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**Biology**  
**2013-2014**

Dear Parent,

It is my sincere pleasure to work with your child this year. Biology is a fun subject and students will be learning many important things that all people, not just those interested in careers in science, need to know to be responsible citizens capable of making informed choices. We will learn about how living organisms interact with one another and their environment (ecology), the cells that make up living organisms, their body systems and physiology, how traits are genetically passed on from parents to offspring, and how the collective genetic makeup of a species changes over time (evolution). Many of these topics center around reproduction and while this class is not focused on sexual education, **some aspects of human and animal reproduction will be addressed in class strictly from a physiological perspective. If you do not wish your child to participate in these educational activities, please note this in the *Parent Comments* section and contact me via email at [kmajda@conejousd.org](mailto:kmajda@conejousd.org) to make an appointment** so that we can discuss your concerns. If you are not sure, please make an appointment with me or bring it up during back to school night on September 18<sup>th</sup>.

It is important to me to provide extra resources and guidance to students who may require such. **If your child has any special needs** that I should be aware of, or prescribed classroom modifications, please describe them in the *Parent Comments* section on the back of this letter.

In addition to teaching the California Content Standards for high school biology, it is also my responsibility to prepare your child for college and his or her future career. Responsibility, organization, and preparedness are critical attributes for future success. Many college professors now use PowerPoint presentations to compliment their lectures which they make available for students to print prior to class. We will be using this model for note-taking in this course. **Students are expected to print out the PowerPoint slides ahead of time (six per page) so that they can take notes on them during our in-class lecture and class discussions.** Students will also be expected to visit my website on a regular basis to access course resources and print some additional assignments. It is estimated that students will need to print out an average of 3-5 pages (front and back) per week for this course. Students who do not have access to the Internet or a printer at home can accomplish these tasks in the library before or after school or at lunch. The library charges \$.10 per page per side for printing, so that **adds up to about \$1.00 or less per week.** If your family cannot afford this, please note such in the *Parent Comments* section and I will make alternate arrangements for your child to obtain copies of the necessary materials. Please note that learning to be responsible for printing and bringing these materials to class is important, so parents should only choose this option if there is a real need.

**Grade updates will be posted on Q/Zangle periodically. Please check my website at [kmajda.net](http://kmajda.net) for the daily agenda for this course, which lists the homework, assigned projects, and upcoming tests and quizzes.** There are also resources posted to help students better understand the course material. If in doubt, students should always check the website first to see if they can find the answer to their question.

**The best way to reach me with questions, concerns, or comments is always via email at [kmajda@conejousd.org](mailto:kmajda@conejousd.org).** Please be sure to include your email address on the back of this letter and inform me if it changes. I have over 150 students so email is the most efficient way for me to communicate with parents since I often do so late at night after my own children are in bed. I will let you know if I am having behavior issues with your child or become concerned with his or her progress in my class.

One way to motivate students is to make the class more engaging and fun. I do this by planning out thematic lessons. For example, first semester will be termed "Medical School" and students will gain an understanding of cellular reproduction by studying cancer. One thing you can do at home, if you have the resources, is to purchase a lab coat for your child to wear during labs in lieu of the less fashionable aprons we have in class. I have purchased my own lab coat and one for my seven year old daughter with our names embroidered on the front for a reasonable price at this website: <http://www.scrubshopper.com/>. Purchasing a lab coat is not mandatory, but it certainly helps motivate most students to work harder.

Finally, one more recommended purchase is the excellent book *Essential Study Skills for Science Students* by Daniel D. Chiras **which can be purchased from Amazon.com for only \$3.00.** Students can either purchase this book on their own or bring me \$3.00 by **Friday, September 20<sup>th</sup>** and I will purchase it for them. I cannot stress enough how important it is for students to learn the skills discussed in this book. We will be discussing many of these in class and it would be very helpful for all students to have their own copy of the book.

Looking forward to meeting you at Back to School Night on the 18<sup>th</sup>,

*Kristin Majda*

## PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE AND SIGNATURE PAGE

Please review and sign off on the items below and return this form to school with your child by the due date of Friday, September 6<sup>th</sup>. Please note that you can view or print a copy of this letter for your records from the course website.

Do you plan to attend Back to School Night on Wednesday, September 18<sup>th</sup>? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

I try to incorporate guest speakers in the classroom to help students learn about careers in various STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields. Would you be interested in being a guest speaker? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If so, please list your profession (for both parents if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

### Please initial each item below indicating you have complied with the requested action:

\_\_\_\_\_ I have read and discussed this letter with my child and will contact Ms. Majda with any questions or concerns

\_\_\_\_\_ I have read the course syllabus and have a general understanding of how my child's grade will be determined

\_\_\_\_\_ I have received the Parent Donation Form from my child.

\_\_\_\_\_ I give Ms. Majda permission to post photos of an academic nature of my child on her course website.  
(this allows me to better share with all parents the sorts of things we are working on in class)

\_\_\_\_\_ I have read and discussed the lab safety rules with my child and signed the lab safety contract.

\_\_\_\_\_ *Honors Students Only:* Per school policy, I understand that my child must maintain a B or better grade to remain in honors biology

**Parent Comments:** (Please write any concerns or stipulations you would like me to take into consideration regarding your child)

Parent/Guardian Name(s) (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Phone Number(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Email Address(es): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature(s): \_\_\_\_\_