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Welcome to 4th Grade Science!

We are so excited about the upcoming year and the opportunity to get to know and teach your child. This year is going to be a ton of fun, and we are going to learn at the same time. We are going to take a different approach to teaching Science this year. Your child will be participating in Project Based Learning (PBL). Project Based Learning is a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to a complex question, problem, or challenge. Essential Elements of PBL include:

- Significant Content At its core, the project is focused on teaching students important knowledge and skills, derived from standards and key concepts at the heart of academic subjects.
- 21st Century Competencies Students build competencies valuable for today's world, such as problem solving, Critical thinking, Collaboration, Communication, and Creativity/innovation, which are explicitly taught and assessed.
- In-Depth Inquiry Students are engaged in an extended, rigorous process of asking questions, using resources, and developing answers.
- Driving Question Project work is focused by an open-ended question that students understand and find intriguing, which captures their task or frames their exploration.
- Need to Know Students see the need to gain knowledge, understand concepts, and apply skills in order to answer the Driving Question and create project products, beginning with an Entry Event that generates interest and curiosity.
- Voice and Choice Students are allowed to make some choices about the products to be created, how they work, and how they use their time, guided by the teacher and depending on age level and PBL experience.
- Critique and Revision The project includes processes for students to give and receive feedback on the quality of their work, leading them to make revisions or conduct further inquiry.
- Public Audience Students present their work to other people, beyond their classmates and teacher.

Your child will not be taking routine tests on the material we are learning in class. Many of your child's grades will come from their participation and understanding of the projects they are working on in class. We will mainly use rubrics (that the students will help create) to issue grades. If you are unfamiliar with rubrics, a *rubric* is an explicit set of criteria used for assessing a particular type of work or performance. A rubric usually also includes levels of potential achievement for each criterion, and sometimes also includes work or performance samples that typify each of those levels. Levels of achievement are often given numerical scores. A summary score for the work being assessed may be produced by adding the scores for each criterion.

Any score that your child receives will be communicated to you through the weekly folders. If you ever have any questions, please feel free to email us! There are many great research articles out there on PBL. I encourage you to read up on PBL and the many benefits.

