

## **WELCOME TO POCS AND ROOM F5 AND THE 2021 TO 2022 SCHOOL YEAR!**

Welcome back and congratulations on making it through last year! I know that it was challenging for all-students, families, and teachers alike. Every student experienced last year differently and I know that returning to “regular” school is going to be an adjustment this year. I assure you that I will be doing all I can to help students with returning into the world of real school as well as all of the normal middle school challenges.. We will not be focused solely on academics. Your children’s social and emotional well being and learning will be a major part of our year together.

I am looking forward to a happy, healthy, and rewarding school year. My commitment to each of my students is to offer them a program filled with meaningful and stimulating activities to aid in their academic, social, and emotional growth. The majority of our curriculum and the lessons I design are based upon the California State Standards. I will do all I can to help these students achieve success while at the same time enjoy school.

I believe that a student needs to become directly involved in his or her learning before it becomes truly meaningful. I will challenge your children to think and work towards their highest potential. I put the responsibility to learn on the children; asking questions, not just giving answers. I tell my students that my job is to teach and their job is to be a student, both of which require a lot of hard work and dedication. Where they go and how far is up to them. I will work to create a safe and positive environment in which respect, responsibility, cooperation, kindness and effort are the standard. I care deeply about my students and will strive to make their year rich and successful. It is my hope that in nine months they leave this classroom happy, thinking, and thriving.

The following should introduce you to this year’s learning. More information regarding expectations, current educational directions, and the content of our year together will be shared at Back To School Night.

### **COMMUNICATION**

We are currently in the second year of a new Gradebook and Communication system, Aeries School Information System ([pinerolivet.aeries.net](http://pinerolivet.aeries.net)). On-line gradebooks are a great way to see in real time what is happening with your child. You will be able to access all assignments and grades through this on-line gradebook. Many of you are already familiar with the Aeries system and Parentsquare for communication. If you are not familiar, we will get you information about how to get on-line as soon as we can and hopefully answer any questions at back to school night. Grades should never be a surprise any longer. You will have 24/7 access. Students will also be required to show you their grades every weekend. If you ever have any problems or questions about the Parent Portal and Gradebook, please let us know.

The student planner is filled out daily and most everything related to school, including homework assignments is recorded in the planner. This can be an outstanding communication tool when used properly. Please check and sign planners daily. You can also write notes to me in the planner as I check it most days.

E-mail is the best way to reach me. My email address is [jworstell@pousd.org](mailto:jworstell@pousd.org). I usually check my email before and after school and will respond quickly. You can also call the office and leave a message for me if you would like me to call you after school. Please avoid calling the office during school hours and asking to speak to your child. This can be very disruptive. Thank you!

Families and students can also go to the school website- <http://www.pocs.pousd.org/>. You will find my homework calendar on there, as well as a lot of other useful information. Please take some time to become

familiar with this website. I will keep my homework calendar up-to-date, so this is another great resource if you are not sure about the homework. I value an open and on-going communication between home and school. Please contact me anytime if you have comments, questions, concerns or feedback. I look forward to working with you!

## **MATH 2**

Our school district, as well as much of the nation, has shifted to Common Core Standards for Instruction. Though they have been around for several years now, they are definitely a shift for many students and families. If you would like to find out more information about these standards go to the website for the California Department of Education at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/>.

This year in Math we will continue our implementation of common core materials from Carnegie Learning Publishing. These materials will be asking students to justify their reasoning and communicate their mathematical thinking more than in the past. The emphasis is shifting to the process of learning rather than simply the memorization and acquisition of content. In other words, how you think is more important than what you know. It takes students to higher levels of thinking, from knowledge to reasoning, from explanation to justification. The skills of communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creative problem solving will be a focus in math. I will also use many supplemental materials to strengthen mathematical understanding and skills.

Many students have struggled with mathematics over the years and doubt their abilities. My goal is to turn this around. I want to help students understand their strengths, be willing to accept and grow from mistakes, and be willing to put forth an honest, strong effort and take risks. I hope all my students will leave seventh grade loving math!

**Homework-** It is extremely important that students do their best to complete ALL schoolwork and homework. Students need to practice when learning new skills. Homework and classwork are the practice. They must also learn independent strategies to access information when confusions occur. Students should let their families and me know if there are problems, concerns, or if they do not understand the material. Not doing math homework in a timely manner can lead to severe difficulties as we progress through new concepts. Khan Academy and Youtube searches on math topics can be of great benefit.

Homework will be assigned most weekdays. Assignments should be recorded in their planners daily. Unless otherwise stated, homework is due the following day. It is my intent to keep homework to a minimum. If students are productive in class and create free time for themselves, they will be able to use that time to work on homework. Productivity pays off! I do not grade homework. Students will receive full credit for completed homework which shows their effort, half credit for late, incomplete, or sloppy work, and no credit for missing work. ALL WORK needs to be shown on all assignments for credit. NO WORK=NO CREDIT. My homework calendar can be accessed at <http://www.pocs.pousd.org/>.

