

Dear Families and Caregivers,

I would like to welcome your kiddo to 7th grade Health! Below is a list of content and chapters within our textbook we will be covering this semester. I have also included some information about classroom flow and expectations. Thank you for all you do, the year is off to a wonderful start!

Chapter 4: Being Mentally and Emotionally Healthy (4.1: Getting to Know Yourself, 4.2: Making Sense of Your Emotions, 4.3 Managing Stress)

Chapter 5: Getting Help for Mental Health (5.1 Recognizing Mental Health Conditions, 5.2 Treatment for Mental Health Conditions)

Chapter 17: The Body Systems 17.2 Moving and Exchanging Substances: Circulatory and Respiratory Systems, 17.3 Digesting and Removing Substances, 17.4 Controlling and Regulating the Body: Lymphatic, Immune, and Nervous Systems

Chapter 18: Human Sexuality (18.1 What is Sexuality, 18.2 Sexual Feelings and Behavior, 18.3 Unwanted Sexual Activity) **Mrs. Prody will be sending an email to you regarding this chapter, and the opt- in process you will now take should you select to have your child participate in this chapter of study.** We do not cover Chapter 18 until the end of the semester, (end of quarter 2). Mrs. Prody will be emailing you in the weeks leading up to our start time. **Please do not send me an email regarding this chapter. All correspondence needs to be through Mrs. Prody, thank you.**

If you are interested in looking at a Health textbook, there are copies available at the Main Office. The textbook adopted by the Helena School District is titled “Comprehensive Health Skills for Middle School,” copyright 2019.

In our class we do use a variety of websites to aid in instruction. They are: Nami (National Alliance on Mental Illness) KIDSHEALTH.gov, AHA (American Heart Association, and TedTalk Education (short videos that help demonstrate circulatory system, digestive system, respiratory system, lymphatic system, immune system, and nervous system function)

Grading Policy:

We will use a combination of participation, assignments, and assessments to measure progress within our health class. I will clarify what criteria are necessary for your child to include in each assignment they will be submitting. If you ever have any questions about assignments, please reach out to me by email or phone. Students mainly do their work in class, because we do not have online textbook access or enough textbooks to check out to students. If your kiddo would like to check one out over the weekend, or for a trip, please let me know and I can arrange that for them. **Missing assignments will be identified in PowerSchool as zero, until they are completed and turned in.** The zero serves as a placeholder until the work is done.

Grading scale:

A: 90-100, B: 89-80, C: 79-70, D: 69-60, and F: 59-below

Available Times to Meet/Visit with Your Student/Parents/Caregivers

I am available to visit/meet with parents and caregivers during my prep period, M-F, from 10:50-11:40, and after school from 2:50-3:15. I am flexible and can make time work outside of those hours if necessary. Additional help for students is available during advisor period, Tr-Fri: 2:10-2:50.

Classroom Flow:

We do most of our assignments during class. Your child will not have homework unless they are absent or choose not to participate in the lesson we study. (This excludes the parental/caregiver opt-in for Chapter 18. Students who do not opt-in for chapter 18 will be excused from the curriculum expectations.) If your student is absent, they can check in with me to see what they need to make up, or they can also take a look at our class agenda that is linked to my website at www.helenaschools.org. It is updated daily/weekly and will give students a head's up on what we are doing each day, or for that week.

The beginning weeks of school, teachers are encouraged to build relationships with students, so you may not see many scores in PowerSchool from me the first month of school. Your child is responsible for making up missed assignments within a reasonable time after their absence, and I am extremely flexible and wanting to help them experience growth and success as we progress along our curriculum. Waiting until the last week of the quarter or semester is not recommended, this becomes overwhelming for kiddos and families!

During health class, we work out of our textbook and participate in labs. I love teaching health education and helping students to understand the importance of making healthy choices today that could affect their overall health now, and in the future. I also enjoy discussing potential career paths in the field of health. Students in middle school are beginning to think about future career interests, and the possibilities in health care are endless and everchanging!

