

RIO MINDERS

Oct 6, 2006

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1 Dates to Remember

- Parent Conference Week / **Oct 9-13th** / 12:05pm dismissal all week.
- PVUSD Board Meeting / **Wed. Oct. 11th** / 7pm / 294 Green Valley Road, Watsonville
- Harvest Festival Planning Meeting / **Thurs. Oct. 12th** / 8am / MPR
- 12th Annual Monte Foundation Fireworks Fundraiser / **Sat. Oct. 14th**
- 2:05pm Release Time for all but AM kindergarteners / **Wed. Oct. 18th**
- Third Annual Harvest Festival / **Fri. Oct. 20th**
- North Zone Advisory Council / **Mon. Nov. 6th** / 7 pm / in Bradley Ele. Library
- Site Council Meeting / **Tues. Nov. 7th** / 2:30pm in Rio library / free childcare available
- Parent Alliance Meeting / **Tues. Nov. 7th** / 6:30pm in Rio library / free childcare available

2 From the Principal's Desk

Dear Seahawk Community:

It's been an exciting couple of weeks around the school. Students have been on fieldtrips to places such as the San Jose Technology Museum of Innovation (4th Grade), Nicene Marks State Park (3rd Grade), Seacliff State Park (2nd Grade), recycling centers (1st Grade) with many more activities to come. Each grade is involved in exciting an innovative ways to make learning exciting and engaging and these field trips are only one of those ways.

We have really rounded out our pool of yard duties. Thank you to all of the parents who have joined the team and are helping to support students on the playground. We are still looking for a game club advisor. We have the games, but need someone who can set them up, play with students and put the games away at the end. As well, we are always looking for people who have a skill or activity that they will share with students during recesses. Please don't hesitate to call me if have questions or interest.

As many of you are aware, the November election ballot includes candidates running for a seat on the Pajaro Valley Unified School District to represent Rio as well as candidates for the Santa Cruz County Superintendent of Schools. On Wednesday, October 18th, 7:00 P.M. at Aptos Junior High there will be a candidate forum. I encourage you all to attend the event.

Next week is our annual parent conference week. Our teachers place a great deal of effort into planning for these conferences, anticipating your questions. The parent-teacher conferences offer you the opportunity to hear about your student's progress as well as ask questions in a scheduled, sit-down conversation with a professional educator.

During conference week, our library will hold the annual Book Fair. Be sure to stop by and stock up on books for your student(s). Reminder: school lets out at 12:05 every day for 1st through 6th grades during conference week; the kindergarten schedule remains the same. There will not be any homework club during conference week. The Wednesday (October 18th) following conference week is a 2:05 dismissal for 1st through 6th grade.

Lastly, we have a couple of fundraisers that put the fun into fundraising. October 14th is the annual firework display at the beach. Buy your tickets from Rio del Mar School. October 20th is our annual Harvest Festival. The Rio Harvest Festival is an incredibly fun family event. Your students (and you) can even try to dunk me and other staff members in the dunk tank. If you're in the market for a new car, take a chance at winning a Subaru. Tickets are on sale in our office and all of the proceeds from the tickets sold come back to the school.

Thank you for your continued support,
Mike Heffner

3 Current Fundraisers

- Subaru Tickets – on sale in the front office until Oct. 15th.
- Monte Fireworks Tickets – also in front office

4 And now a word from our Vice Principal...

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As you know, next week teachers are conducting parent/teacher conferences. More than likely, homework is a topic that will be covered at some point during your conference. What's working well? What's not? If your child is able to finish and complete homework with ease, good for you! However, that is not always the case. Whatever the situation is for your child, it's important for your child's teacher to know how your child feels about and deals with his/her homework at home. If your child struggles with homework, this is the time to discuss how you and the teacher can work together to best support your child with some of these issues. Working in partnership benefits everyone....especially your child.

I found this article at kidshealth.org. and thought you might find it helpful as you begin your conversations.

Happy conferencing,

Deborah Dorney, Assistant Principal

Helping Your Grade-schooler With Homework

Homework is your child's responsibility, so you should just stay out of the way, right? Not necessarily. With a little support from you, homework can be a positive experience for your child - one that enriches learning, reinforces daily classroom lessons, and fosters lifelong organizational skills.

So why is homework so important?

Well, it's one of the first ways that children develop a sense of responsibility for completing their own work. Homework also teaches kids essential skills they need to succeed in [school](#) and future employment:

- learning how to read and follow directions independently
- managing and budgeting time (for long-term assignments like book reports)
- completing work neatly and to the best of their ability

Although it can be difficult, it's important to build homework time into your child's [busy schedule](#), making sure that it's not left until the remaining minutes before bedtime. It's a good idea to set rules for when homework and studying need to be done and when the [TV](#) can be turned on and should be turned off. The less TV, the better, especially on school nights. Making homework a priority will help your child recognize the importance of learning, reading, and studying.

It's also important to never do the work for your child, but to be available to help answer any questions he or she might have about homework. This gives you the opportunity to monitor your child's study habits and overall progress, as well as identify potential problems early on.

