

Dear students & parents:

To my students: welcome to Mr. Bigler's honors Chemistry class! Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be your teacher.

To my students' parents: Thank you. Thank you for taking an interest in your child's education. Thank you for supporting your child as he/she strives to learn new concepts and master new skills. Also, thank you for reading this letter. I apologize in advance for its length, but I hope you find it informative.

My goals are to:

- Teach my students chemistry, according to the standards of the Massachusetts Department of Education.
- Prepare my students to take the SAT Subject Test in Chemistry.
- Teach my students to understand scientific thought and the scientific process.
- Develop my students' problem-solving skills in a way that will be useful well beyond the limits of the classroom.
- Teach my students to design and carry out experiments and keep a laboratory notebook.
- Teach my students to communicate the results of their experiments in writing.

These are the skills that will serve my students well in college, industry, and wherever else life takes them.

In my experience, students are successful when they can see a clear path that leads from where they are to where they need to be. As a teacher, one of my jobs is to make that path as clear and easy to navigate as possible. In most situations, students are invited to re-take tests, re-write assignments, and make up missed homework assignments. In past years, I have found that the difference between an "F" and a "B" or an "A" on a test is only about two hours of focused extra help.

These policies may seem lenient, but it is because the goal is for students to learn chemistry, even if it takes multiple attempts. I have no desire to punish students who need to learn on a different schedule from mine, as long as they ultimately do learn. My class will be challenging at times, but I do my best to make the challenges equal to my students' potential. Chemistry practice, in the form of homework, works just like football, hockey, lacrosse, or cheerleading practice—if you practice enough, you will master the necessary tasks. As a result, I have never had a student who did every single homework assignment and earned a grade lower than a "B."

I have a website (www.mrbigler.com). (Yes, Mr. Bigler is a dot-com!) The website includes a MOODLE online courseware site, which contains downloadable class notes, assignments, an assignment calendar, and links to useful resources and practice problems. I also maintain email list for my classes, which I use to send out periodic reminders about assignments, tests, and other relevant information. Students are given a login on the MOODLE site and subscribed to the email list at the beginning of the year. Parents are invited to visit the MOODLE site—simply click the "Log in as a guest" button—and to subscribe to the email list if they wish.

I also have an AIM screen name that I use for extra help and to answer chemistry questions. The screen name is **MrBiglerChem**. If I am signed on to it, that means I am available to answer questions. (Please note that this screen name is for professional (school) use only, and all conversations are

logged.)

In order to provide me with enough information to be able to help my students as much as possible, I will be distributing both a student information form and a parent assignment. I ask both students and parents to spend a few minutes completing their respective forms.

In addition, if any parents would like to speak with me by telephone or to meet with me after school sometime between now and Parents' Night in October, please let me know. (Please include a telephone number and a description of the best times to call.)

Regarding supplies, I recommend that my students obtain following for my class:

- **A positive attitude.** Any student who doesn't have one of these will need to do a good job of pretending.
- **A 3-ring binder** ($1\frac{1}{2}$ " or 2" recommended) for notes, handouts, and assignments. I give out notes packets and worksheets, so a 3-ring binder works much better than pocket folders or spiral-bound notebooks.
- **A composition notebook** to use as a laboratory notebook. This notebook must have the pages bound tightly so that they cannot be easily removed. A spiral-bound notebook or 3-ring binder is *not* acceptable for use as a lab notebook.
- **A scientific calculator.** If you already have a graphing calculator from your math classes, great. However, you don't need anything that fancy. Any calculator that can do scientific notation and logarithms is sufficient. A basic scientific calculator, such as a TI-30, costs about \$10 at most department stores.

Please let me know if there is anything I can do to help ensure a successful year in chemistry. My email addresses are mrbigler@mrbigler.com and JeffreyBigler@k12.waltham.ma.us. I also have a voice mail extension, but I get so few messages (one or two a year) that I often forget to check it, so email or a message via the freshman house office (where my mailbox is) is the fastest way to reach me.

I am looking forward to a successful year in chemistry for all of us!

Yours truly,

Mr. Bigler