

June 2011

Dear Middle School Families,

With our fourth successful year behind us, we are eagerly anticipating Fall Forum at AHS! First we would like to share a little history, then look ahead to the fall.

Forum has evolved from Academy Hill's Good Morning Show, a program already familiar to many AHS families. As in the Good Morning Show, students deliver presentations, but in Forum they take their presentations a step further, adding length and depth of learning. For an "umbrella" presentation, students tie the topic of their presentation to an over-arching theme that has been chosen to lend cohesiveness to the trimester series. Following their presentation, students lead a discussion among their peers. Students craft two stimulating questions for this discussion. The chance to lead discussions and engage in thoughtful conversations allows students the opportunity to continue to develop real-world presentation skills. **The umbrella theme for the first trimester is BALANCE.** As a way of getting to know fifth graders and other students new to our middle school, we ask them to present an "elective." The elective does not fall under the umbrella theme of the term and is performance based. Elective presentations are a venue for showcasing talents, and we know that the students have many.

Because Forum involves the fifth through eighth grades, we have developed different expectations for the Scholars and the Sojourners. Be sure to review these carefully. We will brainstorm possible presentation topics during the first few days of school; however, each student should bring at least one potential topic to Forum on the first day of school.

Forum generally takes place on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 2:40 to 3:05. We invite friends and families to attend. Beginning Monday, August 1, students may sign up for presentation time slots on the Forum calendar, which is located on the bulletin board on the left after you make the turn into the Middle School hallway. You must sign-up for your first presentation by September 9th. Presentations begin September 12th, the first Monday of school. First trimester presentations must be completed by November 21. **We have reserved the weeks of October 24 and November 7, 14, and 21 for elective presentations. Only fifth graders and other new students may present in those weeks.** We have a tight Forum calendar; sign up early for the best selection of dates.

If you have any questions regarding Forum, please do not hesitate to contact us for clarification.

Sincerely,

Eric Bowman
Bea Heinrichs
Jillian Ronning
Carol Rosenthal

First Trimester Forum Guidelines

- You must sign up for your presentation by September 9th. Presentations begin September 12th, the first Monday of school. We have a tight Forum calendar; sign up early for the best selection of dates.
- You must complete your presentation by November 21.
- New students and grade 5 only will present during the weeks of October 24 and November 7, 14, and 21
- For fifth graders and other students new to our middle school, your presentation must be an “elective” presentation. Here are some ideas you might consider:
 - playing a piece of music and providing a short biography on the composer
 - writing and sharing a poem and presenting on the form of the poem (sestina, haiku, etc) or even presenting on your favorite poet
 - translating a poem and performing a poem
 - performing a dramatic scene and providing a short biography on the playwright
 - creating an invention and discussing famous inventors
 - reading an essay you wrote and presenting the steps that you took to compose the essay
 - performing a stand up comedy and providing a short history of stand-up comedy
 - illustrating and presenting a cartoon
 - teaching a lesson on some skill
 - any other creative idea that you come up with
- For sixth to eighth grade students (those returning to our middle school) your presentation must fit under the umbrella theme of **BALANCE**. We will discuss potential topics during the first week of Forum, but we are sure you’ll come up with lots of “outside-the-box” ideas.
- At least two weeks before your Forum date, you will be expected to submit a Forum Planning Sheet to your homeroom teacher.
- You will also need to review your presentation with your homeroom teacher before it is finalized.

Scholars

- Elective presentation (grade 5 and new grade 6 students): 4-6 minute presentation, followed by 2-3 minute long creative performance. You should also be prepared to take audience questions.
- Umbrella presentation (returning grade 6 students): 4-6 minutes long plus discussion. You will need to write two stimulating questions for the discussion portion of your presentation. Please share these with your homeroom teacher well in advance of your presentation. Your homeroom teacher can help you think about questions that will encourage discussion.
- Audio-visual component. This could be a poster or even a music clip.
- A draft of your presentation, including audio-visual and script, is due to your homeroom teacher one week before your presentation.
- Your completed presentation, including script and any technology such as DVD and slide shows, must be handed in to your homeroom teacher on a USB drive or CD during morning homeroom at least one day prior to your presentation. Do not wait until the end

of the day to give your USB drive to your teacher. Hand it in at the beginning of the day so that there is a chance to review it and ensure functionality.

Sojourners

- **Elective presentation (new students)**: 4-6 minute presentation, followed by 2-3 minute long creative performance. You should also be prepared to take audience questions.
- **Umbrella presentation (returning students)**: 6-8 minutes long plus discussion. You will need to write two stimulating questions for the discussion portion of your presentation. Please share these with your homeroom teacher well in advance of your presentation. Your homeroom teacher can help you think about questions that will encourage discussion.
- Audio-visual component. This could be a poster or even a music clip.
- A draft of your presentation, including audio-visual and script, is due to your homeroom teacher one week before your presentation.
- Your completed presentation, including script and any technology such as DVD and slide shows, must be handed in to your homeroom teacher on a USB drive or CD during morning homeroom at least one day prior to your presentation. Do not wait until the end of the day to give your USB drive to your teacher. Hand it in at the beginning of the day so that there is a chance to review it and ensure functionality.
- You must submit a printed bibliography of your sources to your homeroom teacher. Your literacy teacher will provide information on how to document books, magazines, websites, and other types of sources.

Discussion and Participation Expectations

The discussion leader will need to construct two thought-provoking questions for the discussion. The leader will need to call on audience members and help facilitate the conversation. We realize that the effectiveness of a discussion relies heavily on audience participation, so we expect that *all* students will thoughtfully participate in discussion. All presenters should be prepared to take audience questions.

Evaluation

All presentations will be evaluated on the following criteria: preparation, learning, creativity, audio/visual efficacy, personal affect, and discussion. In addition, Sojourners will receive a letter grade for each presentation.

We are very excited about the coming year. Please feel free to contact us this summer if you have any questions or concerns.

Ideas for audio/visual aid. _____
Remember, PowerPoints and other technology must be given to you teacher in homeroom the day before your presentation!

If this is an elective presentation, please describe the “performance” portion of your presentation.
Remember to use complete sentences.

Please see me. I need more detail.

Teacher Approval