**ALPS 7th GRADE SCIENCE (2015-2016) Information for Students and Parents**

**Curriculum:** I am happy to again be teaching both 7th and 8th grade ALPS science classes this year. The 7th grade ALPS science curriculum is guided by the Indiana standards, with some expansions and additions. We will begin the year with an overview of measurement, key mathematical applications for science, and experimental design. The state life science standards (cell structure, function, division, and differentiation) will be expanded to include diseases, the human immune system, and the history and development of germ theory. This year, thanks to a generous grant from the Tri-North PTO, I am very excited to be adding a book project to my 7th grade ALPS science course. Students will choose from a selection of fiction and nonfiction books related to our study of disease, and will complete assignments based on their reading. I hope this new addition to the curriculum will be engaging and rewarding for the students! After our study of life science, we will explore Earth structure, the rock cycle and plate tectonics. In this unit we will also examine the way scientific ideas change as new evidence comes to light. In our physical science unit, we will study energy, forces, and motion, and we will apply Newton’s laws of motion to an engineering challenge. Unifying themes of scientific methods, processes, and communication will be integrated into our studies throughout the year.

**Methods and Expectations:** In ALPS science, students use a variety of approaches to study science and communicate about what they learn. Reading assignments, lectures, notes, tests, and quizzes will be balanced with projects, writing assignments, hands-on activities, group work, and presentations. Students will develop their skills in many areas: independently identifying and testing experimental questions, accessing new information, applying mathematics to science, analyzing data, and presenting their findings to a group. ALPS science students also complete independent projects; these will be introduced later in the year, since some of our initial assignments provide essential preparation. When possible, students will be given choices of materials, methods, and topics.

**Reading and Writing:** Reading and writing are absolutely critical in all fields of science. The readings students complete for this class will help them to understand science concepts and vocabulary, evaluate different source materials, and develop study and analytical skills that contribute to success in other areas besides science. Many assignments will also require students to express themselves in writing. When I assign written work, I emphasize the importance of clarity, conciseness, organization, accuracy, and supporting claims with evidence. Of course, careful attention to spelling, sentence structure, grammar, and punctuation are always expected!

**Homework and Assignments:** Our 7th grade science textbooks are not adequate for my ALPS classes, so I do not send textbooks home with students. I rely on materials collected from a variety of textbooks and other sources. Text selections and assignment instructions will generally be shared electronically, so students and parents are able to access them any time. Students’ grades are based mostly on projects, labs, tests, quizzes, and work completed in class, so ALPS science students should not expect to have frequent, small homework assignments. When short-term homework is assigned, please be assured that the work represents essential practice or review of key skills and/or concepts, or a meaningful assessment of student progress. Students who fail to turn in assignments on time will be penalized 20% if work is turned in within one day of the due date, and 50% if it is turned in 2-5 days after the due date. Work that is more than 5 days late will not receive credit. Some work will be submitted electronically. When hard copies are requested, they must be turned in to the tray for the student’s class period. All work will be considered late if not submitted on the due date, by the time and in the format required. Assignments may not be submitted via email except by specific arrangement. Papers turned in with no name may be counted as missing until claimed, or late after resubmission. All hard copy work may be either typed or neatly hand-written (in pencil or dark blue/black ink, on full-size paper) according to the student’s preference. ALPS students’ work is always expected to be of high quality, and to show clear evidence of focus and effort.

**Grading:** I update Skyward grades regularly and encourage students and parents to use Family Access at least once a week to check progress. Although the report card view is helpful, I recommend that you do not stop there. Like many teachers, I often comment on assignments, but comments (and indicators such as “late,” “missing,” or “excused”) do not show up on the report card view. To see a complete list of all assignments and assessments with grades and comments, please click on each course grade in your Skyward report card view. Tests and quizzes will generally comprise 65% of the course grade, major labs and term projects 25%, and homework and classwork 10%. This is subject to change slightly depending on the assignments that make up the grade for a particular grading period.

**Attendance and Absence Policies:** I follow the school policy; a student who has an excused absence automatically receives a due date extension equal to the number of days of absence. Make-up work will be made available whenever possible, but please remember that some activities cannot be made up (students will be excused from these). I maintain electronic daily class notes that are available to all students. When a student is absent, I expect the student to check the daily class notes for all missed days, and to complete the work described there (e.g. copying notes, completing missed bellwork, and accessing/completing assignments).

**Required Supplies:** Bring the following to class each day: standard size lined paper, a pencil or pen (dark blue or black ink), a pocket folder just for science materials, and a calculator (a simple 4-function calculator is fine).

**Discipline Policies:** To encourage students to behave responsibly and respectfully, I post and review my classroom rules, and I keep them simple: students are expected to follow all directions the first time they are given, to be prompt and prepared to learn in class every day, and to be respectful to others. My goal is to make my expectations clear and to encourage and support positive choices so that all students can learn!

**Helpful Hints:**

1. Read all the information in the academic handbook. The school has clear policies and guidelines regarding absences, tardiness, grading scales, behavior, and other expectations.
2. Be organized! Write down all homework assignments and due dates. Keep all of your materials for this class in your science folder, and ALWAYS bring the science folder to class.
3. Pay attention in class. If can’t hear or see, or are seated near someone who distracts you, please ask for a new seat. Always check the board when you come in each day; assignments and announcements will always be written on the board.
4. Use our electronic resources to access grades, comments, assignments, and other information.
5. If you are confused or unsure about anything, please ASK!
6. Please contact me at mbowman@mccsc.edu or 330-7745 x51278 any time you have questions or concerns! I welcome your emails and phone calls, and look forward to working with parents to help all of my students succeed in science!

**Assignment:** Students should read through this document with a parent or guardian. Ask your parent/guardian to send me a brief email at mbowman@mccsc.edu, with the student’s name in the subject line of your email! You can ask me a question, share a comment, or simply let me know you have read the course information sheet. This helps me ensure that I have a working email contact for a parent/guardian of each student, and allows me to address any electronic document access issues promptly. I am looking forward to another great year in ALPS science, and I hope you will contact me any time you have a question, concern, or comment to share!