

The article below was written by staff last year as we were developing our school mission. We would like to re-print it to remind families about grade-level expectations. It is a great article to share with your students about their roles in their education.

This document is available in formatted form online at:

<http://www.willettpa.org/school-info/from-our-principal>

Our School Mission is:

**Willett is a community that strives to help all students reach their academic potential while fostering respect, responsibility and resourcefulness.**

### **How to Best Support Your Child in School**

Our goal at Willett Elementary School as a staff is to prepare our students to be independent life long learners. We enjoy working with families to reach each individual student's potential. Part of this process is allowing students to learn on their own and take responsibility for their education and their actions.

There is research about the long term effects on students' success and self esteem when they do not learn independence and responsibility. If a child does not have the opportunity to learn from their mistakes or take a risk, they often feel they are incapable and can become not willing to try. The Search Institute ([www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)) has done extensive research on the development of children and has created 40 Developmental Assets for children which are a great overview of what children need at various stages in their life. This link is provided on our PTA website. We hope that you will take the time to look it over.

As a staff, we have certain expectations about what a child should be taking responsibility for and areas where parent support is important. We hope to make the home-school link as strong as possible. Our teachers and families provide incredible support to students, and we have guidelines about creating the responsibility for the child and helping them become more independent.

We expect that all parents/guardians are maintaining a priority of the following:

- Students arrive to school on time (no earlier than 8:10) every day.
  - If a student is absent, the parent is required to contact the school each day of absence.
  - Provide advance notice for known absences or appointments.
  - Schedule vacations during school holidays.
- Students are well rested and fed before coming to school each day.
- Students are prepared for school with appropriate materials, homework and lunch.
- Student is provided a place and time to complete homework each night.
- Parents support the homework by clarifying directions and allowing the student to complete the work independently.
- Parents read school newsletters, handbook, and teacher newsletters, notes and emails.
- Parents notify the school office and teacher if there are significant changes at home or with contact information.

- Make afternoon plans for your children before school. Send your child with a note about what the plan is if your child tends to forget.
- We do not encourage bringing forgotten items to school for intermediate students, but if you must, please drop it by the office instead of going to the classroom.
- For the safety of our children, visitors are always required to check in at the office before entering campus!
- As always, please contact the teacher in person or by email or phone if you have any questions.

We also expect that all adults are encouraging independence and responsibility and setting an example in their actions and interactions. Our grade-level teams have developed lists of guidelines in terms of how to best support your student. We ask that you look over the following staff expectations and review them with your child.

### **Kindergarten:**

- Children are responsible for bringing and putting away their backpacks, bringing library books and bringing snacks.
- Teachers work with parents on appropriate ways to support their children.

### **First Grade:**

- Take time for family discussions every day.
- 10 minutes of reading together every night.
  - \*Suggest reading literature without dependency on pictures.
- Encourage independence of the children.
  - \*Able to tie, zip, button, open food containers
  - \*Carry own backpack
  - \*Return library books, folders, notes to school
- Teach proper manners.
- Ensuring proper rest, nutrition, and hygiene at home.
  - \*10-12 hours of sleep
  - \*Nutritious breakfast before school
  - \*Provide a healthy snack and lunch (or provide for hot lunch)

### **Second Grade:**

- 1) Communication
  - Use email to convey information to the teacher that does not require an immediate, lengthy response.
- 2) Home academic support
  - Follow through or reinforce any plan arranged with the teacher.
  - Support classroom teacher with academic and behavior goals.
- 3) Support school behavior expectations and reinforcement
  - Be aware of school behavior rules and expectations.
  - Reinforce school behavior at home as necessary.
  - Follow through or reinforce any plan arranged with teacher.
  - Support classroom teacher with academic and behavior goals.
  - Help children learn positive problem solving skills.

#### 4) Life skills and citizenship

- Be willing to allow the child to experience disappointment and failure.
- Help the child develop appropriate social skills.

#### **Third Grade:**

Parents should:

- Establish a regular time and place for homework.
- Provide necessary materials and supplies.
- Provide **limited** instruction and assistance.
- Establish logical consequences for noncompliance and follow through.

Students should:

- Keep track of their books and assignments.
- Start on time and allow time to finish work.
- Do his or her work with only limited assistance.
- Turn the work in on time.
- Accept responsibility for grades or other consequences.

#### **Fourth Grade:**

At Back-to-School Night, we discuss expectations and parent involvement. We tell parents that 4<sup>th</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> grades are a time for children to learn to be more independent and more responsible for their own learning. Parents should provide a quiet place and time for homework and help with directions, if needed. We encourage children to take responsibility for their materials. We suggest that students keep school materials in a special place, and pack them up the night before they are due at school.

We try to keep our message positive, and understand an occasional relapse. If missing materials or incomplete homework becomes a problem, we notify parents.

We appreciate parents contacting us directly with questions, or concerns.

#### **Fifth/Sixth Grade:**

At this grade level, we are scaffolding independence for our students. Parents should expect students to:

- Bring homework on their own.
- Bring musical instruments on their own.
- Bring lunches to school on their own.

Parents should NOT deliver them when they are forgotten.

Parents should expect students to be responsible for obtaining all missed work due to absences. Teach them how to advocate for themselves by contacting their teachers, calling a friend from class, or looking at the class whiteboard for missed lessons.

Parents should not expect email to be used for immediate-response issues. Teachers are working with students during the work day, and there is not time to respond to emails. If there is an **emergency**, please contact the school office.

Parents should respond to negative interactions between students that occur outside of school. School staff will respond to negative interactions that occur at school.

Parents, like teachers, are expected to model respectful behavior.  
Parents need to respect the professionalism of teachers and assume their best intent on behalf of their students (Support the teacher's efforts in your child's education. If you need clarification, please ask the teacher.)