September 13, 2017

Dear Families,

We are pleased and excited to welcome your child to the Sophomore Academy at the Jeremiah Burke High School! Good communication between families, teachers, and students is very important for the academic and personal growth of our students, so we are sending this letter home to ensure our partnership gets off to a great start.

**Required Materials**

- English: 1 three ring binder, 4 dividers, pens, pencils, and erasers
- Geometry: 1-inch binder and **lots of pencils**!
- Intervention Math: 1 graphing paper composition notebook, 1 folder, different colored pens, pencils
- Biology: 2 notebooks, 1 folder, pencils and erasers

**Meet the Sophomore Academy Team**

**Ms. Windle - Sophomore Academy Team Leader**

Welcome back to the 2017-2018 school year! I hope you had a wonderful summer and are ready to embark upon your sophomore year. We are planning and anticipating a year filled with challenges, learning and excitement. Our academy is composed of many dedicated staff members who I am certain will be most helpful to you throughout this school year. Academics will continue to be the top priority in the Sophomore Academy and our focus this year will be based on working together to increase student achievement. It is important that our students arrive for the new school year with the belief that education is important and requires hard work. Please note that school starts at 7:55am and ends at 2:35pm. Punctuality and attendance are virtues that will set a standard for the rest of our student’s lives.

In compliance with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, our sophomores will be required to take the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). Students in the Sophomore Academy will be enrolled in MCAS Math and English classes in preparation for the MCAS exam. To ensure that our students are prepared, we will also be offering MCAS classes through our PULSE after-school program. All students are encouraged to participate in this programming. Research has shown that our students, who use this resource, complete the MCAS requirement on their very first attempt. We would be proud to add your name to this list of students who have completed this amazing accomplishment.

Please feel free to contact Ms. Windle at w: 617-635-9837 ext. 33101 and c: 617-388-3299 as well as email: cwindle@bostonpublicschools.org.

**Mr. Hill and Ms. Hernandez, English**

Tenth grade is a critical year in English as students must take and pass the ELA MCAS test. For the past five years our scores have risen on the MCAS, and we hope this year to continue that trend. To that end, students will do readings from the drama of Shakespeare and other classic works to current events and contemporary literature from various perspectives. They will also write a variety of pieces - open responses, long compositions, analytical essays, and book reviews. In addition, we’ll debate to enrich our argumentation skills, study words and their components to enhance vocabulary, and we’ll look closely at grammar in order to improve writing and our understanding of how and why writers make the choices they do. It’ll be a busy and demanding year, and with your help and support a beneficial and rewarding one as well.

Please feel free to contact either of us: Mr. Hill: mrcfhill@gmail.com or Ms. Hernandez: v hernandez@bostonpublicschools.org

**Ms. DeMello and Mr. Schwartz, Geometry**
The purpose of Geometry is to develop critical thinking and reasoning skills, as well as develop student’s ability to explain their work orally and verbally. Throughout the year, we will be developing students’ geometric and algebraic skills through the use of challenging math tasks and writing. These skills will be essential as students work together to investigate and define the space around them. Go math!

Please feel free to contact the 10th grade math teacher team: Zach Schwartz (zschwartz@bostonpublicschools.org), Viviana DeMello (vdemello@bostonpublicschools.org).

Ms. Ojimba, Intervention Math

Sophomore year is very important for math. Not only will you be learning Geometry, but some of you will be part of Intervention Math, a class designed to support students who have consistently struggled in math. With the MCAS coming up in May you need to be as prepared as possible, as passing the MCAS is a graduation requirement. Students in Intervention Math will improve their overall mathematical understanding and address whatever misconceptions come up. Feel free to reach out to Ms. Ojimba with any questions or concerns at gojimba@bostonpublicschools.org.

