

Dear Parents,

I'm thinking we are all taking a big sigh of relief...the big California Regions Test is done! To make it even better, there is no big test this week and Wednesday is a holiday. Hooray!

Speaking of tests, I must say that I am impressed with how hard all the Ellerbees worked, getting ready for the test! They worked on flashcards. They worked on the map of California, which was not easy. They worked on a short essay about which region was the best region. Moms and dads, I know you jumped in with support and helped with quizzing your student on Thursday night. And, we all survived! Learning strategies for studying and memorizing is something we will continue to do all year. In fact, I was talking with a student last week who said learning with music was awesome. And my reply was, "How did you know we are going to do that?!" LOL! I have had former students visit me from Monte Vista High School and tell me they still use some of the tricks I taught them. Please know your child will leave 4th grade with a "toolbox" of tips and tricks!

On to stuff to know...

OWL PELLET FUN

The big, exciting event for the week is that we will be dissecting our owl pellets! Please pull out the ziplock bag that has: a foil covered owl pellet, some poking tools, and tweezers. In addition, a few other supplies need to be gathered: some plain, white paper, a small bowl or 2 for the bones and fur, and glue like Elmer's Glue (not a glue stick). Finally, please dig in the materials sent home and find a stapled packet. This packet shows what the different bones look like and also a model of how to build those bones into a skeleton. Just a few reminders: 1) the pellets are fully sanitized and safe to touch, and 2) please save the tools in the bag to be returned at the next materials pick-up.

END OF FIRST TRIMESTER

Just letting you know that the first trimester ends on Friday. The report cards will be available online for you to access no later than 5:00 pm on December 9.

NAMING EMAILS AND DOCUMENTS CORRECTLY

We had quite a few weeks where all Ellerbees were being careful with what to name assignments. However, last week we were suddenly back to naming documents and emails randomly. As you know, when assignments and emails are not named correctly, I cannot find them when I search. This is very important. Please remind your student that how to name things is written in many places:

1. We write it on the agenda every Monday. I highlight it in yellow and I am asking students to highlight what to name each assignment/email.
2. It is written on the Weekly Assignments page on the website.
3. It is written on the specific pages (e.g. Reading page, Writing page) on the website.

PLEASE USE BLACK INK

In a similar vein, I am continuing to receive assignments written in pencil. Often the pencil is too light for me to read. Today I received an assignment that was so light and taken from a distance so that I literally could not read one answer. That is heartbreaking!

I do what I can to enhance and sharpen the image, but it can take 5 to 10 minutes to do that. And it is not always successful, especially if the focus is too fuzzy. If I can't read it, I can't give credit for it. Thank you for making sure your child has a few black pens at their "school spot." BTW, there is actually such a thing as erasable pens! Just a thought. And, of course, white out can also help correct mistakes when using ink.

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

I'm just checking in with you to see if the new page on our website was helpful at all. The idea is to have one place to go where all the week's work is in a simple list. It can be used as a checklist.

Last week many assignments were missing. I'm hoping that having that list will show your kids how to keep track and stay organized. I recommend putting a check next to an assignment when it's completed, and then highlight the assignment when it actually gets sent in.

TURNING IN MATH

Just a little reminder that how and when we turn in math assignments is very different from other subjects.

Since math is something that builds concepts from lesson to lesson it is important to grade the work as soon as possible before introducing something new. That way I can reteach and possibly even change the assignment if it appears that more practice will be important.

Because of this, we always grade an assignment the day after we complete it. Then, the graded assignment is sent to me that day so I can assess whether I need to provide more practice etc.

Therefore, it MUST get sent to me that day.

Please think of a strategy that will work as a reminder for your child to send all graded math assignments the day that it is graded. By math class the following day I often have only about half the assignments turned in which makes it difficult for me to see if the kids understood the concept or if we need to practice again.

Thanks, as always, for your patience. I think I managed to get this down to just 2 pages! Possibly the first time this year.

Thanks for all your hard work. I know the amount of support you need to provide during online school is much more time intensive!

Stay safe,

Ruth