

Dear First Grade Families,

Welcome to the First Grade River Otter Class! I am delighted to have your child in my room this year. I am looking forward to working with you and your student to make this a successful school year. This year students will grow academically, gain greater self-confidence, and improve their social skills. We will strive to be a community of learners and friends in this class as we go through the year. I hope that you all had wonderful summers filled with joy, adventure, and relaxation! I have spent time camping, swimming, and relaxing with my family-my husband, my son Riley 11, my 6 adult children and 4 grandchildren. My favorite time is when my grandchildren come to visit and listen to me read their favorite stories.

As for first grade in the classroom, we will be exploring an exciting and engaging curriculum. The first month or so of school will focus on learning how to be first grade students. We will get to know one another, create classroom expectations, and learn routines that will help everyone to be successful students and friends. We will dive right into reading, and I will meet students at their level. Learning to read should be a happy and cherished experience, not a stressful, anxiety-filled one. I will be teaching literacy using the Orton-Gillingham methodology, which utilized multisensory education and explicit direct instruction in order for students to develop a concrete understanding of language. We will learn various strategies to help us grow as readers and develop a love for reading, stories, and literature. Our class will explore and research different birds, mammals, and insects. We still study space, light and waves, harvest, and plants. We will join together with the other first grade class in many activities and field trips. Ms. Samantha will guide our class in creating unbelievable artwork this year. Your children will be enchanted and engaged through rhyme and music. Slowly but surely, your students will become readers, writers, scientists, artists, musicians, and mathematicians.

While there is, of course, a strong academic focus, we also know that developing a strong social-emotional well-being is incredibly important. I have a strong belief that using mindfulness to be present, engaged, and aware of emotions and expectations will help our class to be a strong, sweet, and positive group. We will gather in circles, class meetings, take class hikes/walks, spend time in nature, and express ourselves creatively in order to create a safe, nurturing, and loving learning environment for all. We will learn to be compassionate, caring humans that respect and love

one another.

I am so excited for this group of students. The kindergarten teachers have been raving about how kind, capable, and smart they are. I know that we will have fun, learn, discover, work hard, and have a great year together.

Good communication between parent, teacher, and student is very important for your child's growth. I will be sending out monthly Monday Notes and quick weekly communications as necessary, to keep you informed via Parent Square. I will discuss class projects, volunteering, field studies and more at Back to School Night in September. See my class page for [supply list](#).

Our first day of school is on August 22nd. The first week of school will be minimum days ending at 12:00. School begins promptly at 8:30. Please make sure to send snack, lunch and a water bottle. The week of the 29th will be full days ending at 2:30. Fridays are always minimum days. You may drop off/pick up either at carpool or park and walk to the classroom.

Last, I'd love to have a class community board with photos of each child from our class. Please email or text a photo of your child with their (preferred) name so that everyone is represented. The sooner, the better!

Please enjoy your summer! Don't hesitate to call, email, or text me with any questions, concerns, or happy thoughts!

Love,
Sarah Patton

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