

Welcome to DPES!

First grade will be one of the most exciting years in your child's educational career. Our year will be filled with wonderful experiences and activities. My classroom goal is to provide a safe, nurturing environment that meets individual needs and promotes a foundation for life-long learning. In our classroom, students will be empowered to take initiative and think for themselves.

Meet the Teacher

I have lived in Prattville almost my entire life. My dad was in the military, so as a young child we moved here from Columbus, GA. Fun Fact: I attended DPES in first grade! This will be my fifth year in the classroom and second year teaching first grade. I have previously spent the other three years teaching third grade. I am married to my husband, Carson of almost three years this coming November. This season of my life, I have enjoyed spending time with family & friends and trying to soak in every moment.

Language Arts

Language Arts will be taught using the Open Court and Brainspring reading series and this will be a block of time in which reading, spelling, writing, and grammar will be covered. I will teach the class using whole group, small group, and one-on-one settings. We will cover vocabulary words, phonics, comprehension, and high frequency/sight words in whole group and then break into small groups where I can focus on the skills needed in each group. During this time, the students will do "pencil and paper" work, creative writing, Accelerated Reader, centers, and read many books. You will find all reading materials needed for the week (story, homework, high frequency words, and spelling lists) in your child's binder. It is important for you to go over these materials at home each night. This will allow your child to be more successful. We will be focusing on becoming fluent readers and the more you do at home, the better. You can have your child write the high frequency words for the week and keep them on the refrigerator, and flash cards are always great for sight words and CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words. More information will come about reading.

Math

In our classroom, I will promote mathematical interaction through problem solving, communication, journaling, estimation, connection, and reasoning. Our math program is based in the philosophy that students should develop natural thinking skills and exchange points of view while engaging in hands-on mathematical investigations. I use the Envision math series along with a standards based curriculum to enhance my lessons and we will work in whole group, small group, and one-on-one settings.

Science/Social Studies

We are learning about each other and our world through themes that are interesting to young children. We will cover all objectives in the Alabama Course of Study through hands on activities and projects. We will not cover both subjects in one day. I will alternate throughout the year teaching both subjects and I will always let you know what subject and what skills we are working on. In addition to other resources, I will use the McGraw Hill science series and AMSTI science kits, and the Houghton Mifflin social studies series.

Grading System

One of the biggest differences between first grade and Kindergarten is that the students are given grades on tests and daily assignments. The students will be given a grade for Reading, Language Arts, and Math. The scale is below:

90 - 100 - A

80 - 89 - B

70 - 79 - C

60 - 69 - D

59 and below - F

*Reading and Math grades are composed of Major (tests) and Minor (daily grades) grades. Major grades will be 60% and minor grades will be 40% of the overall grade. You will know major grade dates at least a week in advance. Minor grades are given as we work through each skill.

*Any papers labeled with an "F" will be copied and kept on file and you will be asked to sign and return these. Daily papers (papers that are not put in the

gradebook) will be checked as a class or marked with a smiley face.

*Students must pass MATH AND LANGUAGE ARTS with a yearly average of 60 or higher in order to be promoted to second grade.

*Handwriting, Science, and Social Studies will be given grades of S, N, or U like in Kindergarten.

Homework

Your child will have reading homework materials in his/her binder that will be sent home weekly. The reading materials will contain the high frequency words, spelling words, stories, and homework for each story. I do my best to send the reading homework home on Friday and it will be due the following Friday. Reading homework is not graded. Math homework will be sent periodically but addition and subtraction facts will need to be worked on at home as we will begin timed tests the second nine weeks.

Management Plan

*Please see our classroom website for specific information on this. The same information is also on a sheet in the folders from orientation.

Our rules are:

1. Listen the first time.
2. Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself.
3. Respect others and your school.
4. Follow directions quickly.
5. Be safe and be honest.

*I will use Parent Square to communicate with you about behavior concerns.

Daily Take Home Binders

Your child will come home with their Daily Take Home Binder. It is very important for this binder to go home and to school every day as this will be one of our many communication tools this year. The first thing in the binder will be a zipper pouch that you will use to send any money or notes to me. This way I will be able

to see through the pouch. Anytime you send something to school, please remind your child to give it to me. I will do my best to check the zipper pouches, but they can get overlooked. I will label each pocket of the binder with "Leave at Home" and "Bring Right Back." Items in "Leave at Home" will contain graded papers from me, any information coming from me, or information coming from the school. The other pocket will be labeled "Bring Right Back" and I will put anything that needs to be signed or filled out and returned in there. The next thing in the binder will be the skills sheets. I will place page protectors that will contain the reading materials, reading and math homework, and any other resources for your child to use at home. I try to get the new reading homework in on Friday so that the children can get a head start if they want to. The last thing in the binder is the behavior chart. Your child will mark his/her chart each day with the appropriate color. I will always mark on the date if there was a problem that day. If your child does have a problem that day, I will write a note in the box or message you on Parent Square. Please try to look over your child's behavior sheet each night and initial at the bottom of each day. It is so important that you check everything in the Daily Take Home binder nightly. Information comes home on a daily basis and it is imperative to check the binder to make sure you are staying up to date on things going on in the room and in the school.

