

**Parent Conferences:**

It was good to meet so many of you during virtual parent conferences. Even though there are no more conference days set aside this year, please let me know if you ever have questions or concerns.

**Making Sense of Aspen--Moving to 2nd Trimester:**

Like many units, scores from Cells & Genetics will be added during different trimesters. You want to see all tasks in a given standard at once. Here's what to do:

Once in Aspen, go to **Science**, and then click on "**Assignments**" (the first science screen doesn't give you useful information). Near the upper right are two drop-down menus. One is for **trimester**. Keep trimesters on "**All**". The other drop-down is for **standard**. Self Direction (SD) is the work habits (non-academic) standard. The academic standards, in the order we are working on them, are Science Process Skills, Properties of Matter, Cells & Genetics, Forces and Motion, and Properties of Energy.

Here is a description of the tasks you will see in Aspen for **Cells & Genetics**.

**SD:**

**C&G SD Week 1, 2, 3...:** These weekly scores describe how well students did their jobs in class (followed directions, came to class on time with their science materials, remained on task, participated in discussions) during our unit. These SD scores will be recorded all year. (**Eight** sixth graders had **perfect SD scores** for the entire 1st trimester. This is impressive!)

**C & G Product Goals 1 & 2 on time:****C & G Product Goals 3 & 4 on time:**

These scores show whether your child submitted their products on time. The most recent two goals were due at the end of last week.

**C & G Socratic Assessment on time:** (This unit's assessment is due Friday 12/11, so will be reported after that.) Each unit the Socratic Assessment serves as one summative assessment for the unit. Assessments are activated near the end of the unit, and students have two weeks to answer the 10-questions. This SD score indicates whether your child completed it on time, and also if they signed in properly. [Period Last Name First Initial.]

### **Academic Standards:**

Here were the four product goals for Cells & Genetics:

1. Name a **single-celled** organism and describe how they make more of themselves.
2. Name a **multi-celled** organism and describe how they make more of themselves.
3. Draw or make a model of a cell. (Include the following parts: **nucleus, genes, chromosomes.**)
4. Explain the following:
  - a. Which part of your cell is basically your traits.
  - b. Where **your** traits come from.

For each goal, there is a score in Aspen for the **product** your child made and for the **interview** that was associated with the product. [This means you will see **eight different scores.**] Why do I require both? Students can create products (written narratives, Google Slides, labeled diagrams, videos) that are very accurate without truly understanding the material. How? They use their resources (notes, outlines, Google, friends, parents...) to help them. It is during interviews that I can probe, evaluate, and guide students. Although interviews are summative assessments, there is still teaching and learning taking place!

**Note:** I've completed only half of the student interviews for Product Goals 3 & 4. I will complete the rest early next week.

**Cells & Genetics Socratic Quiz:** [See Socratic Assessment info above under SD.] This will be the final academic task in Aspen for Cells & Genetics.

### **Next Up--Magnetism:**

We will be moving on to Magnetism next. Here are product goals for Magnetism. The **first** and **second** will be performed only orally--no product required.

1. Define "magnetic field".
2. Name and explain at least two different factors that affect a magnet's ability to move an object. [i.e. distance from magnet, mass of object, type of magnet used]
3. Demonstrate the existence of magnetic fields. [Make toy. Paragraph explanation.] **Note:** Since many students lack needed materials, a **detailed diagram** of a toy will suffice.

### **Speaking of materials:**

Families will never be responsible for purchasing special materials for any science unit. However, magnetism will be far more engaging for your child if he or she has a stronger magnet than those rubberized refrigerator magnets.

Ideally students have both a ring magnet and a bar magnet as shown below. Most hardware stores have ring magnets--probably for less than \$2. Many toys have magnets that may work as well, so perhaps a search around the house will reveal forgotten magnets! If students do not have any good magnets, they will still be able to do all activities with me, but if they can't **feel** the magnetism, it will be less engaging.



### **Engineering Assignments:**

When in school, I assign an at-home STEM activity twice per trimester. These **Engineering Assignments** challenge students to create various devices using recycled materials (no materials need to be purchased). I spent a lot of time debating whether or not to make these required this year. I know many homes feel greater stress than normal due to Covid. So, ultimately, I decided to have them optional all year.

The **One-Minute Timer** was our first Engineering Assignment of the year (due early November). 16 Auroras in 6th and 7th, total, completed this. Many were amazingly accurate, and all showed good thinking skills. Our second Engineering Assignment will be given before Holiday Break, and will be due early January. **Note:** [All Engineering Assignments are explained in videos on the Student-Created Work page of my website.](#)

Happy holidays to you and your family.