

August 23, 2018

Dear 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade Parents,

Welcome! My name is Randy Russell. For those of you that do not know me, I am the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Knights Ferry. I am looking forward to a great year ahead of us with much to learn and accomplish.

The daily schedule is as follows:

8:15-8:30	Attendance/Flag Salute/Announcements
8:30-9:30	Math
9:30-10:25	Writing
10:25-10:40	Recess
10:40-11:40	Reading
11:40-12:30	Social Studies
12:30-1:10	Lunch
1:10-2:00	Science
2:00-2:30	P.E.
2:30-2:40	Clean up and go home!

Every student is responsible for knowing what their homework is each day and when that homework is due. Besides constant reminders from me throughout the day, all assignments are written on the front board **every single day**. Each student is supplied with a daily planner, of which, they will be required to write in their planner everything that we've done for the day, homework, and also reminders of upcoming tests, quizzes, projects, etc. Each day, at 1:15 p.m., completed daily planners will be stamped by a student. Student's can bring their planners home every day (they must remember to bring them back every day, too!), so you also have the opportunity to keep up with what your child is doing in class, homework assignments, etc. This is an excellent way to teach students to be organized and to take responsibility for their own school

work. They can get their planners signed to earn class money.

The students will also keep in-class notes for every subject. With my guidance, your child will become very adept at recognizing and recording significant information about important events, characters and meaningful points from the novels, textbooks, lectures, and vocabulary. These notes will also prepare your child for tests.

This year, in **Reading**, we are using a new curriculum that we used the previous year called Amplify that utilizes Chrome books. I am really excited about this curriculum due to its interesting content and ability to adapt to the learner and their ability. Within Amplify we will be reading several novels, short stories, informational texts, and poems. If you would like to see how Amplify works you're more than welcome to come visit while I implement this instruction. Each quarter student's are responsible for reading AR books that they choose from the Library. They will take an AR test on their book and must achieve a passing score to get credit for their book. During the trimester they are given a reading goal, which will count as a test grade. We are continuing our AR program this year which will align reading materials to individual student Reading levels. Students will also be responsible to complete one book project per trimester. There will be a variety of options for students to choose from.

In **Math**, we will be utilizing curriculum designed by Engage NY to implement Common Core State Standards. Math is separately taught for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders and focuses on grade level criteria. Students will engage in group activities, interactions, and discussions to reinforce the desired learning task. Rather than just give the answer, students are expected to

provide verbal/written communication to demonstrate their depth of understanding and take their learning to a deeper level. Curriculum is designed around real-world situations to help evoke the student's curiosity.

In **Science**, we will be studying about Physical and Life Sciences, such as, matter and its interactions, energy, motion, and the structure, function, Earth's place in the Universe and physical properties in living systems. We will perform a multitude of experiments, class activities, and labs to help further the understanding of these concepts. We will have several class projects as well as projects that students will be required to complete at home. We also have Great Valley Museum coming to our class to perform labs on States of Matter, Chemical Reactions, and an eye dissection.

In **World History**, we will begin learning about the history of the World; specifically how different cultures interacted and lived during their time period. We specifically get to look at the expansion and fall of Rome, African, Asian, and the civilizations of the Americas, and the Renaissance . Students will engage in several group activities to explore and understand these concepts to a much deeper level. Throughout the year we will have several projects, debates, and video/technology activities to reinforce the information in the text. We will also take time to learn about local history to help student's understand more about where they live.

In **Writing**, we will spend a good deal of time exploring the process of writing, as well as developing a "finished product" (a final draft). After a writing assignment is given (and thoroughly discussed, outlined, and brainstormed in class with

me!) the students will have time in class to begin their rough drafts. We will do in-class activities for a few days to help, improve, and edit the students' rough drafts. After these in-class activities, a due date will be given for the final draft, usually about a week later. Each writing paper is sixty percent of their final grade. The final draft must be typed and, as I stated above, they will have approximately a week to type their papers. Student's will be typing their papers in class and can type them at home as well. For every final draft turned in, a rough draft must also be turned in that has been edited and signed by at least one adult (more is better!). If you are unable to help your child edit their paper, there are plenty of available adults or staff at our school that are willing to help. Absolutely **No lates** are accepted for **ANY** writing assignment because of the length of time given for each of these assignments. If a writing assignment is not turned in on the due date, it will be recorded as **a zero** in the student's writing grade. We will also work to improve student's conventions of writing working towards developing student's vocabulary acquisition and use. Writing will be used across the curriculum to help demonstrate student understanding of all subject areas.

The **late** and **missing** assignment policy is simple. Assignments are expected to be turned in on the day it's due by 8:30 a.m. for all subjects. If it is not turned in at that time, it will be recorded as a "late" assignment. The students have only **one day** to turn in a late assignment and the grade for that assignment will be dropped one full grade (10%) from the original grade earned on that assignment. If the late assignment is not turned in the following day by 8:30 a.m., it will receive an additional (10%). This year we are continuing our ZAP (Zeros

Aren't Permitted). It is a program designed to reduce the amount of missing assignments for students. For more details, check out the information packet about ZAP.

**The grading scale for each subject is as follows:**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Assignments</b>	<b>Tests/Quizzes</b>	<b>Writing assignments/projects</b>
Reading	40%	60%	
Writing	30%	20%	50%
Math	40%	60%	
Science	40%	60%	
Social Studies	40%	60%	

\* Grades can be accessed online at:  
[ps.knightsferry.k12.ca.us/public/](https://ps.knightsferry.k12.ca.us/public/)

The school sent out a username and password (same as the previous year if you have one) to parents or guardians so your child's grades can be accessed and monitored at your convenience.

Homework is a vital part of the upper grade curriculum. Your child's homework will usually be their daily assignments they didn't finish during class time (and they are always given time to work on their assignments during class.) Homework not only reinforces what is being taught in the classroom, it actually helps build an important part of your child's character; their self esteem. Student's may have less homework and will be expected to read something at home or be prepared to discuss a

topic the following day. The idea is to get them to a deeper level of understanding where they have to explain their process or how they arrived with an answer, rather than just what the answer is. Throughout the year, I will emphasize positive self esteem and self confidence throughout the curriculum, using various activities, games, etc. and homework, which is another important way to build on a child's feelings of success.

Together, we can help your child acquire the skills that they need to become a confident, responsible, self-motivated adult. I know that with all of us working together, we can help your child become the best person that they can be!

We have a busy year ahead of us and I look forward to taking your children as far as they can go...hopefully farther! As always, we will shoot for the stars, and this year, I think we just might make it! If you ever have any questions you can reach me at [rmrussell30@gmail.com](mailto:rmrussell30@gmail.com)

Sincerely,  
Randy Russell