

House Middle School

August 2016

History / Mr. Smith

Dear Parents:

Hello. My name is Mr. Dean Smith, and I will be one of your child's teachers this year. I would like to take this opportunity to let you know how happy I am to have your child in my class. I am dedicated to making this a busy, productive, and fun year! I have some exciting standards based projects and activities planned for the classroom including historical simulations and debates. Social Studies offers some exciting historical and Constitutional arguments that we will explore. This year, I plan to enrich my class instruction by providing my students the opportunity to use technology to express their understanding of key academic concepts in original multimedia projects. As part of this technology integration, I intend to run a modified version of a flipped classroom with my students. A flipped classroom is an instructional model in which the typical lecture and homework elements of a course are reversed. Short video lectures are viewed at home while in-class time is devoted to exercises, projects, or discussions. Please see my "Flipped Classroom letter" for more details.

Frequent Communication:

I will be communicating with you about my classroom plans, your child's progress, and other activities as they arise. Parent communications is very important and, as such, I intend to use remind.com and my classroom website as the principal tools for weekly communication with you. I use my Internet web site for posting classroom activities, handouts, and weekly learning targets. If you have access to the Internet, please bookmark www.smithclass.com and visit frequently. I will provide information on Remind.Com which offers teacher to parent/student text communications. I plan to use this tool to send reminders of online projects, homework, and tests via text to students and parents. This is an optional tool that you may want to join. However, there may be text charges with your cell provider. I am happy to communicate with you via district email. You will need to fill out a form in the office to receive personalized student updates. Please do not think I am rude, but I will not communicate with students via Facebook nor other social networking sites. You can also contact me during my plan period by phone.

Expected Classroom Materials:

As you know, students at House Middle School will need a three ring binder with dividers for each class to help keep them organized. Your child will need to purchase a **spiral or composition notebook** that will be used for their history class notes and responsive journals. Your child will also need to have pencils, **pens (black or blue and red), college ruled paper, and colored pencils**. We use the red pen at the start of class **each** day as we review our Cornell Notes.

Curriculum and Grading:

I hope your child will enjoy our exploration of history this year. My 6th graders will discover ancient and classical history and 7th graders will look at the first one hundred years of US History. My 8th graders will study Washington's unique geography, diverse Native cultures, early pioneer life, 20th century state history, and local/state/federal government. I did want to remind you that students in Washington State are required to take **and pass** Washington State History as a **graduation requirement**. Eighth (8th) grade students will earn a semester grade for the fall semester of Washington State History. Each unit in will focus on the U.S or Washington State Constitution with an emphasis on how the unit shows the conflict between individual rights and the common good. Our class theme is "**What is the Common Good?**"

Tests and assessments will be **eighty-five** percent of the term grade. Students will be allowed to take a test retake regardless of their original grade on the assigned retake day or at lunch if available. Grades may be improved to 90% (A-.)

The following grading scale will be used:

90-100% = A (This is considered exceeding standard)

80-89.99% = B (This is considered meeting standard)

70-79.99% = C (This is considered approaching standard)

60-69.99% = D (This is considered well below standard)

0-59.99% = F (This is considered well below standard and will only occur if students do not put enough effort into retakes and/or homework assignments)

- Retakes will be entered in the grade book as a second column showing points improved from the original grade. Testers who do not improve will have a zero entered in the retake column.
- **The first retake must be done within two weeks of the original test.** Most retakes are done during lunch.
- Class research projects and the CBA, which is required by the state of Washington, will also be a weighted as a test but cannot be retaken.
- Students will receive an "**X**" in their agenda for late assignments and the grade will be lowered 20% per day late.

What are the keys to my child being successful in this class?

- Come to class each day. Get and complete make-up work if absent.
- Be engaged and participate in class discussions. This includes asking questions.
- Take Cornell Notes and review them regularly.
- Complete all homework assignments on time.
- Study for and retake tests to get to standard if necessary.

