

The Sophomore Something

an occasional e-newsletter produced by the 10th grade AGS team



The Sophomore Team: Steve Trenfield (Geometry/Algebra II), Linda Gregory (Chemistry), Edward Tierney (World History), and Stacy Webster (English II)

UpDATES:



September 30: End of the first grading period

Many teachers close their gradebooks during the week leading up to Sept. 30 in order to process late work/ make-up work assignments. Please encourage your student to attend tutorials if they have any missing assignments.

Costa Rica

Payment Deadlines:

September 15: \$400

October 15: \$400

November 15: TBD

(\$400 or less; goal price for trip = \$1750)

Please submit scholarship request forms to the AGS Office ASAP. Thanks!

Next Late Start Date:

Nov. 3

October 12: The [IDEA BOOK](#) is due.

Parents can help with this assignment by brainstorming global issues and talking through ideas (Click on the link for more info.)

Welcome to the sophomore year!

Buckle up, parents. This is the year of drivers' licenses, increased freedoms, mounting expectations, growth spurts, sleeping marathons to accommodate aforementioned growth spurts, first jobs, first loves, third break-ups, and absolute mastery of the eye-roll. And we haven't even mentioned academics yet! The good news is that the tenth grade team of teachers totally embraces the kooky, hilarious, emotional, passionate, talented, kind-hearted, curious creature that is the sophomore. And we're here for you, too.

Tenth grade is not always easy. Many students who have breezed through middle school and ninth grade become frustrated when they encounter concepts that are brand new. This may be the first year that some students really have to study before they take an exam. Writing is assigned and assessed by every teacher on the team, and that can be a shock to the system. Don't worry, and don't let your students panic. We've been on this roller coaster before, and we are here to guide them on this adventure!

The truth is, tenth grade is also a blast. Our AGS students travel internationally for the first time, and we witness our group bonding as a cohort in new ways. We plan on rolling out a new unit in the fall based on waste of all kinds – from systems that were designed to deal with human waste in ancient civilizations to the mathematical and scientific repercussions of our current model of waste management to the global journey of a product – the entire team will be “talking trash.” In the spring, we focus on voice and power as we tap into the teenager's ability to advocate for others.

The ride will be wild at times, but we're confident that tenth grade will help prepare your students for junior year and beyond. Every little thing is going to be all right!

When you ask your kids what they did in school, do they say “nuthin” or shrug their shoulders? We've decided that our middle man often lacks communication skills, so look for this e- newsletter every now and then to fill you in on the real deal. We're still working on the name for our newsletter (we came up with several wildly inappropriate titles and just kept coming back to the idea that it oughtta be “the sophomore.... something,” so that's where we landed. Enjoy!

Passports needed for international travel

Our Costa Rica Learning Expedition is booked for January 15-21. Please check on your student's existing passport or sign up to get a new passport for your child ASAP. **The**

International Office at UT is a great place to consider if you need a new passport or renewal.

If you already have a passport, check the expiration to see if it needs to be renewed. According to the U.S. Govt. website, passports are valid for only five years if issued to a child under

the age of 15. If over age 16, they are valid for 10 years. It is recommended that a passport be renewed if it expires within 6 months of travel. All travelers should have the booklet, not the card that allows vacation travel to Mexico and Canada.

Teacher Request: While passports are muy importante, please do not miss class in order to obtain one. That would be considered an unexcused absence, which is no bueno! ☺



Click this link: [PASSPORT](#) for more information about obtaining a passport in Austin, TX. Ms. Sepulveda in the AGS Office will need a photocopy of your passport.



TEAMS, FIT Portal, Tutorials, and Office Hours

This year, Austin High School introduced an advisory period every Monday to allow for academic advising one week and SEL (social/emotional learning) lessons the next. On Tuesday-Friday, students may use the AISD portal to sign up for a FIT session (the new acronym stands for "Flexible Instructional Time"). Sometimes teachers offer a study hall or office hours, but often FIT sessions are specifically designated for reteaching a certain skill or addressing a small group of students who all struggled with a concept. We will also offer sessions that help your student navigate the required components of our ISSN (International Studies School Network) profile, such as service learning sessions, portfolio-building sessions, etc. Please encourage your student to select FIT sessions that best fit their needs.

FIT should not take the place of old-fashioned tutorial sessions, which are typically longer in length and used for re-testing, office hours, writing conferences, etc. The 10th grade team has devised a tutoring schedule that will allow a student to attend in each core area, if needed. Please be sure that you can check in on student progress using "Parents Connect" in the AISD Cloud. The online gradebook is a living document and constantly changing. Remember, if a teacher spends 3 minutes grading an assignment, that works out to 7.2 hours of grading before all classes are finished, so grades don't often appear the day after an assignment has been handed in. Have patience – it will get graded and recorded by the end of the grading period.

