

The Thunderbolt Times

The quarterly newsletter for the Sky Ranch GATE Magnet Community



September-October 2021

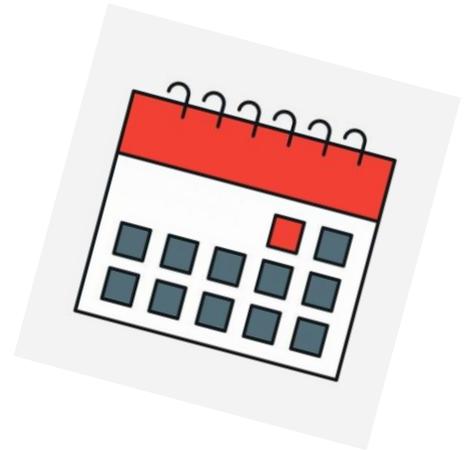
Welcome to the new school year! We will be sending quarterly newsletters home to share what your child is learning in each of our classes, important dates, and information from the GATE program.

This year is definitely unique but the thing that hasn't changed is how exciting it is to see all of the kids and watch the lightbulbs go off when concepts connect!

Please make sure that you have reviewed the student-parent contract thoroughly that was sent home the first week of school. There is a lot of important information in it. If you have any team questions, please email Mrs. Porter at lindsey.porter@washoeschools.net.

Important Upcoming Dates:

September 6	No School-Labor Day
September 24	Color Run
October 1	Last day to turn in late or missing work
October 4-10	Fall Break
October 15	End of Grading Period
October 29	No School-Nevada Day



Wondering how to better support your child's academics in core classes? Here's what we suggest:

Step 1: Check our team websites and assignment calendars to see what assignments are due soon. This is a proactive approach - see what's due before it's due. With this approach, you can help your child break down large assignments and ask your child to show you and talk about their upcoming or completed work before it's due to be turned in. This approach lessens the frequency of missing and late assignments. It's important to check this resource several times throughout the week as teachers do adjust activities and dates frequently.

Team Websites

7th/8th grade team: washoeschools.net/pilotsquadron

6th grade: washoeschools.net/griswold

Step 2: Check Infinite Campus. Infinite Campus is where we post students' grades after the assignments are graded. Some assignment scores are posted within hours, but some assignments take longer to grade; it may be more than a week before these assignments are posted in IC. Checking IC is more of a reactive approach - it may lead to chasing down missing assignments and backtracking whereas knowing what's coming up due keeps everyone up to date.

Helping your Child with Math Homework

What do you do when your child is struggling with math homework? Do you look up how to do the problems on the internet and tell your child what to do to get the work over with? Do you tell your child to keep at it because you know struggle is a great way to learn?

We know that productive struggle is an essential part of learning mathematics – but how do we make struggle productive? Productive struggle means that the student is taking ownership of his/her learning by applying known strategies to their work. As a parent, you want to help your child get over their sticking points but still support their learning.

If students get stuck, you can ask some general questions to help your child continue to move forward without taking over their learning. Start by asking your child to tell you what the problem is asking and what he/she knows about the problem. This alone may spark ideas. If he/she is still stuck, try some of the following questions:

- What part of the problem do you understand? What part do you not understand?
- Have you seen other problems that contain some of the same ideas? What did you do to solve them?
- What didn't work? Why did it not work?
- Can you create a simpler problem (easier numbers, fewer conditions) and solve it? Now can you use the same techniques to solve your problem?
- What if you try some numbers you know work in the problem? What does that tell you about the problem?
- Why does what you're doing work? What mathematics principles supports your work?

Using these questions can often get your student's thinking going again and help him/her over the sticking point.

But what if these strategies don't work? Have your student take a short break and try it again. If that doesn't work, have your student write in the margin of their paper what he/she does and does not understand about the problem and what he/she tried. Then when your student's class is discussing the problem, he/she can focus on the parts understood and not understood and be able to ask good questions to help him/her successfully complete the problem.

Important Information to Kick Off the Year

Class Syllabi: Each teacher posted a syllabus to Teams or OneNote during the first week of school. Each syllabus contains important information that explains the logistics of each core class. Please take the time to go through each syllabus with your child to ensure understanding of each core class.

Essential and Driving Questions: Each core class's curriculum will be driven by essential and driving questions. To help better understand what essential and driving questions are, please see below.

The driving question is both the foundation and the blueprint that gets learners started and guides them throughout the project. A well-designed project is based on a driving question that sets off an inquiry-based learning process where the project activities and objectives are all determined by the driving question.

Essential questions are lesson objectives posed in an interrogative format. Essential questions are posted on the board and changed to reflect the goals of the lesson. Essential questions will be answered in class to assess the understanding of content by students.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL): The Sky Ranch Magnet works hard to create lessons and an environment that supports social and emotional learning. Below is an explanation of what SEL is and why it's important to gifted students.

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is a process which helps children cultivate essential life skills including awareness of one's own emotions, fostering respect and care for others, establishing strong relationships, making ethical and responsible decisions, and handling adversity constructively.

