

Dear Families,

I can't believe that school is just around the corner! I hope you had time to enjoy some summer fun with your kids. If your summer was anything like mine, time just flew by! I am looking forward to beginning a new school year and meeting all of you! Since we will be working closely together to help your child have a successful year, I would like to tell you a little about myself. I earned my bachelor's degree from Carroll College in Waukesha, Wisconsin in Elementary Education and my master's degree from Aurora University. I am very excited to begin my 20th year at West Side teaching first grade. I have had a busy summer traveling to Florida and Green Bay to spend time with family, camping, and preparing for the school year. I am looking forward to becoming even busier as the school year approaches! I am confident that we will have a great year, working and learning together.

Parent Involvement

I believe it is important for the school and parents to work together as partners. Making a commitment to be actively involved in your child's education is the best thing you can do for him/her. One great way to do that is by establishing a daily reading/writing time at home. For example, set aside twenty minutes before or after supper or before bedtime for the family to spend reading together. This little portion of time is very critical in the life of an emergent reader. Throughout the school year, I will keep you informed of school and classroom events through a monthly newsletter. If you have time available and are interested in helping out in the classroom, please fill out the attached volunteer form and bring it to Open House, or send it with your child the first week of school.

Language Arts

This year your child will spend a great deal of time learning about the four areas of language arts: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. We will spend time reading different kinds of literature, reading in guided reading groups, and working in strategy groups. Shortly after the year begins, your child will begin bringing home a nightly reading book that is academically appropriate for him/her. Please note that the book your child will be bringing home is the level he/she ended with in kindergarten.

During the first trimester, your child will be enhancing their penmanship and overall writing skills. We will be learning about sentence formation, vocabulary usage, paragraph writing, how to organize writing pieces, and much more.

Reader's Workshop

The workshop model is a way of structuring the reading block to ensure that every student is independently engaged in meaningful, research-based literacy instruction and practice. These practices have an incredible impact on student reading and writing achievement, as well as help foster students who love to read and write. Students receive explicit whole group instruction at the beginning of workshop time, and then are given independent practice time to read and write independently, practicing the skills and strategies learned that day. Meanwhile, I will provide focused, intense instruction to individuals and small groups of students. When the workshop is up and running smoothly, students will be engaged in read to self.

There are very specific behavior expectations that go along with a successful reading workshop. We will spend our first weeks of school working intensely on building our reading stamina and learning behaviors that help students be successful during workshop time, meanwhile fostering positive social development within our classroom community. I will also spend time learning about your child's strengths and greatest needs as a reader in order to best plan for each student's instruction.

Your child will be taught to select "Good Fit Books" or books they can read, understand, and find interesting. They will be spending a lot of time actually reading at their independent level, which research supports as the number one way to improve reading. I anticipate the motivation and enjoyment of reading will skyrocket when this gift of choosing their own books is accompanied by extended practice and specific reading instruction for each individual child. I am excited to give your child the opportunity to be involved in a structure that will have a positive effect on their education.

Writer's Workshop

Your child will be actively engaged in daily mini-lessons, practicing learned skills and strategies, and he/she will be writing on a daily basis to develop the stamina and focus that is required to

become an independent writer. In their writing, students are encouraged to write using "creative spelling". Creative spelling is a temporary spelling in which students spell a word the way it sounds. Creative spelling allows students to write very difficult words, and the freedom to express their ideas.

Math

Our math resources are McGraw Hill's My Math and Kendall Hunt's Illustrative Mathematics. The lessons are both engaging and challenging. These resources are hands-on and differentiated to best meet the needs of each learner, so it is sure to get your child excited about math! I will keep you informed about our math explorations in our newsletters throughout the year.

Science and Social Studies

Your child will have the opportunity to experience Project Lead the Way throughout the entire school year. PLTW provides a comprehensive approach to STEM Education. Through activities, projects, and problem-based curriculum, PLTW gives students a chance to apply what they know, identify problems, find unique solutions, and lead their own learning.

Your child will be busy with social studies as well. Throughout the year, your child will learn about different cultures, geography, economics, history, government, and citizenship. The social studies curriculum lends itself to class discussions that allow students to develop a greater understanding of the world around them.

Technology

Our school district is 1:1 computing, therefore your child will be using his/her own chrome book at school each day. Students use their devices to listen to stories, practice math facts, complete learning activities on Odyssey, and much more! Having properly functioning headphones is super important!! So if your child's headphones break throughout the year, please send in another set as soon as possible, as we use them each day!

Homework

The most critical homework every night is to read for 20 minutes. Children learn to read by reading! So encourage your child to read nightly to you, and keep reading to your first grader. Your

child will bring home a book from our classroom library every day soon after school begins. Having your child reread his/her books to enhance fluency and expression is strongly encouraged as part of the twenty required minutes. Students may have math homework as well. The homework always reinforces what was learned and practiced in class. If the homework is too challenging or time consuming for your child, it does not need to be completed in entirety. We encourage spending approximately 10-15 minutes on completion. Also, please send completed homework back in the communication folder, which each child will receive on the first day of school. Thanks!

Snack

Snack and breakfast are served at the same time in our classroom each day. Your child may bring his or her own **quick and healthy snack** if they wish or participate in the breakfast program. If you **DO NOT** want your child to take breakfast or milk, please let me know. Other than the occasional special treat, please be aware that if you do not send a snack with your child or your child is not signed up for breakfast, he or she will not get a snack that day. Please keep in mind that having a snack often helps students focus better, so please help them remember their snack every day.

As you send any money to school this year, please put it in an envelope labeled with your child's name, my name and what the money is for. This helps to ensure the money gets to its intended destination.

Water Bottles

The students are encouraged to bring water bottles to keep at their table. Please do not send anything else other than water to school for your child to drink while in the classroom. The water bottles must have secure caps, and the students must bring them home daily to be washed.

Communication

If you ever have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me via email, phone, or just send a note with your child.

Classroom phone: (262) 741-9428

Office phone: (262) 723-3297

e-mail: zickam@elkhorn.k12.wi.us

First Day of School

We will be participating in many activities the first day of school that foster community building. One of the activities requires each student to fill a gallon Ziploc bag with items that signify who they are or what they enjoy doing. These items should be small enough to fit in the bag. (Some ideas are: a couple of family pictures, small toys, magazine cut outs of their favorites, etc.) We will share these items as one of our "getting to know one another" activities on the first day of school. Thanks in advance for your help collecting those items with your child!

Open House

I look forward to meeting you at Open House. Please bring all of your child's materials with you that evening. Please label all supplies with your child's first and last name. (If supplies are in a Ziploc, you can simply label the Ziplocs, no need to label each individual item inside.) Please fill their pencil box with 6 sharpened pencils, a pair of scissors, a box of crayons, one large eraser, and one glue stick. Please put the rest of the sharpened pencils into a gallon Ziploc bag, along with the extra boxes of crayons, large erasers, and glue sticks. (Pencils, erasers, crayons, and glue sticks will be replenished throughout the year as needed.) As for the markers, please place one package inside the pencil bag, and label the other package with your child's name, as we will replenish/replace mid-year. All of this preparation will help reduce anxiety for the first day of school, and help us stay organized. Thanks so much for your help in advance. Please return the attached forms at Open House, as it helps me prepare for the first day of school. Thanks again for all you do! I look forward to seeing you at Open House!

Sincerely,

Amy Zickert