



BEN STEELE MIDDLE SCHOOL

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To the Parents and Families of Ben Steele Students,

For the first month and a half of our school year, the staff at Ben Steele has been working through a book called “Power of ICU”. The goal of this book study was to build a deeper understanding of the ICU program, and the philosophy behind it, before jumping into full, school-wide implementation. If you are new to Ben Steele, this program may be completely new to you. If you have been with us before, or have come from another school that utilizes the ICU program, you may have some familiarity with how ICU works.

On the back of this letter, you will find a thorough description of what ICU is and how it can be utilized to help decrease student apathy, with regards to work completion, and help students, parents and teachers work together to ensure that all work is completed in a quality manner.

Soon after the receipt of this letter, our school will begin using the ICU program as a way to communicate with you, specifically concerning assigned work being turned in on time. This is not a punitive system, as indicated in the program description on the back, but rather a quick, easy and effective way to bring you, as the parent, into the teaching/learning process. We have utilized Power School to import contact information into the ICU program allowing us to “ping” your phone, should your student not turn in an assignment on the assigned due date. Our program allows for one cell phone number and one e-mail address, to be imported, but you can add a second cell number, if requested. ***Contact the office, if you would like to add a second cell number to receive texts.** Since this information is school specific, only the administrative staff will have access to students’ contact information, to make changes or additions. That text message will indicate that, “your child has been placed on ICU by Mrs. Lane” which will tell you that s/he has not turned in a math assignment on the expected due date. That brief reminder will then allow you to communicate directly with your child, concerning the assignment, as to why it was not turned in. Historically, the ICU program has effectively built a system of support around students, combining teacher and parent encouragement of learning concepts and completing high quality work.

If, after reading this letter and the description on the back, you still have questions about ICU, please contact me at the school, or send me an e-mail. I will do my best to answer your questions about ICU and the philosophy behind the program. In the end, it is all about student learning, and ensuring that kids are turning in quality work. Thank you for your partnership!

Respectfully,

Joe M. Halligan
halliganj@billingssschools.org

The ICU Formula – Work Completion + Quality Assignments + Healthy Grading = Student Success

What is ICU?

The ICU program at Ben Steele is a database that allows teachers, students and parents to remain in close contact regarding student work completion, on a day to day basis. The program itself is not a grading, or assessment program, but rather a vehicle to deliver timely information to parents/guardians regarding the status of assigned and completed work. When used correctly, ICU is not punitive, but rather a healthy reminder that work needs to be completed and turned in to the teacher(s) assigning the work.

How does ICU work?

Here is an example of how ICU will be used: If a math assignment, Pg. 204 #2-24 evens, is due on September 21st, for Mrs. Lane, and three students do not turn it in (for a variety of reasons) those students would be put on ICU for that assignment. Once they are put on ICU, ideally during the period it's due or shortly after, parents will immediately receive a text message indicating that "their son/daughter has been placed on ICU by Mrs. Lane". Text messages will go to the phone number provided upon enrollment, or the record in PowerSchool. An email will also be sent, at the same time, and the email will contain more specific information about the missing assignment; page number, problems to be completed, as well as the attached assignment, if in PDF form. (Emails will only be sent if parents have provided an email in PowerSchool)

Why do we use ICU?

The purpose of ICU is three-fold;

1) **Work Completion** – At Ben Steele, we are most interested that students learn the material that is presented throughout the year, and understand that some students will learn at different rates. ICU helps to ensure that all students complete the work that is assigned, regardless of the time that may pass between the assigning and completion. If the ultimate goal is student learning, then we are not going to put a time limit on how long it takes a student to learn a concept. This can, and will, only be accomplished when teachers, students and parents work together to make it happen.

2) **Quality Assignments** – Our teachers are committed to teaching the most important standards across all grade levels and subjects. The goal of each teacher at Ben Steele is to provide rigor and relevance every day, and the work that is assigned to students should reflect that goal. We will not assign busy work, just for the sake of assigning work, but rather the assignments given will be purposeful, and will support and reinforce the standards being taught. Because learning is paramount, in most cases, students will be allowed to make corrections or redo assignments to demonstrate higher levels of learning.

3) **Healthy Grading Practices** – At the end of the day, grades should reflect student learning. Regardless of when the learning was accomplished, students will receive credit (within reason of course) for work completed. Healthy grading practices separate behaviors from academics, and this program helps in that process. While a student's attitude, effort and behavior play a huge role in their academic success, our focus for grading has to be on the concepts learned. The ICU program helps to ensure that work is completed, learning happens and grades reflect academic achievement.

How you can help in the ICU Process –

The success of this program relies on teacher, student and parent buy-in. With your support from home, we will help to hold our students accountable to the (quality) work that is assigned each day at Ben Steele Middle School. We will do our best to offer support throughout the school day, as well as before and after school, but parent support is critical. When you receive an ICU text message, please understand that it is not a punitive text, but rather a reminder (or indicator) that your child did not turn an assignment in when it was due, nothing more, at that point. As the parent, you can help to remind them to make sure the work gets turned in at the next available opportunity. Please call the school if you have any questions.