Once I get to know your student mathematically, I will be putting them into various classes in Mathia. Mathia is an on-line math program through the publishers of our math curriculum, Carnegie Learning. This will become part of their weekly homework. This math program can really help students fill mathematical gaps and push them forward to build concepts if used properly and consistently. It is really important that kids learn to manage their time to be successful.

**Notebook-** A spiral bound notebook will be needed for your student and dedicated only to math class. All homework, classwork, tests and quizzes, and notes will be kept in the notebook. Students will need to get a family member's signature after each test. Please feel free to check student notebooks more frequently if you wish.

**Grading** - My grading continues to evolve to reflect the current changes in what is being valued in mathematics education. I want to honor hard work, creativity, and collaboration. The trimester grade will be determined as follows: 40% work ethic and productivity, 30% content knowledge (tests, quizzes, and written work), and 30% oral communication and collaboration. I want students to see that effort and perseverance are key to learning. A passing grade is a C- (70%) or better. The best way to get a C or better is to participate, try hard, communicate, complete and turn in all assignments on time, keep a neat and well-organized notebook, and study for tests/quizzes. Please see me as soon as possible if you are having trouble with anything related to schoolwork.

**Absences** - Please try to be at school unless sick. **ABSENCES CAN HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON LEARNING. Students can make up assignments but not the instruction and learning of the days they missed.**

When a student is absent, he/she has one day for each day of absence to complete and turn in missed work. Parents are encouraged to pick up any classwork/homework from school if their student is absent for 3 or more days. It is the responsibility of the student to find out what he/she missed during the absence. If a test/quiz was missed, the student needs to see me the day he/she returns to school to schedule a makeup. Please make every effort to have your child to school on time as well. We start the moment they walk through the door so tardiness affects their learning.

**What to bring to class every day** - Our school posts a general supply list for all of our students. I have included a copy of it at the end of this packet. If they have the items on that list they should be good to go for the year. There is no need to bring piles of supplies to school for my class. An organized binder, math notebook, pencils, pens, highlighters, a calculator, and sticky notes will be needed. I typically provide the rest. However, be sure students have all they need at home to be successful too.

## **MIDDLE SCHOOL SCIENCE**

POCS is continuing a shift to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) this year. The NGSS are K-12 science standards that set the expectations for what students should know and be able to do in science in order to make sense of the world around them and be ready for college, careers, and citizenship. Like learning to ride a bike or play music, the experience of doing science is far more important than just reading about it in a book. The NGSS promote a new way of teaching and learning that allows students to actively do and experience science in a deep, meaningful way.

The standards accomplish this by integrating three dimensions of learning:

- Science disciplinary core ideas (the content, for example, biology)
- Major practices (how science is conducted in the real world, such as through planning and carrying out investigations)
- Crosscutting concepts (science ideas, like cause and effect, that permeate all the sciences)

We will be using FOSS curriculum. FOSS is research based science curriculum developed at the Lawrence Hall of Science, University of Calif., Berkeley. We hope to engage in three major units of study: Chemical Interactions, Populations and Ecosystems, and Earth History. Units are hands-on and provide students with opportunities to generate their own questions to motivate sense-making and problem solving. Students will be asked to engage, explore, explain, elaborate, and evaluate. My hope is to nurture a curiosity and spirit of inquiry and exploration in the students while exposing them to this world.

We are learning this new curriculum as well so please be patient as we work and discover the best avenues of pursuit for your children.

**Homework and classwork** - Students write their homework and classwork in their planner on the day it is assigned. Unless stated differently, the homework/classwork is due the next school day. Science homework is not assigned every day and usually not over the weekend unless there is a project. In fact, science homework will likely be infrequent. Projects have their own schedules and due dates, which are distributed to students as necessary.

**Notebook** - Students will use a science notebook to record and reflect on inquiry-based observations, activities, investigations, and experiments in order to increase their understanding of science instruction. Science notebooks are also an excellent tool for students to communicate their understanding of science concepts.

**Projects** - Projects may be either short term or long term; some may be done individually and some may be done in a group. Students will receive a written description of each project and its expectations when it is assigned, including due dates.

**Grading** - Same policy as described in Math above applies to Science. Work ethic and productivity are the key. Please see me as soon as possible if you are having trouble with anything related to schoolwork.

**Absences** - Same policy as described in Math above applies.

**What to bring to class everyday** - Whatever you need to be successful and a curious mind!

I appreciate your support and am looking forward to working together to make this a year of growth, happiness, and success for your child.

Sincerely,  
Jen Worstell

Thank you for taking the time to review this material. Please sign and return this entire packet to me by Monday, August 16. Once we have set up binders, this will get filed in the Math/Science section so that students have it as a reference.

You can contact me anytime at: [jworstell@pousd.org](mailto:jworstell@pousd.org)

Yes, I received it and read it with my child!

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Questions or Comments: