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Ms. Reichmuth

Core 6

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Success For Incoming Students

You walk up nervously to the front of the classroom, ready to present. The room is silent and the eyes of all your classmates are on you. You stand there, awkwardly waiting for the teacher to tell you to start. You are in a slouched position, are visibly anxious, and you can’t remember a single part of the script you had written beforehand. With your palms sweaty and hot and your fingers fumbling, you start to speak, but then falter. To avoid unfortunate and unwanted situations like the one depicted above, there are some things you may need to know about this class. To start, in Ms. Reichmuth’s class you are going to need to know about Project-Based Learning. Secondly, you should know some important tips to get you through the year. Finally, presentation skills are crucial. It is the Project-Based Learning, the general tips, and the presentation skills that demonstrate how there are many ways to succeed in Ms. Reichmuth’s Core Class.

Foremost, Project-Based Learning, or PBL, are a big part of Ms. Reichmuth’s class. First let us determine the definition of Project-Based Learning. According to the PowerSchool website it is, “...an instructional approach designed to give students the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills through engaging projects set around challenges and problems they may face in the real world.” Project-Based Learning is used to help students understand the world around them. **I**n this class specifically, we conduct a plethora of research, essays, presentations, and sometimes even work in groups for our PBL Units. We use online research organizers, outlines, and group contracts to arrange all of our assets. The essays and presentations are pretty standard, but group projects are a little different. When you get separated into groups, group members will have to agree on some rules. The rules are listed in a “contract” that you will all sign. If any of these rules are broken, the rest of the group can take a vote to see if they want to kick someone out. The rules themselves will simply be things like no plagiarism and complete all your work. We have done these things for most of the Project-Based Learning Units that we’ve had.

Some examples of the PBL Units that we have had include the following. The “We Are The World” Unit was extremely interesting because there were such a wide range of topics. The title is pretty self explanatory, but basically, every student chose either an endangered animal or an aspect of climate change that they think is the most interesting. For instance, I personally wanted to talk about the dangers of climate change, so I wrote and spoke to my class about fossil fuels. Another unit we had was for Black History Month. In this one, we were given six different categories that we could research, write, and present about. When you are given the ability to decide which topic you want, you should do a quick background check on all of them, even the ones that you are not too sure you want to do, to see which one you will take the most out of and which one you will have the most fun with. The last PBL that we did was for Women’s History Month. We did a lot of things for this one so I’m only going to cover a few of the projects. Everyone chose the woman that they wanted to research based on what industry they worked in. The class was split into groups based on the industry each student chose and we did research and created a presentation together. We presented to our classmates, and each group even had a few pages in a book that the class and Ms. Reichmuth had put together for Women’s History Month. As you can see, PBL Units are packed with lots of assignments that are aimed at helping us learn more about the world.

Next, we get to learn about the rest of the world through PBL Units. An article titled “The project-based learning approach in environmental education” by Murat Genc declared that, “Students believed this practice helped them define environmental problems more clearly and take on more active tasks in the solution process.” An article called “Problem-Based Learning” listed some of the many skills that can be developed through these units such as oral and written communication, critical thinking and analysis, and problem solving across disciplines. I believe that the PBL experience has given me a chance to think of the problems that people have struggled with all over the world. Project-Based Learning Units make up a good portion, but next up are some important tips for being a student in all aspects of Ms. Reichmuth’s Core class.

Furthermore, here are some important tips you will need to know to be successful in this class. You should be careful when talking, to avoid using the words “Um, Will, or So.” They are considered filler words and should not be used regularly. An article from the Harvard Extension School stated that:

While you may be tempted to fill the silence between ideas with a filler word,

remember to pause and give yourself a moment to think about what you want to

say next. It is important that you don’t begin speaking until you are ready.

You should stop and think it through before saying anything. It will come off more assertive and it will help you eliminate your inclination to fill the silence with “Um, Will, or So.”

To add on to this, there are quite a lot of things you should know about essay writing. In this class, you have to follow the SAT and MLA guidelines. SAT stands for Story, Argument, and Thesis. This is the main method of writing you are going to be doing. First, you will start with your story or hook. The purpose of the story is to draw the reader in. Without a good story, your readers will be much less interested in what you have to say. Next is your arguments. You will generally have three arguments that will be the bulk of your essay. In these arguments, you will give the information to support your thesis. Last will be your thesis. In your thesis, you will state your arguments and your main statement or claim. Another format you will need to follow is MLA, which stands for Modern Language Association. You will use this format for citing. The usual minimum for cites used in an essay is three, but gathering more information is always a good thing.