Setting Up Shop

Whether they prefer to get cozy on the couch or to hunker down on their beds, where kids should do homework depends on their age. The kitchen or dining room table is a popular workspace for younger children; they often feel more comfortable being near a parent or caregiver for help and encouragement. Older children may prefer to retreat to their rooms, but you may still want to check in periodically and review your child's homework when it's completed.

Wherever your child chooses to do his or her homework, it's important to make sure that the workspace is:

- well-lit
- comfortable
- stocked with school supplies such as pens, pencils, paper, stapler, calculator, ruler, etc., as well as references such as a dictionary and thesaurus
- quiet and free from distractions - TV, video games, phone calls, or chatting with other family members

If you aren't able to be home when your child gets out of school - as many working parents aren't - and you need to arrange for after-school care, try to find a program or private caregiver with a quiet, comfortable workspace that's as free of distractions as possible. It's also important for there to be a caregiver available to answer any questions your child might have about assignments.

If your child is having problems with homework or you don't feel comfortable with him or her doing homework in after-school care, try to schedule a time between dinner and bedtime to sit down with your child and go over assignments and any questions or concerns together. Even if your child does do homework in the after-school care environment, it's still a good idea to check up on his or her progress and make sure that assignments are being understood and completed.

If the nightly routine becomes too chaotic for both you and your child, try to schedule some time on the weekends to go over long-term assignments and projects, and to address any concerns or difficulties your child is having in a particular subject. Although the daily grind can be hectic for everyone, it's important to show your child that you're always available, even when things get really busy.

How Much Is Too Much - or Not Enough?

Whereas some students occasionally come home with no homework at all, others seem to be spending every waking moment doing one assignment or another every day after school. Unfortunately, there's no steadfast rule for how much time your child should spend doing homework. However, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) offers these estimates as a guideline:

- **kindergarten through second grade:** 10 to 20 minutes each day
- **third through sixth grades:** 30 to 60 minutes
- **seventh through ninth grades:** the amount will obviously be more than in the earlier grades and may vary from night to night

The USDE also points out that because young children have short attention spans and need to feel like they've finished a task successfully, giving them shorter assignments more often may be more beneficial than giving them fewer longer assignments.

It's important to remember, though, that reading - which is essential for young kids, in particular - is usually included in assignments, which can add considerably to the amount of time spent on homework. Also, the amount of time spent on homework will vary from day to day and will depend on the age and skills of your child, as well as on the policies of your child's teacher and the school.

Especially in the later grades, when your child will have multiple teachers, homework can really add up. Although it may seem like a child is taking a long time to complete assignments, it's important to remember that all kids learn in different ways. Some need breaks, whereas others work better with a time limit; other kids enjoy doing extra work.

If you're concerned, though, that your child is spending too much time on homework, talk to your child first to find out if he or she is stuck on certain tasks and understands the directions. And if you're worried that your child is getting too much or too little homework, talk with his or her teacher to learn about the homework

policies. Often, the teacher can clarify assignment objectives or review concepts taught in the classroom to

make homework easier - and to make sure that your child grasps what's being taught.

If your child consistently says he or she has no homework, you might want to contact your child's teacher. If it turns out that homework has been assigned and your child hasn't been completing it, you could ask the teacher to send home a homework notebook that requires your signature each school day to verify that you are aware of the homework assigned.

Homework Help, Internet Style

Many students now use the [Internet](#) for homework help and research, but access to inappropriate sexual and violent material is just a click away. So it's a good idea for parents to not only monitor their kids' computer activity, but to also educate them about the risks of cyberspace.

Some of the tools you can use to help make your child's Web surfing safer and more productive include:

- parental controls or blocking options, which nearly all online service providers (OSPs) and Internet service providers (ISPs) offer
- blocking software, which prohibits or blocks access to designated sites based on a "bad site" list compiled by the parent and the ISP or OSP
- filtering software, which uses keywords to block sites containing certain words and phrases
- outgoing filtering, which restricts personal information - such as name, address, and phone number - from being sent online
- monitoring and tracking software, which records the length of time spent on the Internet, time of day, sites visited, and time spent offline

But the best filter and monitoring device is you - if you give your grade-schooler access to a computer during homework time, make sure it's in a common space, not in the bedroom. This way, you can keep an eye on what your child is doing and discourage playing games, chatting with or emailing friends, or surfing the Net for fun.

Also, just because a site advertises itself as a homework help site, doesn't necessarily mean that the information on it is accurate. To help ensure that your child is using the very best resources the Internet has to offer, bookmark some of your favorite homework help Web addresses (Kids Health, for example) to give your child easy access to reliable information. And you may want to check your child's favorite sites to make sure that the information they're offering is correct and age appropriate.

It's also a good idea to talk to your child about plagiarism. Let your child know that it's never OK to copy information directly from a website - that the Internet should be used as a resource to help understand material being taught in class, not as a quick and easy way to complete assignments by using someone else's writing word for word.

