

Grade 8 Science Syllabus

Student and Family Course Guide 2026–27

Nishantha Unantenne · Mr. U

This guide explains how to find class materials, prepare for science, and follow the steps for assignments and absences.

Your class website

Visit eleodes.com for the course map, explanations, and study resources. Use Canvas for assignment directions and course materials. I will also send home a website access card. Keep this guide and the card somewhere easy to find.



eleodes.com

The assignment sheet

Every digital and paper assignment goes on your assignment sheet. This sheet is your table of contents and record of reviewed work. I stamp it when I check an assignment and award credit. Keep the sheet and your returned work organized in your science folder.

Due dates and the four day window

I announce a due date for each assignment. The assignment stays open for grading for four days after that due date, allowing students with excused absences to complete missed work. I can review work while the assignment is open. Once it closes, credit is no longer available through this routine. Complete work by the announced due date and follow the excused-absence process for missed work.

Keep your assignment sheet. It is the record we use when checking work and discussing credit.

Missed work and daily routines

After an excused absence

Makeup work requires an excused absence. The form tells me which assignments are ready for review.

1. Ask two classmates what you missed.
2. Check eleodes.com and Canvas. Get the directions and materials you need.
3. Complete the missed assignments while they are open for grading.
4. Fill out an absence form for the missed day. List each assignment you are submitting.
5. For paper work, paper-clip the completed assignments to the form and give the packet to me. For digital work, have the form and your work ready for me to check on your computer.
6. After I review the work, keep the returned work and updated assignment sheet. I use a stamp to record credit and typically a sticker to identify eligible excused-absence work treated as on time.

This routine teaches organization and follow-through. It also helps me reliably check submitted work across approximately 250 students and three teaching assignments.

Makeup tests

Mondays and Tuesdays at lunch

Come to Room 303 with the required form showing an excused absence. Makeup tests are available for excused absences. Follow the form process so I can verify eligibility and review your work.

The first two minutes

We begin with a two-minute Focus Reset. This social-emotional learning routine helps students settle, focus their attention, and prepare for challenging science learning.

Clear expectations and safe participation

I am strict about classroom procedures because following directions and working responsibly matter. Students need strong social and academic skills before I can trust them around laboratory equipment. We practice these habits so students can learn together and participate safely when we use equipment.

What we will learn

We use observations, evidence, models, explanations, and data to study the natural world. The course develops learning aligned with the middle-school Next Generation Science Standards, or NGSS.

Semester 1

Science safety · Scientific method · Measurement and graphing · Matter · Particles · States of matter and particle movement · Compounds, elements, and mixtures · The periodic table · Physical and chemical changes · Chemical reactions · Synthetic materials · Chemistry in nature.

Semester 2

Cells · Parts of a cell · DNA · Traits · Heredity · Natural selection and fossils · Artificial selection · Genetic engineering.

This is our planned course sequence. Pacing may change as we work through the material. Math, measurement, graphing, and evidence-based explanations support learning throughout the year.

Bring every day

Dedicated science folder / Chromebook / Chromebook charger / Pencil

How I teach

I want students to understand scientific ideas and become independent learners. Challenging work gives students a chance to think carefully, explain their reasoning, and improve. Clear routines help students use class time well and take responsibility for the next step.

Meet Mr U

I immigrated to the United States when I was 10 years old. I completed my undergraduate studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and earned my teaching credential at California State University, Fullerton. I have taught science at Pinacate Middle School for 13 years. This year I teach seventh-grade science, eighth-grade science, and science in the school's online academy.

Learning with responsibility

Academic honesty

Graded work should reflect your own thinking. Do not copy, share or seek answers, or communicate during tests. Use AI on graded work only when I specifically authorize it for that task. Ask before using outside help if you are unsure what is allowed. Academic dishonesty is addressed through the school's procedures.

Beyond the classroom

Outside school, I enjoy time with my wife, children, and pets. My interests include software engineering, oil painting, filmmaking, and exploring nature with my family.

Our goals for the year

1. Science understanding: use evidence, models, and explanations to make sense of scientific ideas.
2. Academic skills: organize materials, prepare for class, follow directions, and complete the steps needed to receive credit.
3. Social skills: listen, participate respectfully, and work responsibly with others.
4. Independence: build habits that support success in high school, college, and beyond.

How grades work

Tests and regular classwork all count in the Assignments category. Tests typically carry more points than individual classwork assignments. That is intentional: assessments help me find out whether students have mastered the ideas we have studied. Daily assignments help students prepare.

Extra credit through strong work

Assignments can earn regular credit, and especially strong work that goes above and beyond can earn extra credit. I typically offer opportunities each week. These points can strengthen a student's overall grade when tests are challenging, including for students who find test-taking difficult.

Extra credit adds to the grade; students should still complete classwork, study, and prepare to show what they understand on tests.

Strict but fair

My expectations are high, and I work to apply them fairly. I want students to know what is expected, how to follow the process, and how to become more confident and responsible learners.

Questions and communication

Email me at nishantha.unantenne@puhsd.org with questions about your student's learning or classroom procedures. Keep the assignment sheet and returned work available when discussing a missing assignment.

School procedures and individual IEP or 504 accommodations continue to apply.