Moreover, make sure that you are not stressing over your grades and homework too much. There may be times when you feel like you have way too much homework, especially if you have procrastinated and pushed it off to the very last minute. But if this happens, just take a breath and try to focus on the work rather than how much there is. Do one thing at a time and don’t overwhelm yourself. An article on Aliem (Academic Life in Emergency Medicine) titled, “The 1440 Doctor: Achieving Precision Focus – 3 Ways to Strengthen Your Attention Muscle.” declared that, “...our brains are simply not capable of focusing on 2 things at once. Rather our brain rapidly “task switches” its attention between the 2 items. This process of task switching causes performance to suffer…” Focusing on a single assignment or section at a time will allow you to crank out quality work in an efficient way.

Another thing that many students struggle with and completely obsess over, is their grades. You may be tempted, especially with the easy online version, to just, really quickly, check your grades on Powerschool. But in my experience of doing that, it is almost never just a few seconds. The desire to check your grades for a second could turn into a few minutes and a few minutes could turn into half an hour of wasted time. It’s better to just get your work done instead of spending your hours worrying about your next grade. Another terrible problem that can come from grade obsession is stress. In an article on the Portland State University website said that:

If a student is constantly struggling with their own personal issues and trying to

keep up their grades at the same time, this constant need for A’s can lead to an

immense amount of stress emotionally, physically and potentially even

physiologically.

Don’t let the stress of your grades let you put more pressure on yourself. You should take a breath, and just remember that grades are something that can always be improved. These tips can help you succeed in a major part of this class, but here’s what you need to do when it comes to presenting.

Lastly, when making and giving your presentation, there are a few things you should do. In terms of formatting, keep photos in similar spots. When you switch to the next slide, the images should not be moving all over the page. Remember to keep your bullets short and precise and to have three to five of them on a single slide. A problem you may encounter when making your presentation is time. The presentation may be seven minutes long when the maximum is five minutes. In this situation, decide what slides are truly needed to convey your message and support your thesis, and delete the ones that aren’t. Next, if you still are a bit over the time limit, get rid of any unnecessary or extraneous information. Most importantly, don’t try to solve the problem by talking a lot faster. Your audience must be able to hear, comprehend, and process everything that you say. Remember these suggestions when creating and editing your speech.

Additionally, make sure when you are presenting, that you are projecting your voice, are using appropriate body language, and that you are speaking with a suitable tone. Projecting your voice is a problem that a lot of people tend to encounter. For people who usually talk very quietly, it may feel almost like shouting, but eventually it will start to normalize. If you work on your volume throughout the school year then you will be guaranteed to be a much better speaker by the end of it. Body language can also be used to make your argument stronger. It will help you connect with your audience and proper body language can make you look more confident, giving your presentation more credibility. Another good tactic to keep your listeners engaged is using a suitable tone. Express emotion through your voice. If your voice is monotone the entire time, your audience will quickly lose interest in the presentation. Instead, speak with enthusiasm and boldness, and your listeners will feel it too.

To end with, these presentation skills can come in handy in places outside of the classroom. As explained in an article on Cleverism, skills like these can help in many social and business situations. It says that, “...it is essential for the business professionals to understand the audience. Good presentation skills enable an individual to mold his message according to the traits of the audience.” Following the tips written above will help you properly convey your message to the audience. Another supporting article is one on the Presentation Training Institute titled “Why Presentation Skills Are The Most Important Skill Set To Have.” This article lists many reasons, but one that stood out to me was how these skills can help you form connections and relationships with others. It states that, “Through the use of stories, humor, visuals, and engagement techniques, they have a way of building a rapport with their audience.” This means that the skills for understanding your audience can actually be incorporated into your everyday conversations. Remember to refer to these pointers when you need to persuade or gain another’s interest. As written above, delivering presentations will be an essential part of your skillset in the classroom.

To summarize, there are many ways to make your year in this class the best it can possibly be. Ms. Reichmuth’s class is so fun and amazing, and I know that you will think the same of it. You’ll learn a lot about teamwork, responsibility, and persistence throughout the year. While you are learning these lessons you should think of these tips. Therefore, I hope that from this essay you have gained an understanding of our Project-Based Learning Units. On top of that, I know you now have the knowledge to navigate your 6th grade year in this class. Finally, I believe that the recommendations given in the previous paragraphs will make your presentations strong and influential. You stand up straight and look at your audience with confidence. Your words come out fluently with emotion and sincerity. Eventually your presentation comes to an end and you hear the clapping of your classmates. The teacher gives you a thumbs up and hands you back your presentation rubric with an “100%” written in bright blue pen at the top of the page.

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