

From Your Ridgecrest Counselors

As Winter Break approaches, students look forward to a time without homework and time to relax and unwind. Taking time to relax is so important for adolescents to recuperate before the second part of the school year (is it already that time of year!?). During Winter Break, we encourage you to set aside time as a family to put away all technological devices. By doing this you are giving yourselves the chance to engage in meaningful conversations without the distractions of the virtual world. In the months following winter break, Ridgecrest students will participate in “No Homework” nights. These evenings were proposed by two of our own Raiders, Lucy T. and Vera S. The goal of no homework nights is for students to disconnect from school demands and technology and reconnect with their family. We hope that you enjoy winter break and return in 2016 feeling reenergized for the second half of the school year!

No Technology Activity Suggestions

- Physical activities: biking, hiking, going for a walk, beach
- Relaxing activities at home: playing cards, reading, board games, art projects, write letters to friends and family who live out of town
- Other activities: cooking/baking, home projects, family discussions, taking a fun class, cleaning a closet
- Visit local cultural spaces: Cabrillo Museum Aquarium, Palos Verdes Art Center, South Coast Botanic Gardens, Library

Whatever you choose, remember that soon your student will be looking for more independence. This is a great time to make some new memories and have new experiences together.

Facts about Screen Time

- According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, teenagers should spend no more than 1-2 hours on a screen each day (with new recommendations coming in Fall 2016)
- Common Sense Media found that there are 4 main categories for screen use among children and teens:
 - *Passive consumption:* watching TV, reading, and listening to music
 - *Interactive consumption:* playing games and browsing the Internet
 - *Communication:* video-chatting and using social media
 - *Content creation:* using devices to make digital art or music
- A recent study done by UCLA found that sixth grade students who went 5 days without looking at a screen were able to read human emotions better than their peers who were able to look at electronic devices during that same time period

Recommended Websites

www.common sense media.org – a website with the goal of informing children, parents, and schools about appropriate media for students of all ages

www.screenfree week.org – while we won't be holding a screen free week, this site provides activities and information related to going device free

Happy Holidays & Enjoy your Winter Vacation!

Heidi Shulman & Jesse Allen

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