Flipped Classroom / Technology in the Classroom

This year, I plan to **post one lesson** each week on my classroom website www.smithclass.com. **Students will be expected to watch and take Cornell Notes on the lesson outside of class** and to use one day a week in class using the classroom technology, working in small groups, illustrating maps and graphs, researching opinions, or preparing class notes. While I know that many students have direct access to computers and Internet at home, I also realize that many students do not. Some who do have weekend access, may have sports, clubs, or other activities at night that interfere with computer access. Because of this, I am offering 8th graders one day a week that they can sign up and spend their lunch in my “Internet Cafe” classroom. This time, once a week, will be available for all students to complete weekly flipped classroom homework, work on projects, or retake tests.

Other options for out of class computer access include the Prosser Branch of the Mid Columbia Library where sixteen computers are available for an hour a night for students and the Prosser Computer Sharing program. **I should note here that our first homework assignment of the year, due September 23rd, is for every student to get a library card.** The Compute Sharing program is a joint project of the Prosser School District and the Prosser United Methodist Church. In this program, restored and cleaned computers are checked out to students who do not have computer access at home. The Prosser School District Technology department has also linked www.everyoneon.org as a source for low cost Internet service.

As part of putting classroom instruction online, there may be times that I will record classes in order to review instruction and demonstrate successful small group activities for online viewing. While I will never use a student’s last name, recorded classes may of course include video of students in class, their class work, and contain their first name. If you give your child permission to be recorded in such a lesson, please check the appropriate box below.

It is important to note here that in order to use my classroom computers, your child must have a district network account which includes a home and school license for Microsoft 365. In order to get this, your child must have a **signed Prosser School District Internet Use form** and must conform to district rules for appropriate use of the network. I will discuss these expectations further in class.

While I am very excited about the opportunity to enrich instruction with technology and to use the flipped model to give more time in class for review, discussion, and projects, I also understand that this new model will bring many additional challenges for students, parents, and teacher. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at school. My plan period is 10:40-11:20 Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. Housel’s phone number is 509-786-1732.

Date: _____

Please keep this copy for home.

Child's First and Last Name: _____ Class Period: _____

- _____ Yes, my child **does** have a computer and Internet access available at home.
- _____ No, my child does **not** have computer and Internet access available at home.
- _____ Yes, I hereby **give** permission for Mr. Smith to post video, pictures, and/or audio of my child, her or his class work and small group activities, and first name on the class instructional website.
- _____ No, I **do not** give permission for Mr. Smith to post video, pictures, and/or audio of my child, her or his class work and small group activities, and first name on the class instructional website.

Parent Name: _____ Parent Signature: _____

I have included my classroom rules and consequences for you to look over. Please remember that if you have any questions, feel free to call me at school, 786-1732. The best time to reach me is 10:40-11:20 AM Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and/or Friday. Thank you for your time and interest in having a great school year. Sincerely,

Mr. Dean Smith

dean.smith@prosserschools.org

786-1732

National Board Certified Teacher

www.smithclass.com

Classroom Rules

1. **BE PREPARED:** It is each student's responsibility to attend class with notebooks, books, and all other appropriate materials.
2. **BE PUNCTUAL:** Students must be seated on time for every class.
3. **RESPECT PEOPLE:** Students will treat all persons in a respectful manner. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated.
4. **RESPECT PROPERTY:** Students will treat our facilities and other peoples' property in a respectful manner. Horseplay and other inappropriate classroom behavior will not be tolerated.
5. **Citizenship:** Appropriate citizenship is a key element for success at Housel Middle School. Students are expected to treat all persons in the room with respect. Inappropriate behavior in class, including inappropriate participation when we have a substitute in class, and or the use of personal or class technology without direct teacher approval will earn the student an X in their agenda for behavior and possible office referral.

Date: _____

Please return this copy signed.

Child's First and Last Name: _____ Class Period: _____

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