Your Role - Helping Your Child

So you've set up the dining room table, the supplies are at hand, homework time is scheduled, and your child is ready to begin. But it seems like you're answering all the questions. Young children are accustomed to being helped with many tasks, so they naturally look to parents for help with homework. Remember that a primary goal of homework is to build responsibility. Here, your role as a parent is a supporting one - encouraging your child to think, evaluate, and respond on his or her own.

Although it's appropriate to help your child understand instructions before starting on assignments, you should then step back and let him or her work independently. It's important that you don't actually do the work yourself, because this denies your child an essential sense of achievement - and can lessen what your child learns from it.

Here are some tips to help kids look at homework as help rather than hassle:

- **Scan a homework assignment first to become familiar with it.** That way, if your child has trouble finding the answer, you can offer a clue and then let him or her find the answer. This approach can help build your child's confidence, enabling him or her to do the work alone.
- **Suggest that your child do harder assignments first.** That way, he or she will be more alert and able to focus on tougher material, says the USDE. But be flexible and pay attention to your child's learning style - he or she may want to get the easy work out of the way first and save the heavier stuff until last.
- **Try to broaden the concepts of particular lessons** by applying them to personal situations your child can relate to if your child is stumped on particular assignments. For example, ask your child questions such as, "What could we do in our neighborhood to reduce [pollution](#)?" This kind of dialogue can encourage your child

- to explore beyond the surface of a lesson or topic.
- **Allow your child to take a short break** if frustration sets in or his or her attention span seems to be fading, suggests the USDE.
 - **Check assignments before your child hands them in.** This not only gives you an indication of your child's ability, but it also keeps you up-to-date on what's being studied. And make sure to give your child plenty of praise. If you find errors, don't criticize - your comments should be focused on your child's effort, rather than on whether the results are correct.
 - **Treat homework completion as an achievement and offer occasional rewards.** Celebrate - with a walk, a trip to the movies, a weekend sleepover, etc. - to reinforce your child's hard work, says the USDE.
 - **Don't get into battles over homework.** You can be involved in your child's education without interfering.

When Your Child Is Having a Hard Time With Homework

If your child consistently complains about how hard it is to do homework or you notice that he or she seems to be really struggling with assignments, this could indicate a possible problem, such as [dyslexia](#), [ADHD](#), or [vision](#) or [hearing](#) difficulties. Sometimes, though, a child may simply need to develop better study habits, be more detailed when writing down assignments, or keep them in one place such as a daily homework notebook, which can help both kids and parents know exactly what assignments are due and when.

Help your child develop good homework and studying habits by working together with your child's teachers. If particular assignments seem to be giving your child more trouble than others, send a note to the teacher pointing out the difficulties your child had.

By going over homework with your child, you can identify any problems that need to be addressed and tackle them early on. If you're concerned, consult with your child's teacher, guidance counselor, school psychologist, or doctor. Once a problem is identified, you can work with the school to ensure that your child receives the resources needed.

You can also ask your child's teacher to send tests and quizzes home so you can track your child's progress. Keep in mind, though, that parents sometimes put too much emphasis on grades. A better evaluation of a child's progress comes from parent-teacher conferences, when the teacher discusses a child's attention, study skills, and successes. Remember that the main purpose of elementary school is to build a foundation. What's important is that your child develops study and organizational skills and understands why he or she is learning what's being taught.

Building the Groundwork for Learning

The key to truly helping your child with homework is to not interfere too much. Make sure your child knows that you're always available when he or she hits a snag, but let your child learn the importance of working independently. Encouraging your child's effort and determination and praising his or her hard work are key in motivating your child to succeed.

To reinforce the value of education, constantly show your own interest in learning. While your child is doing homework, do your own - read books, magazines, and newspapers; write letters, lists, and emails; and use math skills to calculate expenses or balance the checkbook, suggests the USDE. By showing your child that learning is important in the classroom and out, you'll help your little one to understand that homework is a very important part of building knowledge that can last a lifetime.

Reviewed by: [Mary L. Gavin, MD](#)

Date reviewed: August 2004

5 Needed: Chairperson for 2007 Auction / Golf Tournament

If you would like to fill this position (or co-chair with a friend) please contact Michele Rossi (684-2469) or Amy Jeske (amy.jeske@sbcglobal.net / 685-2209).

6 Box tops

Don't throw 10 cents away! All of you super savers, bring in your "Box Tops for Education" (trimmed, if possible) and place them in the receptacle in the office. I am volunteering to package them and send them in. Each one is worth 10 cents. Send in any bonus coupons as well.

Thank you!

Julie Harris

Julianne1harris@yahoo.com

7 Parent Alliance

All parents are invited to come join us for refreshments and an opportunity to voice your views the first Tuesday of the month in the Rio library. Free childcare and refreshments are available. The next meeting is **Tuesday, Nov. 7th at 6:30p.m. in the library.**

Current Fundraisers:

- Monte Fireworks tickets on sale now (in front office)
- Subaru Drawing tickets (also, in front office)