Many gifted students face social or emotional concerns ranging from perfectionism to low self-esteem to overexcitabilities. Asynchronous development can leave a gifted child thinking like an adult while his/her ability to process emotions remains that of a child. Exploring and discussing issues such as organizational skills, procrastination, stress, good character and impulse control can help students to maximize their potential and utilize their intelligence more effectively in their world. Pulling from a variety of sources, students will discover, discuss and analyze social and emotional concerns

Classroom Updates

English/Language Arts 6 – Mr. Sorensen

Essential Questions:

- **How do the decisions and actions of characters reveal their identities?**
- **How can writers construct persuasive arguments?**

Students will prepare each week for meaningful book discussions, called Socratic Seminars, with our class novel, *A Face Like Glass* by Francis Hardinge. We will be analyzing the difference between quality discussion questions that are open-ended versus questions that are close ended, to best explore the themes of the book. The students will also be learning the importance of supporting their answers and comments in book discussions with evidence from the book. In addition, we will be working grammar practice through Lexia, the elements of argumentative writing, and Greek and Latin roots.

English/Language Arts 7 – Ms. Tuttle

Essential Questions:

- **Why is it important to understand interactions?**
- **How do hierarchies influence interactions?**
- **How can fiction shed light on historical events?**

In 7th grade English, we are working our way through the novel, *Chains*, by Laurie Halse Anderson. In our Literature Circle Meetings, we have the opportunity to discuss the novel deeply, focusing on the tenacity and resilience of the main character, Isabel. This historical fiction novel will give us a picture of the time period – the brink of the Revolutionary War. We will also tackle our first Literary Analysis essay of the year using *Chains* as our focus. In addition, we're working on our Sacred Writing daily and are preparing to share in a Book Talk our first independent reading novel of the year.

English/ Language Arts 8 - Ms. Tuttle

Essential Questions:

- **How is resilience crucial for success?**
- **In what ways are relationships connected to resilience?**
- **How can authors communicate the impact of large social forces on the experiences of individuals?**

In 8th grade English, we're well into our first novel, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, by Harriett Jacobs. Through discussions and writing, we're focusing on the resilience of the author and the strength she displays in standing up for what she believes in despite tremendous adversity. Her memoir gives us much to think, talk and write about and, in her own words, we find a person we can admire so much for her grit. We will also tackle our first Literary Analysis essay of the year using *Incidents* as our focus. In addition, we've been sacredly writing and getting ready for our first Independent Novel Project of the year, a Book Talk!

Earth Science 6 – Mrs. Clotworthy

Essential Question:

- **How do engineers solve problem?**
- **What is the process for developing potential design solutions?**

Students will begin with fun and educational activities that spark their interest in science. Skill building, scientific methods, and safety will be introduced and integrated throughout the year. Students will understand the nature of what scientists do and how they do it through the engineering

design process. Implementing this process in labs students will practice metric conversions, observations, inferences and the use of different pieces of science equipment.

Students will receive a study guide one week prior to each unit test. I highly encourage students use these study guides (and their lab books and OneNote) to help them prepare for each unit test. Science lab books can go home but they need to make sure that they come back to school each day so that they are prepared for class.

7th Grade: – Mrs. Hill

Essential Question:

- **How do atomic and molecular interactions explain the properties of matter that we see and feel?**

Our first unit, Nature of Science, focuses on lab safety, measurement and conversions, use of scientific tools through practice lab exercises. The content learned during this unit will be used throughout the rest of the year. Since students are coming from different science backgrounds, this unit helps ensure that we are all on the same page so that we can move forward successfully.

We will then move into our unit on Chemistry Building Blocks of Matter. In this unit, students will be introduced to matter, elements/mixtures/compounds, physical and chemical properties/changes of matter, conservation of matter, states and phase changes of matter, and the kinetic theory of matter.

Just a friendly reminder- if your child submits late or absent work online, they will need to fill out a slip (absent or late) and turn it in. Slips can be filled out in the classroom or submitted through email digitally. Without this slip, assignments will not be graded.

8th Grade Honors Biology- Mrs. Hill

Essential Question:

- **How and why do organisms interact with their environment, and what are the effects of these interactions?**

Our first unit, Nature of Science, reviews lab safety, measurement and conversions, and the use of scientific tools. The content learned during this unit will be used throughout the rest of the year.

We will then move into our Ecology Unit. Students will learn about the different principles of ecology, ecological cycles, interactions and behaviors, and the levels of biological organization.

Just a friendly reminder- if your child submits late or absent work online, they will need to fill out a slip (absent or late) and turn it in. Slips can be filled out in the classroom or submitted through email digitally. Without this slip, assignments will not be graded.

6th Grade: Ancient Civilizations – Mr. Sorensen

Essential Question:

- **How do our origins affect us?**

Our first unit deals with the formation of our world and humanity. As such, the focus will be on geographical knowledge and understanding - landforms, bodies of water, where hominins originated, and why. This will lead to work on the transition from Paleolithic to Neolithic societies and the catalysts

for the change. Finally, we will examine the earliest civilizations (Sumer and Catal Huyuk) and define what a civilization is using the ASPIRE framework.