Don't worry about things labeled as "pending," but do be on the lookout for grades coded as "missing," and encourage your student to attend tutorials. Those zeroes can have a devastating effect on final averages, so we want students to attempt every single assignment.



CURRICULUM CORNER

From the beginning of civilization to the scientific building blocks of everything around us, sophomore students are focused on **foundations**.

In **World History with Mr. Tierney**, students are learning about the political, social, religious, techno-logical and economic aspects of the Paleolithic, Neolithic and the earliest civilizations. Students are also learning the structure of the class by organizing their Interactive Student Notebooks and learning about their first Idea Book prompts.

In **Chemistry with Dr. Gregory**, students have learned about matter – the foundation of all things around us! We've talked about types of matter such as elements, compounds, and mixtures, as well as the physical and chemical changes each can undergo. Students have calculated percent composition of compounds, which will be a crucial skill

needed for our upcoming waste unit.

Most recently, we have been learning about the arrangement of the periodic table, the names of parts of the table, subatomic particles in atoms, and the presence of isotopes in nature.

In the interdisciplinary spirit of things, **Mrs. Webster's English II** class has been focused on the foundations of language and literature. A close analysis of visual art, "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus," has allowed students to experience the habits of thinking required for our course: remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. The same mini-unit has required us to review the primary literary devices used to analyze text. Students had the chance to apply these devices during our Socratic Seminar about *Life of Pi* and we'll soon focus on the foundations of storytelling

with our "ancients and archetypes" unit that connects to World History.

Mr. Trenfield's Geometry course is currently using transformations on the plane with 2-D shapes to create tessellations in the style of M.C. Escher. We have explored tessellations involving translations, rotations, and glide reflections. Additionally, we are practicing using precise, mathematical language and notation to create instructions on how to create tessellation tiles.

Algebra II with Trenfield just started their regression project last week. They will be researching different data sets to look for patterns and relationships between different variables, using regression to estimate a function that models the relationship, and summarizing their conclusions in a written report and an infographic.

TUTORING SCHEDULE, FALL 2016			
	Before School	During Lunch	After School
MONDAY		World History, 1 st half	Math
TUESDAY	Math Chemistry	World History, 1 st half	
WEDNESDAY		World History, 1 st half English II (all of lunch)	English II Math
THURSDAY	Math	World History, 1 st half	Chemistry
FRIDAY	(Take a taco to a teacher day!!)	World History, 1 st half	(No tutoring on Friday afternoons.)
Note: FIT sessions are also available for re-teaching and teacher office hours.			

Attendance Issues:

In order to succeed, students must be in class. We understand that viruses and fevers strike, and the best place for a feverish kid is at home in bed (technology in hand). If a student is not contagious and it's possible for them to be sitting upright and learning, we NEED them here.

On the block schedule, it's extremely difficult to help a student who missed 90 minutes of class catch up in a short tutorial session. Most of our lessons do not translate to packets of work that students can just do on their own, and students often feel overwhelmed after an absence and find it difficult to get back on track. So here's our plea:

Please, please, please limit your student's absences to the days when they are truly ill. Do not book driver's license tests or passport appointments during the school day. When possible, book doctor's and dentist's appointments at times that do not conflict with school, particularly the core academic courses.

If your student does have to miss school for any reason, remind her to check her teachers' websites in order to attempt some of the work. It shows exceptional maturity and professionalism when students email their teachers regarding absences and attach assignments, when possible.

Tardies are monitored by teachers and AP's and result in students having to attend Saturday School. Blech. Avoid that, too.

Self-Advocacy:

AGS believes students should be advocates for the world, their community, and themselves! We understand that parents want to guide and protect their students from making devastating academic mistakes, and we truly work in partnership with you. It's important, though to allow your STUDENT to take the lead on communication with teachers at this point in their high school career. If your student is struggling, focus on these questions: Are you attempting all assignments and handing them in? Are you attending tutorials? Have you conferenced with your teacher? If those things have occurred and your student is still struggling, please contact us via email to discuss your concerns. We may devise a new plan to help your student, or it may be time to schedule a team conference to problem-solve the situation. Please avoid emailing or calling about a grade on a specific assignment until you have had a chance to talk to your student and ask questions, and the student has had a chance to conference with the teacher about any issues they may have. If your student has modifications for extended time, note-taking assistance, etc., remind them to advocate for themselves! We want all of our students to demonstrate ownership of their learning. Thanks!