

## Honors Biology Statement of Understanding and Agreement Form

To be signed by both parents and students

Dear Honors Biology Parents and Students,

Congratulations for signing up for Honors Biology! As a science educator, I truly hope that this will be a great experience for you and your child. I would like to clarify how and why taking this course is different from the traditional path of taking a regular biology class. Students, by choosing to take an honors science class, I am assuming that you have a very high interest in taking advanced and AP science classes in the future. We know that in order to be successful in the advanced classes, it requires more skills than just performing well on tests. Although memorization of information is important, science demands more than that. It requires important skills such as critical thinking, advanced reading/writing, problem solving and being comfortable with not having the right answer all the time. True science is about asking questions and then figuring out the best avenue to answering those questions. Although we want all students to experience success, it is not about getting an A. It is about learning. My expectations for my students are that they ask questions, become patient with the process, and be open to learning skills that will enhance their understanding of complex science concepts. This may look very different from the traditional approach students have grown accustomed to in past science classes. My goal is to prepare our science students for a future in the fields of science and/or developing higher thinking skills that will enable them to have success in advanced courses.

As the Honors Biology teacher, I will require that students spend time at home learning concepts and forming questions. There will be **required** reading assignments along with note taking, question development, vocabulary acquisition, and the traditional “homework.” The beginning of each class period will be used to review the reading, discuss the learning targets within the reading/assignment, and begin to explore answers to the questions raised. There will be notebook checks to ensure that students are keeping up with the material. Some tasks might seem tedious but it is important for students to understand that much of science is about connecting large concepts to detailed, nuanced components. Essentially, working to put the puzzle together to understand the larger picture. Making observations, recording data, generating more questions, refining procedures and evaluating information seen and unseen is what scientists do. Discussions, presentations, notebooks, quizzes and tests are my window to visualize their learning and progress. It is so important that students remain actively engaged and independently determined to be successful in this class. Open communication between the student and teacher is critical. I can only help if, and when, I know there is an issue. I will be happy to explain the purpose of an assignment or to give suggestions on study skills, problems in labs, difficulty with material, etc. But keep in mind that part of the solution might require time for students to figure it out.

Students need to be highly motivated, well organized, detail oriented, strong communicators, and accepting of trying and being wrong at times to grow as an honors student. Students who memorize well and test well, but are not motivated and fall behind, will struggle mightily in this advanced course.

### **Classroom Expectations:**

- Be on time for class
- Be respectful to yourself, teachers, and peers at ALL times
  
- Be prepared for class:
  - Bring your ***school-issued Macbook*** each day
  - Bring ***headphones/earbuds to class***
  - Bring your ***agenda/planner*** each day
  - ***REQUIRED - 3-ring binder (1.5") used for Biology only with 8 dividers.***
    - ***Students also in the AVID program will utilize a specific system for that class and this piece does not apply to those students.***

### **Grading System:**

- Unit Tests – 45%
- Common Assessments – 30%
- Quizzes - 15%
- Classwork - 10%
- Each semester final will count as 15% of the grade for that semester.

### **Late Work:**

- Learning to budget your time and meet deadlines is a valuable job/life skill which students will need in the “real world”!
  
- Nearly all of a student’s grade in Honors Biology will reflect their knowledge of the content in the form of quizzes, common assessments, and unit tests. There will be very little work to be turned in from time outside of class; however, not completing assigned activities may significantly impact student knowledge/skills within the content and result in low scores on the above items.
  
- Students who do not come to class consistently prepared (3 or more times without completed work/readings/notes) will be required to attend a detention as an aid to help them allocate time as an extra step in accountability as they have placed themselves in a rigorous curriculum.

### **Winter Project:**

- Students in Honors Biology will engage in an independent research project that culminates with a “TED Talk” style presentation. It is a very large undertaking that students will need to devote a large chunk of time to complete to a high level. There will NOT be class time given to work on this project.
  
- The components of this project will be shared in early November.

As the introductory course for all honors science and AP courses, I am here to help and guide you to meet your goals. Please sign below indicating that you understand the expectations and rigor associated with this class. I look forward to working with all of you.

Sincerely,

Justin Hoffman  
Honors Biology Teacher  
De Soto High School

---

Parent printed name Date

---

Parent Signature Date

---

Student printed name Date

---

Student Signature Date

Please address any comments or concerns below. Thanks for your time.

Comments/Concerns: