



# Westpark Elementary

## Fall Newsletter



### A Focus on Homework

As part of the IUSD Continuous Improvement Efforts, teachers have been examining their homework practices. Westpark teachers have taken time to make sure their homework reinforces their learning objectives and helps students establish work habits that promote success for their future. After each grade level determined the purpose of homework, a continuum from Kindergarten to grade 6 was developed and shared with all teachers. Communicating these expectations to students and parents is done through a variety of ways including Back-to-School Night, teacher websites, emails, and as assignments are given. If a student is having difficulty with homework, teachers are available for support and conferences. Westpark teachers recognize the need for students and families to enjoy their holidays and breaks, therefore they do not give homework assignments that are due when school resumes from a break. Upper

grade teachers will inform students of long-term assignments so they can start the projects. Westpark teachers welcome input and questions from parents and students about homework. Homework supports student learning and we appreciate families assistance with our mutual goal of student success.

**Ann Marie Simmons**  
Principal

### The Homework Connection

Academic success is important and homework is a part of that success. Students experience that success when they have a special area to complete their homework. Some students know exactly how to approach homework and some need to learn how to organize. Many children benefit from seeing how to prioritize their assignments based on the time needed to complete them. They may also need assistance and structure to learn how to place completed assignments in their backpack right away.



### Homework Tips for Parents

**Workshop on November 17th, 6:00-7:00 p.m.**

Please join us as teachers in primary and upper grades give tips on homework. Learn more about ways to support your child's learning and ways to get the job done effectively.

### *Important Dates:*

- Veterans Day Holiday - Friday, November 11th
- Thanksgiving Holidays - November 24th-25th
- End of 2nd Quarter - December 16th (Minimum Day)
- Winter Recess - December 19th - January 6th

## From the Health Office...

As flu season has arrived, we are concerned about maintaining a healthy atmosphere in our classrooms to keep the children safe and healthy. Here are a few things that you can do to help us during flu season:

- Keep sick children at home. If your child experiences influenza like symptoms, please contact your health care provider.
- Teach your children to wash their hands often with soap and water when possible, and cover their noses and mouths with a

tissue when coughing or sneezing (or a shirt sleeve or elbow if no tissue is available).

- Good nutrition and proper hydration are of utmost importance.

We want healthy students at school each and every day. We love teaching your children and being a part of their learning and growth.



## Parent Involvement

### Parent Teacher Association

Our PTA holds meetings most months of the year and organizes fundraising and community building events. Please visit the link on our homepage for more information. Your volunteerism and financial support is incredibly appreciated and invaluable. The home-school partnership is critical to overall school success. The PTA would like to extend an invitation to all parents to participate at any level. The PTA Board members would love to hear from you and help you find an area where you

can really help support all they do.

Joining the Westpark PTA by completing a Membership form is an important way of demonstrating your support for the PTA. Westpark Elementary PTA supports many of the events and activities at school. Some of the most exciting and unique events at Westpark include the Talent Show and the Musical. These two productions are outstanding, particularly for an elementary school. All students are encouraged to participate and many new stars are born each year.

This year, the PTA will be assisting with a 20th Anniversary Party to celebrate Westpark's 20th year. Mark your calendar for Saturday, April 28th!

It is not too late to join the PTA. If you have not returned your membership form and dues, please know your PTA will always be excited about a new membership.

# Thank You!

## Loved One's Day



Students are encouraged to invite their Loved Ones to come to school on Wednesday, 11/23, to participate in Westpark's Loved Ones Day. Each teacher will have a special activity for the student to engage in along with their loved one. Once the activity is complete, loved ones and students are invited to have lunch at the students' regular lunch time (Grades 1-3: 11:35 and Grades 4-6: 12:20). Loved ones are invited to bring their own lunch to share with the students on the lawn. If you plan on bringing a lunch to have on the lawn, please bring picnic blankets or portable lawn furniture since our lunch tables are not large enough to accommodate students plus loved ones. Students will be allowed to eat their lunch with their loved ones or

participate in lunch as we do daily by brining or buying a lunch. Westpark teachers will be honorary loved ones for all students who do not have a loved one who can make it. In addition, sixth grade students will be selling Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory caramel apples that day to help support projects and activities.

## Instructional Strategies at Westpark:

### Thinking Maps Incorporated

Developed by Dr. David Hyerel and Dr. Chris Yeager

This year the Westpark staff has been implementing a strategy for students to organize their thinking processes using Thinking Maps. Thinking Maps are a set of visual patterns based on a fundamental thinking process. These patterns are used individually and in combination across every grade level and curriculum area as an integrated set of tools for life-long learning.

We all learn in different ways. Research teaches us that the brain takes in information kinesthetically, through auditory means, and visually. Current research suggests that our ability to learn visually is greater than any of our other senses. Visualizing our thinking allows us to have a concrete image of our abstract thoughts. Thinking Maps combines the flexibility of brainstorming webs and structure of task-specific graphic organizers with visual patterns for the depth and complexity of critical thinking. Thinking Maps provide a common visual language in classrooms and whole schools.

Thinking Maps identifies eight thinking processes and has developed visual maps to help organize the thought process. The eight thinking processes are: Defining in Context; Describing Qualities; Compare and Contrast; Classifying; Part-Whole; Sequencing; Cause and Effect; Seeing Analogies. Thinking Maps teaches the students a visual representation linked to a specific thought process. By connecting a dynamic visual design with a specific thought process, students create mental visual patterns for thinking based on the eight cognitive skills.

You may notice that your child is using a visual representation to brainstorm or when thinking about homework. You will also notice the Thinking Maps posters displayed in the classrooms. The teachers and Instructional Assistants participated in a full day of professional development to learn about the Thinking Maps. They are implementing lessons

using the Thinking Maps. They will attend several more staff development sessions to be coached on how to use Thinking Maps to enhance their lessons and teach students critical thinking skills.



## Soft Truancy Information



Irvine Unified School District



### **STUDENT SUCCESS BEGINS WITH ATTENDANCE!!!**

Please help improve student attendance by taking a positive approach to assist in establishing positive attendance patterns and avoid chronic truancy.

#### **FACT:**

**Hard Truancies almost always begin with a pattern of Soft Truancies that is not corrected.**

Please visit the following link for a message to Parents and Students:

[Soft Truancy](#)

