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Dear Parent or Guardian,

We are pleased and excited to inform you that seventh and eighth graders from Bristol, Hartford, Meriden, New Britain and Wolcott are being invited to participate in an inter-district grant sponsored by CWEALF and CT Science 4 Kids entitled “CAPTivating Kids III – Innovate & Educate”. In this program, students will be brought together for eleven (11) sessions to promote academic and social enrichment. The program is designed for students to have fun while building teamwork and communication skills and enhancing self-esteem and mutual respect.

 The lessons and activities will be run in a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere, giving students ample opportunity to meet and make new friends. The sessions will consist of both formal and informal educational experiences as inter-district teams of students meet, share information about themselves and their communities while becoming cooperative learning partners. Throughout the course of the year, students will engage in the exploration and investigation of “real-world” topics that will help them become problem solvers as they acquire content knowledge and learn to integrate higher order science process skills, use and practice reading/writing competencies as they investigate and explore “real-world” topics and issues in the physical and life sciences, all based on the Next Generation Science Standards.

Activities may include team-building, hands-on experiments and building challenges, coding, visiting museums and colleges, and learning about careers in science and technology. Students will meet on Friday afternoons, Saturday mornings, as well as one to two days in June after school ends.

Cosmic Cultures is staffed by teachers from the participating districts, is sponsored by the Connecticut State Department of Education, and is provided at NO COST to you or your child. Transportation is provided to and from Washington Middle School. **You will be responsible for dropping off your child on time (unless the event is directly after school) and promptly picking them up at WMS**. Enclosed you will find the form you will need to complete to register your child.

If you would like to enroll your child, please complete the attached form and return them to Mrs. Vollono in 8D by **Wednesday, October 23rd**. Space is very limited as our budget has been cut and the spots will be filled as applications are returned. Also**, please understand that we must have a firm commitment from you and your child to attend all sessions of the program in order to follow grant requirements**. Attendance will be strictly monitored and **students with two absences will be dropped from the program**. Additionally, parents who are **habitually tardy in picking up their child risk their child being dismissed from the program**.

We look forward to working with you and your child!

Sincerely,

Ms. Melissa Vollono (melissa.vollono@meridenk12.org)

Washington Middle School

Steve Pelosi and Jay Brennan,

CT Science 4 Kids Interdistrict Grant Coordinators

**Common Questions and Answers**

**Q. What do I bring to these events?**

Water, weather-appropriate clothing, a snack. For our Friday night events, pizza is provided for dinner. For our Saturday events, you will need to bring a lunch. More details will be provided for each event if anything additional is required.

**Q. How does pick-up/drop-off work?**

For Friday events, we will leave directly from school at the end of the day. On Saturdays, we usually meet at around 8:30 am. The times I give your child are the appropriate arrival times. Our bus will come about ten minutes after that so we can wait for any “stragglers”. For all of you conscientious parents, please do not drop off your child earlier; your child will be waiting for a long time, and often the school is locked. For pick up: you need to be here on time. After two late pick-ups your child will no longer be allowed to participate. Please consider carpooling!

**Q. How will the information be communicated?**

Approximately two weeks prior to each exchange, a letter indicating the details of the trip will be distributed by their science teacher. These letters, along with the website, is the primary form of communication. Please be sure to read the details as they may change from the original calendar.

Additionally, in order to streamline last minute communication with parents, we like to be able to contact you by email and text. Please include your email on the registration form – write legibly! It is difficult with students in different clusters and in different grades to distribute hand-outs. And, with so many students participating, it is not feasible to make phone calls to every parent when there are last-minute changes. Accordingly, we use the Remind system to contact parents and students. A sign-up sheet will be distributed with acceptance letters.

**Q. Is it fun?**

Yes! Kids love this program and make lasting friendships! The activities are engaging and we’re pretty fun people to hang out with! We have had many returning participants each year.

**Q. So, it’s really free?!**

Yes!

**Q. What is expected from students?**

Attendance at all events is required for participation in the fun events at the end of the year. Space is limited. Please do not sign up if you think your child will miss more than 1 event. Other expectations: willingness to work with students from our school and from other districts, communication to parents about drop-off/pick-up times, and a good attitude.