**8th Grade Physical Science and English**

**Course of Study, Policies and Procedures**

Dear Student and Parent(s),

Welcome to 8th grade Science and English! My name is Kim Ritter and this is the beginning of my eleventh year at St. Luke (22nd year as an educator). I graduated from Xavier University with a duel major in Elementary Education (1-8) with a science concentration and two special education degrees in Severe Behavior and Learning Disabilities (k-12). I also hold a Masters degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Dayton. I am currently pursuing another Masters degree in integrated math & science (4-9) from Wright State University to be completed in the next year or two. Can you tell that my motto is, “the more you learn, the more you realize you don’t know?” ☺ I have five children, two here with me at St. Luke, one in high school and two in college. My husband and I were high school sweethearts in Tipp City and moved to Greene County 17 years ago after living in Tennessee for several years. Along with teaching, I am a certified doula and enjoy reading, camping and photography whenever I have the time!

Junior high is an exciting part of St. Luke and should be a memorable and enjoyable experience for all! Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions or concerns. Email is the best way to reach me as I can check it periodically throughout the day. If I can answer with a quick reply I will do so, or we can schedule a time to meet after school. Below please find information about the courses I teach to 8th grade and some general policies and procedures for the classroom that I hope you find helpful.

**Course of Study Physical Science**

This course will be divided between the sciences of chemistry and physics. The first semester (roughly) will be devoted to chemistry with a strong emphasis on the states of matter and the periodic table of elements. We will also explore chemical reactions and acids and bases. There is a strong element of organic chemistry in the biology courses in high school, so this is a good foundation for next year! In the second semester, students will explore the physics concepts of waves, electricity, motion and force and simple machines. The scientific method will be used throughout, along with the engineering design process. There are also both STEM and inquiry based initiatives. The course follows the Archdiocese of Cincinnati graded course of study for junior high which is aligned with the State of Ohio’s ninth grade curriculum. Specific standards and general content guidelines for each chapter are available on my website. Science fair support is also available on-line.

**Course of Study English**

This course is divided between grammar, writing and vocabulary- each is a critical element in clearly and succinctly presenting one’s ideas in writing and speech in high school and beyond. Grammar will start a review of nouns, adjectives, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, and verbals. We will conclude with diagramming in the fourth quarter. Vocabulary consists of 15 units with a test every two weeks. Unless a week has less than two days, we press on with a given unit so we are done with the book around spring break. Finally, in writing we will cover research, expository, descriptive, and argumentative writing. We will write both formal and informal papers as well as poetry. The course follows the Archdiocese of Cincinnati graded course of study for 8th grade. Content specifics are available on my website. A simplified vocab list is also available.

**Grading**:

Grades in my classes will be calculated with percents. With only a few exceptions, most assignments will be worth 100 points. The overall grade will be weighted as follows:

25% homework and check tests

25% participation/group work

50% tests, quizzes and projects

In general I take grades on homework that should demonstrate mastery as well as bell work done in class of the same intensity. Homework and bell work that is exploratory in nature or a check of understanding in order to identify misconceptions will be counted as participation. Check tests in English are assessments following each individual component of a unit- for example, while studying nouns we will have check tests on subjects, compliments, objects and so on- culminating with a final unit test on nouns. These English check tests will be graded and returned to students. In science, check tests follow note- taking and those notes are permitted to be used during the check test. Answers for science check tests are reviewed immediately after tests are collected and tests are not returned.

 Participation has many facets. The largest portion is exploratory homework and bell work assignments that are checked for completion using a check plus, check, check minus system. General classroom behavior and participation in answering and/or attentiveness in class are also included in this grade which is recorded every two weeks. Group work is also an important part of learning. Group work may involve completing a worksheet with a partner or producing a group poster, project or presentation.

Tests in English consist of unit tests for each grammar concept, vocabulary tests and writing unit tests. Grammar tests require application of concept understanding through a variety of tasks. Vocabulary tests are multiple choice and focus on parts of speech and definitions- including antonyms and synonyms. Writing units will involve not only writing papers, but also understanding the components of each style of writing. We will do free writes, timed writing and polished pieces.

Tests in science require both recall & application of science concepts and typically occur after each chapter.

**Exams**

Students will take a mid-term and final exam in English, and a final exam in science. These are designed to be learning experience in preparation for high school and are weighted so as to have minimal impact a student’s grade. For students on the edge of moving up a grade a superior exam can provide the leverage needed for the higher grade. Exams are calculated into the semester averages and are not currently recorded on grade cards.

**Absences:**

* In junior high students are encouraged to be proactive when absent- speak to teachers before or after school, plan to make up tests and quizzes promptly and keep up with on-going assignments- progress book is good for making sure all assignments are completed and up –to-date
* I keep absent work in bins in the room for students to pick up and complete to assist them in catching up- I will not, however, stop the class and explain things while everyone else is waiting to begin the day’s lesson! Please see me after class, during end of period work time, before/after school, during study hall, recess or during office hours!
* Baring a long absence, pre-announced tests/quizzes should be taken on time or immediately upon return
* Long term assignments are due upon return even if absent on day it is due
* For planned absences, I encourage students to take tests/quizzes early and turn in any long term assignments that may come due during their absence. This will make returning and catching up SO much easier! As per the policy, I do not prepare work in advance, but that does not mean students can’t get ahead.

**Late work:**

* I will usually accept late assignments the day after they are due with a 10% reduction in the score. For long term assignments the deduction will be higher as the student had an extended period of time to complete the assignment. Any work graded in class that is subsequently turned in late, will result in half credit as the answers were revealed in class.
* I **do not** accept any long overdue assignments the week before grades are due
* I **do** make exceptions on late assignments with students who are almost always timely with work or who present the forgotten work before school starts the next day

**Extra Credit**

I provide periodic extra credit throughout the year that provides extended or in-depth study on a particular topic. I will also include extra credit questions on tests and quizzes quite frequently. For a long term assignment, extra credit is often offered for timely completion- generally a few days before the official due date- the early bird gets the worm! ☺

**Required materials and organization**

Please review the materials list carefully and have an ample supply of necessary items on hand. While some items are not used every day (rulers, calculators etc) they should be at hand when needed. Students are expected to keep a binder of all their current assignments. At this age, some students have mastered this organization and some need a bit more support. It is ok to take a few minutes once in a while to flip through the binder and help your student organize loose paperwork. Binders should be cleaned out at the end of each quarter. It is recommended that students have a box at home where they can put all the papers coming out of the binder so they can be referred to during mid-term and final exams. Finally on materials- please take care that books are well covered throughout the year. Our texts are quite a few years young ☺ and with electronic textbooks on the horizon I expect they have a few more years of service in them before they are replaced with newer technology. The content in our texts is sound and any areas that are lacking are easily supplemented with handout materials.

**Teacher expectations**

Success for every student is always the goal. While 8th grade content is challenging, content is always broken into small pieces and hints and tricks are frequently offered. I carefully explain how assignments should be completed and what tests and quizzes will look like. I give suggestions for studying for tests and review key concepts in class before tests are given. I use a variety of assessments and activities to meet the learning strengths of all my students. Students need to ask questions and clarify what they do not understand- they can ask in class, email, write it on a post it note- students should never be afraid to clarify what they are studying. By being attentive in class and actively participating, students will have all the tools they need to succeed.

**Student Expectations**

Students are expected to be responsible, respectful and be a witness to their faith.

**Contact Me!**

 Website: <http://mrsritter.weebly.com/index.html>

Email: ritterk@stluke.cnd.pvt.k12.oh.us

Updated 5/17/17