**Welcome to the Edison Middle School Big History Project**



Dear EMS Parents & Scholars,

We would like to welcome you and your scholars to Edison Middle School and the Big History Project. This year we will be taking an exciting 13.8 billion year journey that will explore the furthest reaches of the past, while helping to explain how we have arrived at where we are at today, and hopefully, give us a glimpse of what the future may hold.

Traditional history courses tend to rely on only telling the story since humans began walking the Earth. Big History on the other hand, weaves together our collective understanding of the entire history of the universe to give us a more robust and vivid understanding of “WHY” the present is the way it is. Moreover, the critical thinking skills and content that you gain throughout this course, will provide you with the tools to help you analyze, question, and shape the future into one that is equally beneficial to all lifeforms that inhabit our planet, our solar system, and the universe.

Big History is truly interdisciplinary in nature. We will rely upon the most up to date evidence from disciplines such as astronomy, anthropology, chemistry, astrophysics, cosmology, geology, and of course history, to put together a modern-day origin story that helps to explain our 13.8 billion years of shared history.

In the next few pages, you will see a “Quick Glimpse Course Roadmap”, “The Class Expectations”, “Class Requirements”, “The Grading Policy” and “Teacher Contact Information”. Once you have had a chance to review these sections with your scholar, please sign and date the last page and return it to either Mr. Cain or Ms. Nunez. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact you scholar’s teacher by email or phone.

Again, welcome to Edison and the Big History Project. This is going to be a fantastic and exciting year.

Sincerely,

Mr. Cain & Ms. Nunez

**Quick Glimpse Course Roadmap**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Unit | Driving Question(s) | Duration |
| What is Big History? | * Why do we look at things from far away and close up?
 | 2 weeks |
| The Big Bang | * How and why do individuals change their minds?
* How and why did human understanding of the Universe change?
 | 3 weeks |
| Stars & Elements | * How can looking at the same information from different perspectives pave the way for progress?
 | 3 weeks |
| Our Solar System & Earth | * How and why do theories become generally accepted?
 | 3 weeks |
| Life | * How are we still evolving?
 | 3 weeks |
| Early Humans | * What makes humans different from other species?
 | 3 weeks |
| Agriculture & Civilization | * Was farming an improvement over foraging?
* What makes human societies similar and different?
* Why do societies collapse?
 | 4 weeks |
| Expansion & Interconnection | * What are the positive and negative impacts of interconnection?
 | 4 weeks |
| Acceleration | * To what extent has the Modern Revolution been a positive or negative force?
 | 9 weeks |
| The Future | * What is the next threshold?
 | 2 weeks |

**Class Expectations**

1.) Everyone will be treated with respect at all times.

2.) Putdowns, purposely hurtful comments, and abusive/offensive language will not be tolerated.

3.) No one will be allowed to disrupt the learning process of anyone else. Students should enter and exit the room in a quiet manner.

4.) Students should arrive promptly for class each day (be in their assigned seat) with all of the required materials for a productive learning experience.

5.) If a student has a question or a comment, they must raise their hand and wait to be called upon before speaking.

**Class Requirements**

You are responsible for bringing all of the following to class each day:

* An open and inquisitive mind that is eager and willing to learn.
* 1 folder that is labelled social studies.
* 1 notebook specifically for social studies.
* Pencils/pens/highlighters
* Color Pencils, Crayons, or Markers \*\*(A note will be put on the door for days that you need these supplies).

**Grading Policy**

Our focus on grading students is not whether they have successfully memorized random facts, dates, events, or people for a test, but instead, on how well they have **mastered** various skills that they will use throughout their lifetime. Within this course, we will be focusing on the following **Power Standards**, and their specific *Performance Indicators*:

* **Claim**
	+ *Making a claim to answer a question(s).*
	+ *Remembering knowledge from the unit.*
	+ *Writing good supporting questions.*
* **Evidence**
	+ *Identifying and understanding the essential parts of a source.*
	+ *Identifying sources that support my claim.*
	+ *Deciding if evidence supports a claim and/or counterclaim.*
* **Reasoning**
	+ *Interpreting primary and secondary sources within their historical, economical, geographical, and/or political context.*
	+ *Justifying (explaining) claims with evidence from primary and secondary sources.*
* **Action**
	+ *Identifying and explaining connections between the past and present.*
	+ *Creating, judging, and defending a plan to solve real world problems.*

Throughout the year, each of these standards will be assessed multiple times using the following Standards-Based Grading terms:

* **Exceeding**: The student is achieving a level of mastery beyond the grade-level standard for this skill or topic.
* **Meeting**: The student has mastered the grade-level standard for this skill or topic.
* **Approaching**: The student has begun to make progress forward with this skill or topic, but is not yet meeting the grade-level standard.
* **Beginning**: The student has just been introduced to the skill or topic and is still a novice at meeting this grade-level standard.

More information and specific rubrics for each Power Standard and Performance Indicator will be shared as the year progresses.

**Teacher Contact Information**

Please feel free to reach out to your scholar’s teacher throughout the year if you have any questions, comments, or concerns:

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| --- | --- |
| **Team Adventurers**Mr. Zachary CainEmail: cainza@u4sd.orgPhone: 351-3771Website: <http://mrcainsbighistoryprojectsite.weebly.com/> | **Team Voyagers**Ms. Jessica NunezEmail: nunezje@u4sd.orgPhone: 351-3771Website: <https://sites.google.com/u4sd.org/msnunezbighistoryproject> |

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I have **read** and **understand** the class expectations for Edison Middle School’s Big History Class.

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Parent Name (Please Print)

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Parent Signature Date

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Student Name (Please Print)

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Student Signature Date