7th Grade: U.S. History – Mrs. Porter

Essential Question:

- **How do hierarchies influence interactions?**

Our first unit for the year students will be learning about history skills and then applying those skills in a project about themselves. For example, they will learn what the difference is between a primary and secondary resource and then create an autobiography and have an adult write a biography about them.

During our second unit of the year students will be studying the American Revolution. Students will be ranking events that led to the Revolution and have to defend why they ranked events where they did using evidence and reasoning. During this unit we will focus on argumentative writing strategies while also looking at the impact the American Revolution had on the start of the new country.

8th Grade: Accelerated Analyzing War - Mrs. Porter

Essential Question:

- **How do relationships require resilience?**

The first unit of 8th grade is the Gilded Ages. Students will use various resources to analyze why this time was seen as a golden time. They will be asked to create structured arguments that use evidence to defend whether big business owners were captains of industry or robber barons. Students will look at primary and secondary resources to support their arguments. During the Gilded Ages students will also study progressive amendments and presidents that helped catapult America into the modern era.

Math 6 – Mrs. Clotworthy

Essential Questions:

- **How do integers interact with each other?**
- **What are the characteristics of different kinds of numbers?**
- **Why do operations outcomes change with regard to positive and negative values?**

Beginning with our 5th grade review including order of operations, mean, median, mode, range and coordinate graphing, we will dive head first into order of operations using integers and drawing connections between those operations and other numerical concepts that draw on student mathematical knowledge.

Integrated I - Mrs. Sellers

Essential Questions:

- **How do the properties of equality justify equation solving techniques?**
- **How can you prove geometric relationships algebraically?**
- **How do mathematical relationships help us make sense of the world?**

The first two units of the year for Integrated I are review units. We will review rational numbers, integers, and order of operations through a variety of self-paced activities and stations. We will then

move into reviewing expressions and solving equations. These concepts will be used throughout the entire year, so there will be many more opportunities to practice and improve. Next up, we will move onto some geometry units. We will begin by reviewing and learning basic geometry vocabulary terms. As we get further into geometry, these units combine solving equations with geometric problems. Students should be utilizing Microsoft Teams to check assignments for correctness and for self-check quizzes. All assignments are posted as if a student was absent. On Teams, students will see a blank homework document, the key, and a learning resource to review the concept. Homework will typically be completed in Onenote.

Integrated II - Mrs. Sellers

Essential Questions:

- **Can you identify the types of functions that model real world data and write a regression equation?**
- **How can you prove geometric relationships algebraically?**
- **How do mathematical relationships help us make sense of the world?**

The first two of the Integrated II year are review units with a hint of new material. We will review functions and extended this concept by adding piecewise functions. We will then review writing equations of lines and extended this concept by adding parallel and perpendicular lines. From writing equations of lines, we will move into bivariate data and functions that can model real world data. Students will learn how to find the regression equation that models the different data sets using graphing calculators. Upon finishing this unit, we will move on to exponents and radicals. Students will review simplifying exponents and radicals from Integrated I. We will then extend this knowledge into fractional exponents and solving exponential equations. Students should be utilizing Microsoft Teams to check assignments for correctness and for self-check quizzes. All assignments are posted as if a student was absent. On Teams, students will see a blank homework document, the key, and a learning resource to review the concept. Homework will typically be completed in Onenote.

Algebra - Mrs. Sellers

Essential Questions:

- **How do the properties of equality justify equation solving techniques?**
- **How do patterns help us determine mathematical relationships?**
- **How do mathematical relationships help us make sense of the world?**

The first unit for Algebra will be solving equations and inequalities. This will be some review from Integrated I with a hint of new material. We will then begin representing relationships between quantities using functions, tables, and graphs. We will then use our knowledge of functions to begin graphing and writing equations of lines. We will represent real world situations through graphs and equations. Students will learn the different forms of writing a linear equation and when to use each form. Students will learn to manipulate the different variables in writing equations and determine the effect each has on the linear function. Students should be utilizing Microsoft Teams to check assignments for correctness and for self-check quizzes. All assignments are posted as if a student was absent. On Teams, students will see a blank homework document, the key, and a learning resource to review the concept. Homework will typically be completed in Onenote.

Enrichment:

7th and 8th Grade:

Due to our unique situation this year, round tables are currently suspended, so our work in Enrichment has had to pivot. We will utilize Enrichment time for Second-Step Lessons (school-wide Social Emotional Learning), team building and counselor lessons. In addition, students will have study hall and silent reading time throughout the week.

6th Grade:

Enrichment will be used as an opportunity for students to get used to the demands and expectations of middle school, the Magnet program, and those they have for themselves. This will include collaborative activities, self-reflection, class discussions, and SEL lessons (either teacher- or counselor-led). They will also have time to get help on assignments and read their assigned novel.

Counselor's Corner:

GT Counselor: Ms. Ivans, our GT counselor, has shared some resources for parents. Mrs. Porter will forward you newsletters from Ms. Ivans each month.

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