August 27th, 20198

Hello Parents!

As you know, I am Maranda Willingham, your child’s second grade teacher for this 2019-2020 school year. This is my very first year as a teacher, so I am fresh out of college and full of new and exciting strategies, techniques, and ideas to teach your students! I received a dual degree in Elementary and Special Education from Grand Canyon University in Phoenix, Arizona this spring. I am excited to have such an enthusiastic and eager group of students to start of my teaching career. Here is some important information on what to expect this school year and in my classroom.

Sports Friday

Our class is full of sports fanatics this year! I would like to encourage all students to represent their favorite sports, teams, or activities in general on Fridays by wearing a shirt or jersey to show their support. Special brownie points to anyone who wears Dallas Cowboys or Alabama Crimson Tide ☺

Grading

* All grading is based off of the 2nd grade Common Core State Standards.
* Most grades will be based off a numeric score of a 1, 2, 3 or 4
  + 1- student is in beginning steps (there’s a problem)
  + 2- student is nearing proficiency (they’re almost there)
  + 3- student is proficient (right on target)
  + 4- student is exceeding grade level expectations (hard to come by)
* Some grades, such as assessments or projects, may be based on percentage scores.
  + 59% or below- 1 Beginning steps
  + 60-79%- 2 Nearing proficient
  + 80-100%- 3 Proficient
  + Above 100%- 4 Advanced
* If a student receives a lower grade than I know they are capable of, I will speak with them privately and constructively about their work and about how they can improve in the future.

Literacy and Phonics

* We are starting a new program this year called Benchmark.
  + Incorporates grammar, reading, writing
* Our phonics program is called Fundations, which will help supplement the Benchmark grammar instruction.

Reading

* Connected with Benchmark program
* Students will be divided into daily reading groups.
  + Students will work on different aspects of reading such as fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and word study.
* Students read independently every day during DEAR time (drop everything and read).
* Please take the time to do nightly reading with your child! Reading and discussing books with them deepens their understanding and ability to transfer these skills into the classroom.

Spelling

* Weekly spelling tests every Friday—homework correlates with each week’s words
* Challenge/Bonus words only help your child’s grade. Missing 1 or 2 of these words will never deduct from their score. Each correctly spelled challenge/bonus word will cancel out any regular misspelled words on their spelling test, or add 3 percentage points per bonus word. If the student spells everything correct, including the bonus/challenge words, they can receive a 106%!

Writing

* Daily Journal entries based on prompts
* Writing assessments based on current units of study

Math

* Stepping Stones math program
* Supplemental activities and assessments given, with technology and old-school pencil and paper
* Math apps and flashcards are a great way to support your child at home. Memorizing math facts minimizes the need to count on fingers and increases speed and math fluency

Social Studies

* Integrated into Benchmark curriculum
* Supplemental projects throughout the year
* Scholastic News for current events

Science

* We use science kits with hands on learning provided by the Center for Hands on Learning

Presentations

* Throughout the year, students will be giving presentations on projects that will be graded based on a rubric. When these come, I will send out a schedule if you would like to come in and watch your student’s presentation! Students love to show you their skills and effort in the classroom☺

Homework

* Weekly homework packets covering spelling, math, and a reading log
* Please keep up on the reading log, as students will be required to write responses to their nightly reading as we get further into the school year.
* Homework gets sent home every Friday to allow your students a head start, especially since so many of them have extracurriculars you all work around.
* Please check over your students’ homework! Make sure they have capitals at the beginning of sentences, correct punctuation, neat handwriting, letter reversals, etc. This will help them correct mistakes quickly and decrease them in the future!

Discipline

* Students receive consequences based on their actions. These consequences can include loss of class reward, loss of recess, Caution Cards, referrals, etc.
* Students participate in a class management system called Teacher vs. Student. They compete with me during the week to earn points towards a class reward. If they are disruptive or fail to follow directions, etc., I earn a point. If they are able to transition quickly and quietly, follow directions, etc., they earn a point. Class rewards will vary throughout the year, such as Free Choice time, class parties, Pajama Day…
* If a child’s behavior is exceptionally out of character or inappropriate, I will contact parents. However, it is my hope that my expectations hold students accountable and it won’t have to get to that point.

Time Management

* There is a time and place to go to the bathroom and get drinks of water! Students are given opportunity for both at the beginning of the day, after recess, and after lunch.
* I encourage students to use these times to take care of business so they do not ask to go during instruction time, which disrupts their learning.

Folders

* Please return you child’s North Star folder every day!
* If you have notes or information for me, please send them in your student’s folder.
* When students bring completed/graded work home, please review it! It is important for you to see where they are excelling or struggling so we can work together to support their strengths and needs as a student

Pull-outs/Specials

* Monday- Computer Lab
* Wednesday- Art or Music
* Thursday- Library
* Friday- PE (don’t forget proper shoes)

Star Student

* Starting the second week of September, I will randomly select a Star Student every Friday
* You and your student will receive a sheet of instructions of what to do during their week

Birthdays

* Kids are welcome to bring treats for their birthday
* Please do not send treats that contain any type of tree nuts, as we need to respect students with allergies
* If your child’s birthday falls on a weekend, please let me know if you will be sending treats on the Friday before or Monday after
* Students with summer birthdays can send in treats on an alternative day of their choosing to celebrate
* If you are having an off-campus birthday and do not wish to invite the whole class, ***DO NOT*** send invitations through the child at school. We do not want anyone’s feelings to be hurt!

Sickness

* If your child is even the slightest bit contagious, please keep them home! This is in the best interest for the rest of the students as well as me as the teacher. ☺

Additional Cost

* We collect $25 that will cover the cost of the first couple of field trips, and personal dictionaries. Please send CASH only.

Volunteers

* I am in need of a Room Mom/Dad and volunteers for the classroom.
* Room Mom/Dad help schedule classroom helpers and plan class parties to assure everything goes smoothly (done by delegating planners or being part of the planning)
* I would love to have classroom volunteers to help with grading, copies, assisting children, etc. Sometimes these tasks are not super exciting, but they allow you to invest time in seeing your child and their peers at work!
* This also goes for field trip chaperones
* If you are interested in taking any of these responsibilities, please contact me. I GREATLY APPRECIATE ALL HELP!!!

Background Checks

* ALL classroom volunteers and field trip chaperones need to do two things:
  + Sign a confidentiality form
  + Complete an APS background check.
* You must apply online at [www.aps.edu/volunteer-with-aps](http://www.aps.edu/volunteer-with-aps) and receive clearance.
* Please see the office for further information or details.

Communication

* Don’t ever hesitate to contact me for any reason; I am here to work with you and your student to provide the best educational experience for everyone involved!
* The quickest way to contact me is by Remind101 or by text at **505-554-7872**.
* You can also reach me by email at [maranda.willingham@aps.edu](mailto:maranda.willingham@aps.edu)
* Please DO NOT leave messages with the school office.
* I am HUGE on communication, so I will be in frequent contact with you through weekly newsletters, direct emails, etc.
* If you ever want to set up a conference, just let me know and we will schedule a time that is convenient for both of us.
* Communication can be both positive and negative! I can’t wait to contact you with positive news about your child’s achievement in my classroom. ☺

I am looking forward to a great year!

Warmly,

Maranda Willingham