Mrs. Robb and Ms. Lamb, Biology

Biology is a standards based course that covers the following units: scientific inquiry, ecology, macromolecules, cells, genetics, evolution and anatomy and physiology. Students will be using inquiry in order to develop their understanding of science and the world around them. In class, students will be developing communication skills, which includes presentation skills, as well as reading and writing skills, in order to learn new information and share their new knowledge. Students will carry out scientific experiments, create projects, and write lab reports and essays demonstrating what they learned throughout the year. We look forward to meeting all of you. Mrs. Robb and Ms. Lamb will be the Biology teachers, if you would like to contact us, our emails are: dlamb2@bostonpublicschools.org and aroubb@bostonpublicschools.org.

Mr. Rusell, Student Development Counselor

Mr. Rusell assists all students in the Sophomore Academy with developing academic, career and personal/social skills goals. Mr. Rusell works to ensure that all students are exposed to higher educational opportunities by arranging college tours throughout the school year. On a regular basis, he collaborates with parents/guardians and educators to assist students with educational, career and life planning. Please feel free to contact Mr. Rusell at w: 617-635-9837 ext. 30213 and email: Irussell@bostonpublicschools.org.

Mr. Thomas, Student Engagement Counselor

Mr. Thomas assists with the implementation of student support goals in the Sophomore Academy. Mr. Thomas works closely with the Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color (COSEBOC) in which Mr. Thomas plays an integral role by taking students to the COSEBOC annual conference. “The mission of the Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color is to connect, inspire, support and strengthen school leaders dedicated to the social, emotional and academic development of boys and young men of color.” Please feel free to contact Mr. Thomas by email at: dthomas4@boston.k12.ma.us

Mr. Alfaro, School Social Worker

Mr. Alfaro supports students in the Sophomore Academy with developing and managing personal, social, and emotional goals. Mr. Alfaro assists with the implementation of individual therapy for students on a regular and as needed basis. Mr. Alfaro will frequently collaborate with parents/guardians and educators to support students with social, emotional, and educational planning. I look forward to working together with the Sophomore Academy to help all of the students achieve success both inside and outside of the classroom throughout the year. Please feel free to contact Mr. Alfaro at w: 617-635-9837 ext. 33125.

City Year at the Burke

City Year supports students and teachers in the Freshmen, Sophomore and SEI Academies. During the day, City Year corps members attend classes with students to provide whole class support as well as one-on-one and small group
tutoring in math, English, history, and science. City Year corps members are mentors and role models to our Burke students, and work with students to help them succeed in all areas of school, including attendance, behavior, and coursework.

The City Year team also staffs a free after-school homework help room (the "BARK" room) from 2:00 to 4:00 every Monday through Thursday after school. City Year corps members will also begin running their own monthly after-school enrichments starting later this month. Options include Poetry, No Bake session, Fitness, and more. Join us at the Open House to meet us in person and learn more about what we do at the Burke!

**Sophomore Academy Grading**

**Our Philosophy:**

Many people think of the brain as a mystery. They do not know much about intelligence and how it works. When they do think about what intelligence is, many people believe that a person is born smart, average, or dumb — and stays that way for life.

But research shows that the brain is more like a muscle — it changes and gets stronger when you use it. And scientists have been able to show just how the brain grows and gets stronger when you learn.

Everyone knows that when you lift weights, your muscles get bigger and you get stronger. A person who cannot lift 20 pounds when they start exercising can get strong enough to lift 100 pounds after working out for a long time. That's because the muscles become larger and stronger with exercise. And when you stop exercising, the muscles shrink and you get weaker. That's why people say "Use it or lose it!"

But most people do not know that when they practice and learn new things, parts of their brain change and get larger a lot like muscles do when they exercise. Inside the cortex of the brain are billions of tiny nerve cells, called neurons. The nerve cells have branches connecting them to other cells in a complicated network. Communication between these brain cells is what allows us to think and solve problems.

When you learn new things, these tiny connections in the brain actually multiply and get stronger. The more that you challenge your mind to learn, the more your brain cells grow. Then, things that you once found very hard or even impossible to do — like speaking a foreign language or doing algebra — seem to become easy. The result is a stronger, smarter brain.

