Bartelso Middle School Science-8th Grade
Mrs. Gibson

Dear Eighth-grade Student & Parent, August, 2025

Welcome to a new school year and 8th grade Science. I am excited to meet all of you! I have been teaching for twenty-eight years in both Illinois and Missouri, spending the last twelve years utilizing my endorsement in middle school Science. I live in Breese with my husband and our dog, Lasha. My hobbies and interests include hiking and camping, cooking, and visiting my two sons who are practicing veterinary medicine in Houston and Denver. I am looking forward to a successful and fulfilling year with you all!

Science Overview

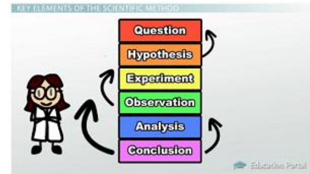
A great deal of focus continues to be placed on improving science education and student achievement in the U.S. The Next Generation Science Standards that have been adopted by the Illinois State Board of Education provide the framework for this goal. At the core of this is engaging students in three dimensions: science & engineering practices; crosscutting concepts; and core ideas. The vision is to develop in our students the contextual understanding of scientific knowledge, how it is acquired and applied, and how science is connected to everything around us. I look forward to engaging your child and facilitating in the development of the skills he or she needs to understand science in the world around him/her.

Middle school science builds on the K-5 disciplinary core ideas, but it broadens in scope and depth. It extends from the physical sciences and engineering practices to the life sciences to earth and space sciences. Performance at the middle school level focuses on students developing understanding of several scientific practices, including developing & using models; planning & conducting investigations; analyzing & interpreting data; using mathematical & computational thinking; and constructing explanations. These practices are used to demonstrate core ideas.

To deepen understanding and foster the development of a scientifically based view of the world, throughout the year with the various units, we will implement various crosscutting concepts at all grade levels: cause and effect; patterns; structure and function; system and system models; energy and matter; scale, proportion, and quantity; and stability and change.

Learning begins with curiosity. Eighth-graders will be provided with Glencoe's Integrated Science textbook, however, to supplement this I will be using printed handouts and materials from a Glencoe Physical Science textbook, McGraw Hill's *Inspire Science* series, plus a number of other teaching resources. Use of the various sources is designed to spark students' interest and encourage them to ask questions, think critically, and generate innovative ideas. Students will seek solutions through inquiry-based, hands-on investigations related to real-world phenomena. The 5E instructional framework I incorporate allows for exploration in the classroom; the five components that instructional units are built around are engage, explore, explain, elaborate, and evaluate.

We will highlight important concepts in the handouts and make notes to study from. Additional typed notes will be provided as needed for various lessons within a unit. We will not necessarily be covering units from the textbook in order.



In eighth grade, we will begin with a brief unit on the scientific method, since this is crucial to science education, providing a framework for learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving, and developing skills applicable to various fields.

Following this, eighth-grade science will focus on Physical Science. We will cover units involving energy & motion, where we cover such topics as forces and motion, mechanical energy and electromagnetic forces; understanding matter, which includes states of matter, thermal energy, temperature, and pressure; interactions of matter, which goes into properties of matter and chemical reactions; and understanding waves, which deals with wave properties and light.

Class Procedures & Expectations

I will be including general information regarding what we are covering in Science as well as specific information regarding projects, tests, and quizzes in the weekly newsletter that is sent with students at the end of the week. Homework assignments, projects and tests will be posted on the school web pages for their homeroom and under Science as well. Links to various videos, notes/study guides, review Kahoots! and various activities and assignments can also be found on Google Classroom.

Following is information which pertains to procedures and policies for all students:

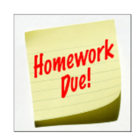
- **Grades**: Grades will be based on students' performance on homework assignments, quizzes, tests, class participation, and various projects. Grades will be broken down as follows:

    5% of the grade → based on **participation** in lab activities, demos, & discussions
    25% of a student's grade will be made up of **homework assignments**
    30% of a student's grade will be comprised of **quizzes & in-class work**
    40% of the grade will be comprised of **tests & projects**

    A **point system** is used (rather than percentages) for all work so that individual questions are not weighted disproportionately. Students are given ample time for work; they need to put forth the necessary effort and be adequately prepared for homework and tests; therefore, there will be no extra credit work or retests given on an individual basis. I may provide extra credit opportunities for the class throughout the year as warranted; extra bonus point questions are also generally included on tests/quizzes.

- **Late work:** Assignments are expected to be turned in on time. Assignments are considered late if they are not fully completed and turned in at the beginning of class. Late work will be accepted and given credit following the middle school policy: the score for the assignment will drop by one letter grade for each day it is late, and the student will complete it during recess and/or P.E.

- **Absences:** If a student is absent, work must be made up within one day for each day absent to receive full credit, as per the Middle School Handbook. This includes obtaining any missed notes, completing reading & written assignments, and scheduling & making up lab activities. A homework sheet will be completed for the day missed; it can be picked up in the office after school or sent home with a family member or friend if requested. It is the **student's responsibility to turn in all work** and to verify that all assignments have been completed. Zero points will be given for any assignments not made up.

    [Please note: When students have missing work due to absences and late or incomplete work, a zero will be temporarily entered in the gradebook as a placeholder/reminder until work is completed and turned in. Credit will be given and scores entered accordingly when absent and late work are submitted and graded.]

- **Class Structure:** Reading from the textbook will be assigned both in class and as homework. Material will be presented through demonstrations, lectures, class discussions, class activities, lab activities, and individual research and exploration. Preparing and staying organized, reviewing material daily, taking good notes, participation in class and attentiveness are key for success. Any questions/concerns should be communicated with me by the student. Students are responsible for having the following materials each class:

  10-pocket folder
  planner
  Chromebook
  textbook, handouts & other materials provided
  pencils, red grading pen, highlighter
  silent reading book

  Students are expected to keep all handouts, notes, homework assignments and related materials for a given unit until we have completed the unit.

- **Expectations: Respect for all is a top priority in the classroom.** Students are expected to follow posted classroom expectations, teacher-given directions, the posted science lab expectations, and the guidelines outlined in both the Bartelso Student/Parent Handbook and the Bartelso Middle School Handbook. Specific posted classroom expectations include the following:

  Be prepared- Students should be in their seat and ready for class, with all necessary materials.

  Be respectful- All actions should be conducive to everyone's learning. Students should work well with others, listen when others are speaking, only share positive thoughts with the class, use appropriate language, only use others' belongings with their permission, and clean up after themselves. A student may not infringe on another's right to an education, their mental and social well-being, or a safe environment.

  Be responsible - Students should participate, stay on task, and listen to & follow both teacher directions and the Bartelso Student Handbook and Middle School Handbook policies. Students should always strive to do their best.

- **Rewards/Consequences:** Positive behaviors will be rewarded with positive feedback, student positive punch card punches with which small prizes can be earned, and quarterly Good Behavior Parties/activities. Consequences for problematic behaviors include warnings, behavior card punches resulting in detention and/or loss of participation in quarterly Good Behavior Parties, and/or an office referral.

If you have any questions/concerns, please contact me at school at (618) 765-2164, or by email at agibson@bsd57.org. Thank you for your support.

Looking forward to a great year,

Mrs. Angie Gibson
Middle School Science
Bartelso 57 School District