

White River School
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Sheila Powers, Principal
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September 16, 2016

Dear Families:

Here are a couple of notes for you:

Homework

The first-grade classrooms will begin sending homework the last week in September. Homework will usually come home every Monday.

We hope that you read with your child, or to your child, or listen to your child read to you every evening. Read whatever your child is interested in. You can do choral reading or shared reading, enjoy the pictures, talk about the stories and characters and meanings of words, make predictions. It's really important to take this time!

In addition to reading, first grade teachers will send home one page (usually double-sided) of math practice on Mondays and it will be due back to school by Friday. I've included a page about specific homework expectations that you can keep for reference to help your child. I have talked with the class about the expectations and we practiced completing the first "homework" here in class this week. Homework should not take first graders an excessive amount of time. It will be work they know how to do, and in many cases can sit down and do independently. If homework ever becomes a battle, or takes a very long time to complete, or is really difficult for your child, please let me know!

Also, a clarification/reminder: every few weeks, I will send home some parent information from our phonics program, Foundations. It includes activities and handwriting pages for your information that you may want to have your child do when you have time. You are welcome to send these back in and I will give your child a sticker for doing them,-- BUT, these are not mandatory and are not considered homework.

Outerwear

It's started feeling like fall! It has still been quite cool at our morning recess, and sometimes still at our midday recess. Please send your child to school with sweatshirts/coats, etc. every day now. They can certainly take them off if it warms up later in the day but they should have them with them.

Lunch Money

If you send in money for school lunch, or for snack milk or for milk with lunch from home, please send it in an envelope or plastic bag with your child's name on it. We will send the bag back home

after the money is deposited in your child's account, and you can reuse it. It makes the busy morning routines go much smoother when I'm not being handed loose change. If you send a check, please put your child's name on the memo line and make the check out to White River School. Checks do not need to be in an envelope. Thank you!

Reading and Math Testing

At various points in the year (generally beginning, middle, and end of year), we do school-wide reading and math assessments on all students. These are in addition to ongoing classroom assessments, and teachers need to work one-on-one with students to complete them. They provide really useful information, but take time to do, so I will be out of the room occasionally to devote a day to this testing. The first of these days was yesterday; I got to read with each student individually and learned a lot of good information.

School Rules

We have three White River School rules:

- Be safe
- Be responsible
- Be respectful

Students are responsible for these rules across all school settings. I've spent a lot of time these first few weeks of school modeling, discussing, and having students practice following the rules throughout our day. Students brainstormed lists of what each rule means. Then each student illustrated one of these examples of what it means to follow the rules. After a lot of practice and talk, last week we began using the school-wide color chart in our classroom. This is a color-coded system that helps students be aware of their behavior throughout the day. Here are some nuts about bolts about how it works.

- If students break a rule in any setting (playground, in gym class, in the classroom, etc.), I name the rule they forgot and move their name one color.
- The colors progress from green, where every student begins every day, to purple, then yellow, then red.
- If students move a color, they do not move back within the school day.
- At the end of the day, students take home a colored square to represent how they ended their day. They should show this to you and be able to explain what happened if they were not "in green."
- The color system is not a punishment or to make students feel bad. It is intended to remind them of their choices throughout the day. If they are in purple or yellow, it's a chance to think carefully about what to do differently for the rest of the day.

- I tell students everyone makes mistakes—grown-ups, too! It is normal to be in purple once in a while. Please ask them to tell you about it but don't worry if your child is in purple once in a while. I will talk with you if I am concerned about patterns in your child's behavior.
- Occasionally our school has "Green Zone Days," which means a brief time when Ms. Powers or another adult will spontaneously visit the class and give any students in the green at that time a recognition—perhaps a sticker, a "green buck" to use at the school store, a pencil, or a coupon.
- If a student is in the red zone, they visit with Ms. Powers to talk about their behavior and make a plan to improve it. They may need to meet with her at recess to do this.
- There are a few "severe clauses" for which students are automatically moved to the red zone, such as physical aggression, refusing to do work, threatening someone, lying, or cheating.

The color system seems to work well for most students, and most first graders understand how it works. If you have questions about it, just let me know.

Have a good weekend,

Amanda Ehret