Mr. Lord's "Flipped Class"

Welcome to Honors Biology with Mr. Lord in the 2015-16 school year. I am excited to share some information about this course with you as we embark on another year of learning. It is truly an exciting time to be a student of science. I encourage you to visit our class website at http://sunsetridgemsbiology.wikispaces.com/ often to see what your student's are and will be doing throughout the year.

I will be teaching this course through the use of a teaching model called the "flipped classroom". Please take a few moments to read about how my Science classes will work this year using the flipped model.

What is a "flipped class"?

"Flipped Class" is a method of teaching and learning that turns things around and puts kids in control of their learning. Students watch videos of teacher-created material at home instead of listening to a lecture in class. Students take notes and answer questions while they watch the video at home. When students come to class, they use the information that they learned in the video to do things that require people to be together, face to face. This includes activities that put the material to use, and also creating projects and presentations based on the information that they viewed in the video. Students can ask questions of the teacher and their peers in class to clarify questions that they have about the videos. This new-found class time also allows me time to circulate the room and work with groups of students to gauge their understanding, help those who need it, or challenge those who are excelling.

What does homework look like now?

For homework, students will be required to watch videos created by me, where I will teach them the lesson and give examples in the same way they would receive it in class. However, because the students are watching the lessons on video, they have the POWER to pause, rewind, or re-watch any segments of the video at any time. This allows students to learn at their own pace and become more self-directed, having to know when they need to go back over a certain concept they did not fully grasp the first time it was explained. Each video covers roughly half of a chapter and runs 5-15 minutes in length. Students will be required to watch 1-2 videos PER WEEK. Students should plan on spending TWICE the amount of time on homework as the video length is, since they will be pausing to take notes and spending a few minutes at the end thinking and reflecting about what they learned while answering concept check questions. The videos can be accessed through the class website. Because the videos are online, they can be accessed on any internet-capable device, such as a cell phone. I will of course still have traditional homework as well especially if they aren't managing their time wisely.

If you have concerns about your child having access to the videos, please let me know and I will make accommodations. Note taking is being asked of the students in the flipped classroom to help each student stay engaged in the content delivery outside of the classroom. Each student should also take other steps to ensure that he/she completes their homework to the fullest. For instance…

Limit distractions (Turn off the laptop, iPod, TV, cell phone, etc.)

Find a quiet place to watch, listen and write down notes. Allow AT LEAST twice as much time than the length of the video to complete the homework of note taking and answering the worksheets which go along with the video lecture.

Example: After pausing, writing, rewinding, re-watching and writing some more, it may take 10-15 minutes to adequately complete a 5 minute video homework assignment

Watch the video before 10pm

There will be some nights where homework will look like it used to. Not every class will need to be preceded with a video. On those nights (mostly before labs or exams) assigned homework will revolve around pre-lab activities, lab prep and/or review problems and worksheets.

What does class time look like now?

With the movement of direct instruction (i.e. lecture, pre-lab explanations, activity instructions, etc.) out of the classroom, a large chunk of time has now been made available for three major events to take place throughout the class. The three major events that will now shape how class time looks are...

1. Clarification of the content

This will occur at the beginning in a whole class setting. Students and I will take 5-10 minutes at the beginning of class to clarify any major misconceptions or misunderstandings. We will also sample some of the notes and questions students created from watching the videos. This is imperative in making sure we have a solid foundation set to build knowledge from for the rest of the class. Short quizzes over video content will also be given 1-2 times per week. This will also occur throughout the entire period during activities, labs, working practice problems etc. Not only will I have more time to assist students on a one-to-one or small group basis, but students will also be given the ability to assist and clarify for each other. Powerful…

2. Applying content knowledge in a problem-based setting Project based learning is centered around an intriguing driving question centered in the real world. Students must work in groups through multiple activities and labs to gain a deeper insight into the problem at hand. Collaboration and creativity are two skills that I will work to cultivate in each one of my students. Learning to work in a group setting is critical to success after high school. However, I understand that students need to be held individually accountable. Your student will be assessed as an individual and as a group throughout each project.

3. Apply knowledge learned in a test setting

Unit tests will be given every 4-6 weeks and truly challenge students to recall everything they have learned and apply it to real world and laboratory scenarios. Tests are multiple choice, short answer, and essay. In short, what has typically been assigned outside of the classroom for completion will now be worked on and completed inside the classroom. With the additional amount of time now present, the methods of practicing and mastering content can vary greatly in both type and pace. Also, how students display their knowledge will be given more freedom with more time to create and produce work that demonstrates learning to a higher level.

What does a "flipped classroom" require of you as a parent?

The "flipped classroom" enables you as a parent to be more involved in your student's science education. Most parents tend to agree that they do not remember much from their high school science classes and do not feel they can support or help their student at all when they are home doing homework. However, with the flipped classroom there are several very easy ways you can help your student (note: these are just suggestions!):

1. Provide your student with a quiet place to watch the video (preferably with headphones to limit distractions) each night. If Internet or computer access is not available at your house, provide your student with the time to stay after or come in before school to watch the video in the school library or Falcon's lair.

2. Ask your student questions about what they watched and have them present their notes to you out loud.

3. Read their notes yourself to make sure it sounds complete and makes sense.

4. Read the questions they may have asked/written down while watching the video and see if they can answer them after.

5. Encourage them to take their time while watching the videos, which means they pause, rewind, or re-watch portions of the video when the teaching is going too fast or when students need a minute to make sense of what was taught.

6. Watch the videos with them so you can learn along with them and help them when it comes to doing regular practice at home the night before the test!

What does a "flipped classroom" require of your student?

In reality, a flipped classroom does not change the fact that students are expected to go home and do "homework" for 30-45 minutes a night. The only thing that is different is the type of "homework" that they are doing. Instead of doing a homework assignment that the student may get stuck on, find too difficult and then quit or copy from someone else, students simply have to

watch a video, take notes, and answer questions. On nights when they are not watching a video or preparing for a lab, they should be studying their notes or reading from the online textbook or the pdf workbook. Students are expected to come prepared to class each day with the background knowledge of each concept, ready to learn it better, deeper, and faster. Students are not expected to have full mastery of the content before they arrive in class, although many students will be at that level.

The flipped classroom requires your student to take responsibility for their learning in several ways:

1. Students must plan time to watch the video when they are still fully awake and able to make connections between content. (Before 10pm is highly suggested).

2. Students must take initiative to re-watch videos they need to see again.

3. Students must make sure that if they are absent; they still watch the required videos and come to class prepared.

4. Students must make sure that they take initiative to communicate with me either online or in person if there are issues with watching the videos. This includes coming and seeing me before school, after school, or during lunch to watch the videos before class begins as often as possible.

5. Students must take high-quality notes and turn them in on the assigned due date. Video notes are a significant portion of their grade and failure to complete these assignments will lower their grade.

What if I still have questions?

Great! I always tell my students that questioning is an indicator that you are trying to understand the material to a deeper level. Feel free to contact me anytime at joshua.lord@jordandistrict.org. I look forward to working with you and your students to make this year a success!

Sincerely,

Joshua Lord