

August 18, 2011

Dear Parents and Guardians of 7th Grade History Students,

This year will be an exciting one for the students in my classes. They will be learning key historical concepts in a highly engaging way.

Encore is using *History Alive!*, a program that truly engages students in learning. Your student will be an active participant instead of a passive observer, experiencing history through innovative teaching practices that include dramatic role playing, creative simulations, dynamic group projects, and writing from a historical perspective.

Curious about what your child will be learning this year? California's History-Social Science Standards form the backbone for the course. The standards for grade 7 cover the period between ancient and modern times, or the medieval world: life in medieval Europe and the Byzantine Empire; the history of Muslim empires and the rise of Islam; the cultures of West Africa; imperial China; medieval Japan; the Mayan, Inca, and Aztec civilizations; and Europe's Renaissance, Reformation, Scientific Revolution, and Enlightenment.

Within the seventh grade California History-Social Science Standards, your student will be learning about a number of sensitive and controversial topics, including the development of different world religions. The *History Alive!* materials were designed to deal with these topics objectively, respectfully, and in accordance with state guidelines. These materials will not promote or encourage students to believe in, practice, or follow the fundamentals of any specific religion. They will be taught for the purpose of understanding how history has been affected, altered, or changed to influence our world through the medieval period to the present. Respect for others' opinions, beliefs, differences, and practices are mandatory. Rudeness, disrespect, and inappropriate actions and/or comments will be immediately given disciplinary consequences.

Here are some tips on supporting your child's academic progress in this class.

- Discuss history and current events with your child, and listen to what your child has to say.
- Ask to see your student's Notebook and workbook on a regular basis, so you can see for yourself what your child is learning. Your student may also ask you to sign their notebook, showing that you have looked over what they are studying as an assignment.
- Provide a quiet study place, free from distractions.
- Finally, extend learning beyond the walls of the classroom by taking your child to historical sites or museums. Point out that history is all around us, that it shapes the present and the future, and that every one of us can play an active and positive role in it.

What your student should do on a regular basis:

- **Be Organized:** Check to make sure your student is keeping an organized 3-ring binder, just for history, as per the notebook organization notes provided. These should be in the last divider of their notebook. Their notebook, along with their workbook, should be in class with them daily. Both of these serve as additional study tools for quizzes, unit tests, and benchmarks above and beyond the text.

- **Be Thorough:** Help your student make sure they have done complete work and understand it. Read their chapter “Reading Notes” in their workbook. If you don’t have a decent understanding of what the section is about by what they have written, chances are they need to expound on their answers. Also, have your student explain to you what they learned in each section. This not only helps him/her understand the material better by applying it, but also lets them see if they have been thorough enough by whether or not someone else can understand what they are explaining. Tests/quizzes will occasionally be open note which also makes it imperative for the student to do thorough, complete work.
- **Be Prepared:** Students who are prepared for class tend to be much more successful. Students should come to class daily with their 3-ring binder and their workbook, paper, pencil, and two pens; one black or blue and one red. Your student should also take their materials with them to their study hall to complete any work not finished in class. They should not be working on assignments the day they are due. It is very difficult to work from behind as history builds.
- **Communication:** Students are required to write down their agenda and homework in their history notebook daily in the format given. Ask them to show it to you. You can also check the grade sheet in the front of their notebook, which also serves as a table of contents for their notebook. It contains the California State Standard of each assignment, due dates, assignment titles, and scores/points possible for each assignment as well as where the assignment is located (workbook vs. notebook). Students and parents have access to the grading program, Aeries, used at Encore. Here agendas, assignments, due dates, upcoming events, and grades can be accessed. If your student is absent, this is a way to find missed agendas/homework prior to returning to school. Or, once they have returned they come in and find the same information on the cork board posted on the wall under Daily Agendas for A-Day and B-Day in the classroom.
- **Assignments:** This course will have various types of assignments but most will be located within the student workbook that corresponds to the standards based textbook. It is imperative that the workbook and text are in class daily. The 3 types of assignments in the workbook are called: *Preview*, *Reading Notes (RN’s)*, & *Processing*. These main titles will repeat but each will also include the chapter number that they correspond to. If an assignment is on a separate sheet of paper it will have the title of the assignment and will be labeled with (WS), standing for worksheet. All assignments are to be kept as they will serve as study tools for tests/quizzes, benchmarks, and the final. Workbook assignments stay in the workbook and loose paper work and notes will be kept in their history notebook behind the appropriate divider for ease of reference and study.

I want to thank you in advance for your support. I am looking forward to an exciting, enjoyable, and enriching year working with you and your child.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Schoch