



Fern Ridge High School

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Rebecca Warren
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August 2011

Fern Ridge Students and Families,

The remaining days of summer break are quickly passing by and the first day of school will be here before you know it. The beginning of every new school year is always an exciting time at Fern Ridge because it brings with it an opportunity for our students to experience a fresh start which includes changes in friendships and academic successes. The beginning of the 2011-2012 school year brings several important school-wide changes including: new teachers, new start and end times, new format to the school day, and new cell phone/computer usage policies. It is important to be aware of these changes so I encourage you and your student to read about them in the remainder of this newsletter and then discuss the impacts they might have on you, your student, and your family.

New Teachers

Last school year, we bid a fond farewell to two dedicated and talented teachers; this year, we invite you to welcome Ms. Lombardi, our new Communication Arts teacher, and Ms. Stenger, our new Special School District teacher, to our school community and Fern Ridge family. I am sure you will find they are passionate about teaching, dedicated to meeting student needs, and committed to ensuring student success.

New Start and End Times

As you probably know, because high school start and end times have changed, our start and end times have changed, too. The school day will now begin at 8:10 a.m. and will end at 3:00 p.m. In addition, if your student rides a bus to their home school in the morning, their bus stop pick up time will be earlier than it was in prior years.

New Class Schedule Format

Our students are extremely important to us and we are dedicated to fulfilling our school's mission of ensuring that they become curious, capable, and confident learners. To that end, we are changing our class schedule from split blocked classes to blocked classes to allow more students the opportunity to take advantage of additional learning endeavors such as attending technical school and/or dually enrolling in college classes during the first half or last half of the school day. We will continue to offer four academic classes during each of our four-nine week semesters.

New Cell Phone and Computer Usage Policies

Although information and communication technologies play an increasingly important role in 21st century communication skills, they also play an increasingly disruptive role in school classrooms. The number and the severity of "problems" caused by students 'texting, making and/or receiving calls, and accessing social networking sites during class time is not conducive to effective learning practices. Students cannot successfully learn new academic skills, concepts, and/or perform at higher academic levels. In fact, recent brain research on multi-tasking provides interesting evidence that multi-tasking (texting) in a learning environment can result in lower grade performance. These results are similar to the results found by neuroscientists on the brain's limited ability to retain and effectively retrieve information under dual tasks conditions (multi-tasking) such as tex-

The mission of Fern Ridge High School and the Parkway School District is to ensure all students are capable, curious and confident learners who understand and respond to the challenges of an ever-changing world.



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ting during class time. Therefore, to ensure optimal classroom learning environments for our students, we will be enforcing new cell phone and computer usage policies.

We will also use these policy changes to help teach and promote personal, social, and civic responsibility as they relate to the ever-changing technologies. For more information about these changes, please refer to the 2011-2012 Student Handbook for specific changes in cell phone and computer technology usage policies.

On a different note - our first official school day is Tuesday, August 16 and the Fern Ridge staff is excited to start the new year. We urge you to be a partner with us and stay actively involved in your students education by encouraging them to attend school each and every day. Your involvement also includes becoming familiar with our school by accessing and utilizing our website and the Infinite Campus Parent Portal and by attending all school events including Open House Night, Parent/Teacher Conferences, and our school play.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call. I look forward not only to seeing you at Fern Ridge in the very near future, but also to working with you and your student throughout the school year and providing them a productive and safe learning environment that supports student success.

With great enthusiasm,

Becky Warren