notebook (provided), homework, and a positive attitude.
  2. Scholars must raise their hand before speaking or leaving their seat.
  3. Scholars will treat one another with respect, including using appropriate language and behavior.
  4. No cell phones or iPods are to be used in class or the hallways.

**Classroom Consequences:**

* 1. Verbal warning will be given for a scholar the first time they break a classroom rule.
  2. On the second offense, a scholar will be given a second verbal warning and moved to the “TAB” station in the back of the room for 3 minutes to complete a short reflection sheet on their behavior. Failure to complete the reflection sheet will result in a lunch detention and a call home.
  3. Third Offense: Scholar will receive a lunch detention, a 0 for participation that day, a call home to the parent/guardian, and a behavior write-up form.
  4. Fourth Offense: After-school detention, loss of certain in-class privileges, a 0 for participation that day, behavior referral form, and in-school conference with parents.
  5. Conference with parent/guardian and school administration.

**GRADING POLICY:**

Below you will find a breakdown of how your child will be graded in science, math, language arts, and social studies. The 7-8 team is aiming to provide your scholar with a seamless transition between all their classes and thus have ad

opted the same grading policy for all scholars and all classes.

**Class Participation** 30%

**Homework** 20%

**Tests/Quizzes/Projects** 50%

Please note that your scholar’s failure to complete a significant portion of their homework and/or poor in-class behavior will lead to them failing science. Although I do not forsee that happening with any scholar it is important to encourage your scholar to bring their game-face each day to class!

Grade breakdowns, as determined by the New Haven Public School District, are noted below. You will receive regular updates of your scholar’s progress and grade throughout each quarter in order to aid you in monitoring their grades.

**A+** 97% - 100% **C+** 77% - 79%

**A** 94% - 96% **C** 74% - 76%

**A-** 90% - 93% **C-** 70% - 73%

**B+** 87% - 89% **D+** 67% - 69%

**B** 84% - 86% **D** 64% - 66%

**B-** 80% - 83% **D-** 60% - 63%

**F** is anything below 60

**SCIENCE FAIR:**

All scholars in the 7th and 8th grade will participate in a school wide science fair, to be held in January 2014. Winners selected at the school science fair will go on to participate at the District science fair, held in May of 2014. Please be on the look-out for more information regarding science fair and ways you will be able to help!

**SCIENCE DIAGNOSTIC AND END-OF-YEAR ASSESSMENT:**

Your 8th grade scholar, in addition to tests and quizzes throughout the year, will also take a non-graded assessment at the beginning of the school year to determine what pre-existing knowledge they have so that I can appropriately tailor the curriculum for each scholar. Scholars will take a **graded** assessment at the end of the 8th grade academic year in which they will have to receive a passing grade (69% or above). I recognize that 8th grade scholars do take the CMT but this exam is given in March and there is curriculum taught after the CMT. Taking the CMT will not be an excuse to stop learning but rather an excellent reason to continue on with learning. The end-of-year exam is meant to keep scholars focused on the bigger goal.

**OPT-OUT POLICY:**

I recognize that certain content in the curriculum may make parents or guardians uncomfortable. Although I teach the curriculum given to me please do not hesitate to speak to me with regards to having your scholar opt out of certain lessons. I encourage all my scholars to take academic risks and explore the world around them using science as their guide but I also highly value your input. Please review the unit outlines I will send home with your scholar to determine if there is anything you would like to discuss with me personally prior to the scheduled lesson. Your scholar will be provided with the appropriate make-up work.

**ACCOMMODATIONS:**

I comply with all necessary accommodations for those scholars with proper documentation. If you are concerned that your scholar is not receiving the accommodations that they are supposed to please contact me so we can schedule a conference.

**HONOR CODE:**

Science scholars should always respect, and value, honesty and integrity. As a class we will be working towards creating a classroom community that works together, has common goals, and expects the best efforts of everyone in the class. This being said, **cheating will not be tolerated**. If I see a scholar cheating, whether on a test, on homework, or even on independent work in class I will contact the parent/guardian for a conference. I would much rather have a scholar honestly tell me they simply forgot to complete the work or did not understand the work than for them to copy the work of their peers.

**BULLYING POLICY:**

*New Haven Public Schools take a very strict position on bullying. There is a 0 tolerance policy for bullying at Wexler Grant and we are required to fill out reports to the district if we have documented evidence of bullying. If you suspect your scholar is being bullied please contact me so we can schedule a private conference with your scholar and the administration.*

*GET READY FOR AN EXCITING, CHALLENGING, THOUGHT-PROVOKING YEAR OF SCIENCE FUN!!!*

**TENTATIVE UNIT BREAKDOWN**

8th GRADE

| **UNIT** | **TOPIC** | **ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S)** | **DURATION** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 0 | Classroom culture setting, goal setting, and the scientific process | How do science scholars show PRIDE, prepare for high school and college, and explore science safely and smartly? | 3.5 weeks at the start of the academic year and ongoing throughout the rest of the year |
| 1 | Forces and Bridge Design | How do we design a bridge that can withstand large forces? | 6 weeks |
| 2 | Newton’s Laws, Circular Motion, and Inertia | In what ways does gravity affect us in every day life? | 5 weeks |
| 3 | The Solar System | Why don’t the planets all just crash into each other? | 3 weeks |
| 4 | CMT REVIEW | How do we best prepare ourselves for success on the science CMT? | Throughout the year and 3 dedicated weeks in February |
| 5 | Earth Landforms | Journey to the center of the Earth: Is it possible and what will get in our way? | 3 weeks |
| 6 | Rocks and minerals | How are rocks formed and what can we use them for? | 3 weeks |
| 7 | Natural Disasters (Tornados, hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis) | Hurricane Sandy Explained | 3 weeks |

**Family Survey**

*Thank you so much for providing us with more information about your scholar. Feel free to use the backside of this survey for any questions or comments that you may have for us at this time. Please have your student return this survey to us on* ***Tuesday, September 3rd****. Again, feel free to reach out to me by phone or email!*

Scholar’s Name:

Parent/Guardian Name:

Contact Phone Number:

Contact Email:

1. How would you prefer to be contacted (phone, text message, email)? If you would like to receive automatic updates about your scholar’s grades or attendance record please include your email in the space at the top of this page

**If you have provided your email how often would you like to receive email updates about your scholar’s grades in science? Please circle one.**

Weekly

Every two weeks

Every Month

1. What do you wish that teachers knew about your student that they might not know? Also, does your student have any special needs or conditions that make learning more difficult for them?
2. What motivates your student?
3. What are your goals for your student?
4. Is there anything else that I should know that would be helpful in making me the best teacher for your student?
5. Would you be interested in being a classroom volunteer, occasionally helping run activity afternoons/early evening for scholars and their families?