At first, no one can read or solve equations. But with practice, they can learn to do it. And the more a person learns, the easier it gets to learn new things because their brain "muscles" have gotten stronger! (above adapted from “You Can Grow Your Intelligence” at [http://www.nais.org/](http://www.nais.org/))

Based on this knowledge we have set up our coursework in your core academic classes to allow you to practice, practice, practice so students grow their brain and their intelligence to get ready for the MCAS, junior and senior year, the SATs, and college.

We have also structured our grading on this philosophy. Most of a student’s grade will come from their demonstration of having actually learned how to independently accomplish tasks asked for in the learning standards. They will also be graded on how effectively they are utilizing all their practice time.

**Commitment to Learning Grade:**

In addition to demonstrating their understanding of content and skill standards, it is also very important that students continue to demonstrate their ability to show the habits of mind of a successful student. We believe these habits of mind include a strong commitment to learning, such as putting in effort to both classwork and homework, along with some other consistent expectations. Each of the four main academic subject area teachers will grade students according to the Commitment to Learning standards on a weekly basis on the same rubric. This grade will compose approximately 25% of students overall grade in each of their four main academic classes. These Commitment to Learning (CTL) grades will also be compiled weekly and will be used to determine which students will receive various rewards and incentives throughout the school year and which students are eligible for fieldtrips.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>4 (Advanced)</th>
<th>3 (Proficient)</th>
<th>2 (Needs Improvement)</th>
<th>1 (Failing)</th>
<th>0 (No attempt)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Present and on-time</td>
<td>- Always in class from bell to dismissal</td>
<td>- Consistently in class from bell to dismissal</td>
<td>- Frequently in class from bell to dismissal</td>
<td>- Occasionally in class from bell to dismissal</td>
<td>- Rarely in class from bell to dismissal</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Rarely late to and/or absent from class for any reason</td>
<td>- Occasionally late to and/or absent from class for any reason</td>
<td>- Frequently late to and/or absent from class for any reason</td>
<td>- Consistently misses class time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Prepared for class</td>
<td>- Always has materials necessary for class</td>
<td>- Consistently has materials necessary for class</td>
<td>- Frequently has materials necessary for class</td>
<td>- Occasionally has materials necessary for class</td>
<td>- Rarely has materials necessary for class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Always maintains their binder in organized manner</td>
<td>- Consistently maintains their binder in organized manner</td>
<td>- Frequently maintains their binder in organized manner</td>
<td>- Occasionally maintains their binder in organized manner</td>
<td>- Rarely maintains their binder in organized manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Shows Respect for classmates, teacher,</td>
<td>- Always respects and supports the learning of self and others</td>
<td>- Consistently respects and supports the learning of self and others</td>
<td>- Frequently respects and supports the learning of self and others</td>
<td>- Occasionally respects and supports the learning of self and others</td>
<td>- Rarely respects and supports the learning of self and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school property</td>
<td>- Always uses respectful, appropriate language when referring to</td>
<td>- Consistently uses respectful, appropriate language when referring to</td>
<td>- Frequently uses respectful, appropriate language when referring to self, classmates, and teacher</td>
<td>- Occasionally uses respectful, appropriate language when referring to self,</td>
<td>- Rarely uses respectful, appropriate language when referring to self, classmates, and teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self, classmates, and teacher</td>
<td>self, classmates and teacher</td>
<td>- Frequently helps maintain an clean, orderly learning environment</td>
<td>classmates, and teacher</td>
<td>- Rarely helps maintain an clean, orderly learning environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Always helps maintain an clean, orderly learning environment</td>
<td>- Consistently helps maintain an clean, orderly learning environment</td>
<td>- Frequently helps maintain an clean, orderly learning environment</td>
<td>- Occasionally helps maintain an clean, orderly learning environment</td>
<td>- Rarely helps maintain an clean, orderly learning environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Honors Deadlines</td>
<td>- Homework always turned in complete and on-time</td>
<td>- Homework consistently turned in complete and on-time</td>
<td>- Homework frequently turned in complete and on-time</td>
<td>- Homework occasionally turned in complete and on-time</td>
<td>- Work rarely turned in complete and/or on-time</td>
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<tr>
<td>(home work &amp; papers)</td>
<td>- Papers and projects always turned in complete and on-time (or early)</td>
<td>- Papers and projects consistently turned in complete and on-time</td>
<td>- Papers and projects frequently turned in complete and on-time</td>
<td>- Papers and projects occasionally turned in complete and on-time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Engaged</td>
<td>- Always actively engaged and on task</td>
<td>- Consistently actively engaged and on task</td>
<td>- Frequently actively engaged and on task</td>
<td>- Occasionally actively engaged and on task</td>
<td>- Rarely engaged in a positive, productive manner</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Always actively listening and participating in class and groups</td>
<td>- Consistently actively listening and participating in class and groups</td>
<td>- Frequently actively listening and participating in class and groups</td>
<td>- Occasionally actively listening and participating in class and groups</td>
<td>- Needs frequent redirection and/or behavioral mediation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Positive leader amongst classmates</td>
<td>- Positive leader amongst classmates</td>
<td>- Rarely needs redirection</td>
<td>- Occasionally needs redirection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Testing Information**