Timely Tips for the First Week

1. You may walk your child in on the first day of school. There is a schedule posted on the school's website with a lot of other information. You may come in through the Green hall between 8:00-8:15 to walk with your child in. Doors will not open until 8:00 a.m. Please walk your child in and then exit the building to eliminate the amount of people in the building. If you are walking multiple children to different halls, begin with the hallway entrance of the first child you are dropping off, then walk down the main hallway to take your other children to their classrooms. Please walk your child in and then exit the building to eliminate the amount of people in the building. There will be several support staff in the hallway to help assist.

2. Bus Tags: The students will need to wear bus tags pinned on their bookbags the first 2 weeks of school. Please be sure to indicate whether they are a walker, car rider, 1st load or 2nd load bus rider, or day care van rider. You will

receive the bus tag at orientation. Bus questions should be directed to the Transportation Office.

3. The front doors will open at 7:10 for drop off of car riders and walkers.

4. Written notification is required for ANY transportation change.

Miscellaneous Information

1. Please send all money to school in an envelope with your child's name, my name, and purpose of the money. Please send separate envelopes for lunch money, snack money, field trips, etc. All checks should be made payable to DPES. On the memo line, please write Mrs. McDonald and the purpose of the check. Envelopes and notes should be placed in the zipper pouch in your child's binder. Labeled envelopes prevent first graders from losing money and they allow individuals who find lost money to direct it to the correct teacher.

Example:

Jane Doe

Mrs. McDonald

Snack \$1.00

2. Juice and snack may be brought from home or purchased from the school. We will go to the "Power Pantry" everyday and the students will have the opportunity to purchase a juice and a snack. \$2.50 will buy a juice and a snack and if you do send snack from home, please do not send carbonated beverages.

3. Students can bring a water bottle to school. I would suggest a Thermos type with a lid that they can pop open easily. I would prefer them to not have screw top, plastic water bottles as these are harder for the kids to open and close properly. We will have refilling stations if the kids need more water.

4. Please label all of your child's personal items with his/her name.

5. Fill out a medication consent form when your child needs to take medication at school. You can find these at the nurses' office.

6. Please notify me and the office in writing when you have a change in address or phone number.

7. Attendance is very important to your child's success in school. Being ten to fifteen minutes late can cause a child to miss important announcements and directions. Our school day is very structured to maximize learning time, and each day builds on the one before. Illness will always occur, and I will do my best to reteach concepts and allow students to make up work. However, please help by making sure that your child attends school regularly and on time. Try to schedule doctor appointments for after school and take out of town trips that don't interfere with school days. Mr. Thornton will need to approve absences prior to any trip. Death or family illnesses are exceptions, but a note must be turned in upon return. Your child will be marked tardy if they are not in class at 8:00. If your child is absent, please send a note within three days of the student returning. You will only be allowed 7 days of parent notes. After that, your child will need a doctor's note. Please read over the attendance section in the handbook on pages 9 and 10.

8. Birthdays - It is the school's policy not to celebrate birthdays during instructional time. Parents who wish to celebrate their child's birthday at school are asked to do so in an alternative manner. You may send in store bought, individually wrapped snacks for the students or mini cupcakes and I will pass them out during snack time. Please mail or deliver all party invitations to your child's friends at their homes. I will not hand these out unless there is one for each child. I also cannot give out addresses.

9. Field Trips - Parents are always welcome to accompany us on certain field trips. No siblings or young children can attend field trips. Please adhere to the deadlines posted and note that we will not accept any late money.

10. Lunch - All food (breakfast and lunch) will be free for the students this year. If you need to fill out a free/reduced lunch form, please go to dpeseagles.com and click on "Parents" and find "Lunchroom" and you will find the information that you need.

Parental Communication

I am your partner in education. I believe very strongly that parents and teachers have to work together and have good communication. If you ever have questions or concerns, I will be available to conference with you. The best way to get me is through email or Parent Square. You may call and leave a message

with the secretary in the office and I will do my best to get back to you during PE or after school. You may also send notes in your child's zipper pouch. Please connect to Parent Square if haven't already.

Contact information: Caitlin.mcdonald@acboe.net or 361-6400 (school)

*I am available for in-person conferences from 12:55 - 1:45 most days. I am available for phone conferences during that same time or until 4 after school.

*I will send a newsletter home every Friday or Monday. This will give an overview of what is going on for the week and any major grades that are being given. I will post a picture of the newsletter on Parent Square as well. You can find the beginning of the year information on my school website (www.dpeseagles.com, click on school staff) but will use Parent Square to update you throughout the year.

"I promise you that every day your child will learn something. Some days they will bring it home in their hands. Some days they will bring it home in their heads. And some days they will bring it home in their hearts." Valerie Welk