How I Approach Classroom Expectations and Behavior:

I appreciate a "heads-up" if your child is going through something either in school or outside of school, where they may need some extra support. Even just a quick email or text that says they are having a tough morning can be super helpful! This information helps me understand their behaviors and helps me accommodate and support them if I know there is something going on. Thanks!

In our classes, we follow the **Golden Rule: Treat others as you would like to be treated.** We have a lot of discussions, and we talk about "real-life situations" and how students can positively develop their self-esteem, advocate for themselves, and better understand how their brains work. We discuss mental health throughout the year and focus on the many strategies we can use to improve our overall health and well-being. Once a week I have students do a quick, "mental health check-in" with me. This takes less than five minutes, and they rate themselves 1-5. Here is an example:

1-rotten (do not want to be in this state for days upon days 7-10 days, ask for help!!!)

2 –meh (do not want to be in this state for days upon days 7-10 days, ask an adult for help!!!)

3- average (some highs/some lows, evens out to be pretty darn ok/good)

4- great (all-around good, maybe lasts all day, or a few days)

5- off to Disneyland! (looking forward to something, special occasion, trip, holiday, birthday, maybe does not last for days on end) The 1-5 system for me as their teacher helps me to build a connection. I can remember who had a hockey tourney, or who was going to grandma's house, or who had a pet that passed away. With 130+ students each semester, it is important that I connect with each one.

- **I encourage you to try this at home, or in the car, or at dinner, wherever!** Ask your kiddo to rate their day 1-5, make it a family affair! Talk about how we all kind of "level" at around a 3. We talk about in class that even when you are in Disneyland, you are not at a "5" the whole time! The lines get long, you get tired, hot, crabby, etc. The ride itself may be a "5" but waiting an hour to get there, you may have been a "2!" (:
- **If kids can learn to check in with themselves throughout their days, they learn that they have some control over some of the things that happen throughout their days.** They can learn to regulate their moods, their feelings, before they become so big that they feel out of control, or at least that is the goal. They can ask themselves "what do I need to make this day a little better than it is right now, so that I am not stuck at a "1" all day?"
- **Gaining control and taking responsibility, along with figuring out a plan...these are all healthy ways of developing and growing their independence.** I am sure I can learn a lot from you about your child as well, so please do not hesitate to share "what works" with your kiddo with their teachers! We appreciate it!!! GREATLY!!! (:

Research has proven that for kiddos to learn, they must first feel:

1. **Safe**- (physically, emotionally, socially)
2. **Connected**- (Have a positive relationship with at least one adult in the building)
3. **Know how to self-regulate their mental/emotional state.** (How to handle their emotions safely and appropriately, such as telling the teacher they need a break from the classroom environment, asking for help when they need it, and learning healthy strategies to help them should they experience stress and anxiety.)

I often share with your kids that it is their right to enter the school environment and feel safe in all aspects. If your child is not feeling safe, we talk about how important it is for them to talk to their parents, caregivers, and other trusting adults- they also know that they can reach out to me, counselors, other classroom teachers and staff, and the CRA admin team at any time.

In my classroom, if a kiddo is not treating others, themselves, or the classroom environment safely and respectfully, I will reteach the appropriate behavior whenever possible. I have learned that there is usually a communication breakdown somewhere in there, and if I can help kids to learn how to stay safe, regulate their behavior, and stay in the room with us, that is the goal. If there is a repeat in unsafe or disrespectful behavior, the student and I will be calling you during their scheduled lunchtime or after school to report what is going on in class. I have found that when kiddos have parents and caregivers involved from the start, communication is key, and we can almost always solve issues together rather quickly. Thank you! I will also be following the building response to intervention process (RTI) and district student handbook policy for discipline referral. You

may reach out to our building admin team to discuss this process further or visit the handbook at www.helenaschools.org at any time for access. Our school counseling staff and admin team are working hard to support teachers and students in building, maintaining, and restoring relationships in a positive manner, and a referral to the principal can result in positive outcomes for the entire school community, and does not have to end a “negative result.”

