

June 2006

Dear Young Scientist,

Welcome to AP Biology! My congratulations to you on your decision to accept the challenge of a rigorous academic curriculum! AP Biology will prepare you for the Advanced Placement Examination to be given in the spring of 2007. **All students taking this course are expected to take the AP Examination.** Students may receive college credit and/or advanced standing for their work. Even if credit is not awarded, admissions offices recognize the rigor of AP courses on a transcript and may factor them in when determining college acceptance. Enrollment in AP classes is recognized as one of the very best predictors of college success.

To help allay some anxiety and put students on a confident footing, I will require you to do some summer preparation for the fall semester. During the summer you will be required to complete Interactive Online Activities using PH SuccessNet and *BIOLOGY EXPLORING LIFE* textbook programs. Each student will be given a student registration form, User ID, and password to allow him or her to utilize the interactive textbook at PHSuccessNet.com. During the school year you can expect to have **homework** every night.

Biology is an exciting and rapidly growing field of study. I want to provide you with an excellent college-level introductory biology class and prepare you for the AP Examination. My hope is to give you a deep understanding of the major concepts that run through the discipline and an appreciation of science as an exciting and ongoing process.

If at any time you have any questions, concerns or just plain curiosities, please do not hesitate to contact me. Feel free to call me at the school (447-7511), at the pharmacy (442-1159), or e-mail me at jcross@svsu.org or through my classroom Website message board found at www.mauhs.org. I hope you are up for a challenge, and I promise you we will have fun!

Sincerely,

Mr. Jim Cross

Student Signature_____

Parent/Guardian Signature_____

MR. CROSS' CLASSROOM RULES

As you will find throughout your life, you will discover in this classroom that your attitude, community, and effort are very important. But first and foremost, I place GREAT value on civility toward your fellow classmates. In addition to your good humor and civility:

1. Be to class on time, one minute late is **LATE**.
2. Regular school policies will be applied in this classroom. It is your responsibility to read them, know them, and follow them.
3. Bring a pen, pencil, a two-inch three-ring binder, lined 11 x 8.5 inch paper, your textbook and any assigned homework to class each day. You should have a 3.5 inch formatted diskette in order to save any computer work. All computer work must be saved to diskette; we do not save to the hard drive.
4. All papers must have your full name, date, and block number at the top of the page.
5. No food or drink in the classroom, but you may have a water bottle. After discussion, this rule may be amended at my discretion.
6. **If you have any questions, concerns, or need extra help, please speak to me. I am always available to you.**
7. All assignments are to be handed in on time. Late assignments may not be accepted and may receive a zero. Missed tests and quizzes must be made up within five days after you return to school. Tests and quizzes that are not made up within five days may receive a zero.
8. Detentions assigned by me will start at 2:15 PM and end at 3:00 PM. You will be given twenty-four hours notice and I will determine on which day detention will be served.
9. The Grading System will be numerical based on Tests, Quizzes, Class Discussion, Projects, Homework, Notebook, and Rubrics. There will be a Final Exam, which will count as 20% of your final grade.
10. Now, be like a Labrador puppy. Just believe the best is going to happen and dive right in!

Thank you

The word "civility" comes from the Latin root "civitas," meaning city and "civis," meaning citizen. Civility, then, is behavior worthy of citizens living in a city or in common with others. Civility asks simply that we respect the rights and dignity of our fellow citizens.

Mr. Jim Cross
Mount Anthony Union High School

My Thoughts on Teaching Science

I want students to pay attention to their own ideas, to keep on thinking about things on their own, and to believe their ideas can lead them somewhere. I want my students to take their thoughts seriously, and pursue them in depth. An awful lot of scientists got their start in the backyard, catching crickets.

I want them to ask themselves basic scientific questions, “why does that happen-why does that work that way?” I want them to want to do more science.

The message I will give students in the classroom is, “this is only what we know so far”. This message is wonderfully suited to teaching science, because critical thinking and fresh ideas are crucial in expanding the boundaries of current scientific understanding. Teaching science as if it was all fact, removing uncertainty and speculation, prevents students from improving their ability to think, to challenge and be confident in their views. History shows us that some of the most acclaimed scientists formed their theories at an early age, often challenging existing assumptions and theories being taught as “fact”.

The enduring understanding I want my students to leave me with is an aspect of science that is difficult to convey amidst the tables, graphs and endless theories named after famous people. **I want my students to understand that much of science is about observations, assumptions, and even opinions.**