All sophomores at the Burke will take the PSAT on **Wednesday, October 19th** to help prepare them for the SAT, an important national college admissions test. More information on the PSAT is at: http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/about.html

Successful completion of the high school Math, English and a Science MCAS tests is a requirement for graduation across the commonwealth of Massachusetts. All sophomores at the Burke will take the Math and ELA 10th grade MCAS for the first time in the spring of 2018 (as will all sophomores across Massachusetts.) Most students at the Burke took the Physics MCAS at the end of their freshman year, if they passed this exam they do not need to take the Biology MCAS in the spring of their sophomore year. For those students who didn't pass the Physics MCAS being prepared to be successful on the Biology MCAS instead will be critical.

The test dates for the spring MCAS are as follows, you'll want to make sure your student is in school on time with a good night's rest and a good breakfast (available at school) for these very important tests:

- ELA Composition, Sessions A and B - MARCH 27
  (For this test students will be writing and revising their own 5 paragraph essay about a book they have read - they will want to come prepared knowing strong details of at least 2 books to choose from.)

- ELA Reading Comprehension, Sessions 1 and 2 - MARCH 28
- ELA Reading Comprehension, Session 3 - MARCH 29

- Mathematics, Session 1 - MAY 23
- Mathematics, Session 2 - MAY 24

- Biology/Physics, Session 1 - JUNE 6
- Biology/Physics, Session 2 - JUNE 7

Thank you for your time, input and dedication to your child’s learning. We look forward to getting to know him/her this school year!

Sincerely,

The Sophomore Academy Team
Please return this page to school with your student. Your contact information will help us keep communication open throughout the year. Your student should give it to their homeroom teacher.

Student Name: ____________________________________________________________

Parent/Guardian Name: ____________________________________________________

Parent/Guardian Day Phone: ___________________________ Evening Phone:________________________
Parent/Guardian Cell Phone: ___________________________ Email:__________________________@_____

Does your child have access to a computer at home? Yes No
Does your child have access to Internet at home? Yes No
Parent/Guardian Preferred Contact Method: (check one or more):

_____ Phone   _____ Email   _____ Text Message

Preferred Contact Time: (check one or more):

_____ Day   _____ Evening   _____ Weekends   _____ Anytime

Additional Contacts (Name / Relationship to Student / Contact Info):
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

Language(s) spoken at home: ______________________________________________________________

Optional: We believe that families play a vital role in a child’s education—you know your child more than anyone else in the world. Therefore, your knowledge and values are important to us as teachers.

If you have time, please answer the following questions. Your answers will help us get to know you and your child. Use space on the back of this sheet, if necessary.

1. Is there anything we should know about your child that might help us better teach him/her? (Environments in which he/she has succeeded, environments that have been challenging.)

2. Use this space to BRAG about your child - what is awesome about him/her?