Free/Reduced Lunch Online Forms:

There are kiddos at CR Anderson who are coming to school hungry. If you are concerned about food, I would encourage you to log on and fill out the free and reduced lunch online form at www.helenaschools.org. It takes about ten minutes to complete, and it is very fast at letting you know how your family may qualify for free or reduced breakfast/lunch. **Research shows that students who come to school hungry have a difficult time learning.** Our bodies need nourishment to learn. For students who qualify, their lunch experience looks no different than any other students going through the line. All students eating school lunch simply enter the line and give the lunch staff their student id number. That is how easy it is! No student is outwardly identified at all as receiving a free or reduced rate at breakfast or lunch.

Donations/We Are Always Ready to Receive:

We are always in need of: **Hand Sanitizer, Kleenex, and Clorox Wipes.** Bulk, packaged snacks like **pretzels, cereal, crackers, granola bars, Goldfish,** etc. for students who may need a quick bite. Hygiene items such as **mini-deodorant, body washes, shampoos, combs/ brushes** are also welcome! **This is a big year for needing to remind kiddos of the importance of healthy hygiene!** Gently used **sweatshirts, sweats, and coats** are also appreciated, and our Counseling Office also accepts clothing. **I would encourage your child to bring a snack and water bottle every day.**

About Me:

I was born and raised in Helena, and as a child, attended schools in East Helena, and Clancy, and Helena school districts. One funny fact about me: I attended CR Anderson many, many years ago...1987! I have a picture to prove it in my classroom, one of me with braces and giant hair! I earned bragging rights as the CRA 8th Grade Spelling Bee Champ of 1987! I have already used many of my many awkward 12-year-old moments as “teachable moments” for your kids!!!

I graduated from Capital High School and attended Western Montana College of the University of Montana. My first nine years of teaching were in Great Falls, Montana, where I met some of the best friends in my “adult life.” I have been teaching for 23 years and have been fortunate to have taught kiddos in grades K-7, as well as high school.

I have a master's degree in Trauma and Resilience in Educational Settings from Concordia University in St. Paul, MN. I chose this program carefully, and it has prepared me for the ever-changing world of education by providing a research, brain-based approach on how I could provide educational content to students, while “real life” is happening all around us, impacting our brains, and how we process information. In short, our brains are fascinating and complex

I am a mother to 3 children, ages 23, 25, and 19. My daughter Mikal, the oldest, recently graduated with her master’s degree in social work from the University of Texas, in Austin. Mikal

is also our Bobcat; her undergrad is from Montana State University! She is employed as a Child and Family Therapist in Helena. My daughter McKinlee is in her final semester of her master's program at the University of Montana and will be graduating as a Speech and Language Therapist. She is moving back to Helena with her fiancé (Drew Deck, #2 Senior wide receiver for the Griz, and #1 in our hearts!) in January and is getting married next summer! They will be making their home in Helena, and that makes my heart so happy! My son Merek is starting his first year at Montana Tech University in Butte and is a red-shirt freshman (quarterback) on the football team. He is learning the ropes about living away from home, and I miss him terribly!!!

Do You Have a Kiddo(s) Who is in Need “End of the Day” Supervision?

An extra special addition to the end of my school day will be a new adventure that I, along with my colleague, Samantha Hoggatt, are excited to share! Sam is our School Psychologist at CRA, and we have joined forces to create an after-school program for middle school students who need a safe place to land at the end of the school day. We have been approved by the Helena School District Facilities Department to invite CRA students grades 6-8 into our program at the CRA campus, in my classroom, room 198. See the attached flyer and please contact Samantha or myself for more information or to enroll your kiddo! Space is limited, so please email us with questions and sign up, beginning October 1st!

I appreciate all your help and need it to make the school year fabulous! I love my career, and your kids are a joy! They are so smart, kind, thoughtful, sweet, funny, and full of all kinds of energy! I am honored to be their teacher, and I am looking forward to a fabulous semester.

Ashlee Mihelish

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