



## ***Veneta Elementary School***

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Olivia Johnson, Principal  
Gary Carpenter, Superintendent  
Fern Ridge School District

May 1, 2017

Dear Families,

Veneta Elementary will make some significant changes to our homework schoolwide beginning with the 2017-2018 school year. A copy of the homework policy is attached to this letter. In it we are asking families to spend their evenings focusing more on reading and spending time together as a family. What it barrels down to is that at the Kindergarten through 3rd grade level, we are taking away the required homework and replacing it with 20 to 40 minutes of reading or being read to each night. At the 4th/5th grade level, we are again asking families to spend 30 to 40 minutes a night reading but we have also included a short assignment each week, so that students can practice the work habits they will need in middle school. In addition, work that is not finished at school may be sent home and the occasional project may come that has a home component- for example your child might be asked to create a diorama related to the Native American tribe they are studying in school. For the most part though, even for our 4th and 5th grade students, reading every night is what we really truly want them to do.

So why are we making this change? This year our Building Leadership Team, composed of classroom teachers, instructional assistants, and our principal, took a hard look at homework. We looked at research that said spending time reading was the single most important thing that families could do to help their child succeed. We looked at research that clearly showed that, at the elementary level, homework in terms of drill, practice, and worksheets had no real benefit. We surveyed parents who told us that homework was, for many, a source of stress and conflict. We looked at other schools that had made the move to significantly reduce or eliminate homework and the success that they were experiencing. And we kept asking ourselves, what would we rather have students do: spend thirty minutes each night struggling with homework, where they either already had the skill or became frustrated that they didn't "get it", or spend 30 minutes reading a book or listening to a book being read to them? The answer seemed clear. With the support of our entire staff and our site council, we had our new Homework Policy.

We believe that students who read more will be more successful in school. Reading has been proven to expand vocabulary and build writing skills. Reading sparks a lifelong love of learning. In addition to spending more time reading, we also hope that less homework means students will spend more time with their family- whether it's helping to set the table together or playing a board game together or spending time outdoors together. Children benefit from time spent interacting positively with the adult role models in their lives.

Now that we have adopted this new homework policy, we will continue to reevaluate, through student performance data and parent surveys, every year to ensure that it's a policy that benefits all of our children.

We have one of the best libraries for a community our size in the state of Oregon. We have included information about the library with this letter. The children's librarian, Sharon Chittock, can help you find books that your child can read independently or books that you and your child can read together.

If you have any questions or concerns about this change, please feel free to contact your child's teacher or Ms. Johnson by phone or email.

Thank you,

Olivia Johnson  
Veneta Elementary Principal