

# Letter to Parents and Guardians

The model parent letter on the following page is designed to inform parents about state standards, the pedagogical methods you plan to use with the *History Alive!* curriculum, your approach to teaching about controversial issues and religious topics, and tips on providing support at home.

## Using the Letter to Parents and Guardians

1. *Reproduce the parent letter.* You may find it more effective to create your own letter based on the model provided. A customized letter might include rules and procedures that are specific to your classroom.
2. *Send the letter home with students during the first week of school.* Open the lines of communication early. The same letter, or another version of it, should also be available for Back to School Night. Include with each letter a copy of the Student Guide to the California Standards, so parents will have a quick reference to what students will be learning in your class.
3. *Encourage parents to monitor progress throughout the year by reviewing their child's Interactive Student Notebook.* The Interactive Student Notebook will give parents an overview of their child's learning. During parent conferences, you could use the Interactive Student Notebook to demonstrate where students are excelling and where they are struggling. You may want to have parents sign the Interactive Student Notebook each week to ensure that they are continually monitoring their child's progress.



Dear Parents and Guardians,

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.

Our school 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. You'll find them in the back of your child's *History Alive!* textbook. I have also attached a copy of the Student Guide to the California Standards, a simplified version of the standards that serves as a quick, easy-to-use reference. The standards for grade 8 cover the history of the United States through industrialism: the founding of our nation, the growth of American democracy, the Civil War that divided us, the diverse cultures that have enriched our society, the transformation of the United States into an industrial nation.

As you can see by scanning the standards, eighth grade students learn about a number of sensitive and controversial topics, including difficult constitutional issues. The *History Alive!* materials were designed to deal with these topics objectively, respectfully, and in accordance with state guidelines.

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 the Interactive Student Notebook on a regular basis, so you can see for yourself what your child is learning.
- 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.

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,

Your child's teacher