

Whitney's Class Handbook

2021-2022



This is going to be a great school year! Despite ongoing uncertainty, it will be a great year full of learning, growing, and excitement. If at any time you have any questions or concerns, whether they be social or academic, serious or silly, please get in touch with me either through email (wdoenges@huusd.org) or phone (classroom: 583-7923).

10 Things You Should Know About Me:

- 1) I love my job. I think it's amazing that I get to spend all day, every day with your child. I live for experiencing the learning process and watching children achieve goals.
- 2) I love children's books and am always on the lookout for new ones!
- 3) I think the Warren School is one of the most special schools. We are so lucky to have it! In fact, I went to the Warren School as a child and it was my dream to teach in this wonderful school with such an amazing staff.
- 4) I am really passionate about our outdoor education program, ECO, and outdoor learning.
- 5) As a student I was never good at math, but now love math, teaching math and I hope to help kids avoid the 'bad at math' myth.
- 6) I love doing crafts with kids.
- 7) This summer I finished getting my Master's degree!
- 8) I am passionate about teaching writing. It's my favorite.
- 9) I have a special 'school' during choice time for students who need to learn how to tie their shoes. It's called 'Whitney's School of Shoe Tying' and your child may enroll at any time. It will be a goal for our whole class to learn to tie their shoes by the end of the year and we will celebrate with a party!
- 10) I live in Warren with my husband, Bill, and two children, Max and Lucy. We have one silly black lab puppy that we like to call Mildred. As a family we love to go to the ocean, go on walks together and read.

Bonus Fact: I am a high-five giving, hugging, handholding, back rubbing teacher and it's going to be so hard for me not to be able to give your children these comforting, encouraging physical touches during these times of COVID. I'm going to have the class help create other ways of showing our feelings!

Classroom Entrance:

Our classroom will be on the corner by the library. Each child will have a cubby in this hallway where we will keep our things. Kids are encouraged to keep a pair of sneakers at school during the winter when we wear boots to and from school.

Birthdays:

Birthdays are very special to us all, and I enjoy celebrating them in school. The new guidelines are that students may bring in prepackaged treats to share at school- no homemade treats.

In order to avoid hurt feelings with birthday party invitations, you may give them to me to distribute discreetly. Other parents in the past have sent email invite to parents or word of mouth invites to avoid this problem.

Sharing:

As part of our morning meeting each day, three children will share. This is an important opportunity for your child to share something that is important to them: a story from a family trip, a special souvenir, a photo of a pet or event, something special to them. I like to encourage the children to bring in something meaningful rather than their latest toy. **In fact, we have a 'no toy' rule.** We use sharing as an opportunity to learn about each other and practice asking appropriate questions and making comments. The best sharing happens when parents work with their child to think of something to share and practice what they will say about it. After a few weeks of school, your child will be able to sign up for sharing when they have something they'd like to share.

Snack and drinks:

I encourage you to send in a healthy snack each day. I know how hungry busy learners can be and welcome students to eat whenever they are hungry.

I also encourage you to send in a labeled water bottle for your child to drink from throughout the day.

Communication:

Most of my general classroom communication will be through email. I will also post on our classroom blog through Seesaw. This eliminates a lot of the paper that gets crumpled or lost in backpacks. As second graders the children will be using chromebooks at school and learning more about accessing the websites and virtual tools we use on the computers.

Curriculum:

Math: Our district has adopted a math curriculum called Bridges. Here's what the Bridges website says about the program "The curriculum focuses on developing students' deep understandings of mathematical concepts, proficiency with key skills, and ability to solve complex and novel problems. Bridges blends direct instruction, structured investigation, and open exploration. It taps into the intelligence and strengths of all students by presenting material that is as linguistically, visually, and kinesthetically rich as it is mathematically powerful."

Reading:

For whole group reading lessons I use the reading lessons in Lucy Calkins. This is where a lot of comprehension work happens and where students work together, regardless of reading level, to dig into texts together and discover a community passion for reading.

For small group reading group instruction I use Guided Reading and decodable texts. In this model, students with similar reading levels are grouped together to work on reading with me. We will work on phonics skills, fluency, comprehension, decoding, retelling, developing a love for reading and many more skills!

Students will also be engaging in reading work with two fabulous technology tools called Guided Readers and Lexia. These programs give students direct instruction and/or practice on a variety of reading skills at their individual level. There is a home component too. Much more information will be coming home soon about this.

Phonics:

Second graders will continue their phonics work with the Foundations program that was used in first grade. Here's what they say about Foundations:

Wilson Foundations for K-3 is a phonological/phonemic awareness, phonics and spelling program for the general education classroom. Foundations is based upon the Wilson Reading System® principles and serves as a prevention program to help reduce reading and spelling failure.

Rather than completely replace core curriculum, Foundations provides the research-validated strategies that complement installed programs to meet federal standards and serve the needs of all children.

Teachers incorporate a 30-minute daily Foundations lesson into their language arts classroom instruction. Foundations lessons focus on carefully sequenced skills that include print knowledge, alphabet awareness, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, decoding, vocabulary, fluency, and spelling.

Science and Social Studies:

We have 3 science units this year: form and function, the changing earth, properties of matter. These units will provide exciting opportunities for hands-on, inquiry based learning. We will also meet many of our science standards in the forest during ECO.

For Social Studies we will be exploring Our Families, Communities and Maps and Community Economics.

Writing:

We will be using the Lucy Calkins Units of Study curriculum. I love teaching writing! This program is aligned to the Common Core but is child friendly. It is a systematic workshop style curriculum meaning each session will begin with a mini-lesson using a mentor text, time for writing and conferencing and then a time for sharing. We will be writing three main types of pieces- opinion, narrative and informational. Students will LOVE writing nonfiction chapter books and fairy tales. You will see so much growth in your child's ability to write!

We will begin the year with a unit on poetry.

ECO Program: This is incredibly exciting. Gina and I worked together to write a significant grant to fund an outdoor education program. We have

contracted Dave Muska from North Branch Nature Center to be our ECO leader. ECO stands for Educating Children Outdoors. ECO will take place on Thursday mornings from 8-11. We will be outside in almost all weather (more about this in the ECO documents). Through participating in the ECO program, students will explore standards-based themes and will be presented through games, observing, journaling, building, drawing, writing, tracking and sharing stories.

I will be working to find ways for us to spend as much time as possible in the forest and outdoors.

Homework:

Homework will consist of nightly reading. Throughout the year I will send home suggested learning activities for you and your child to do together.

Research has found that daily homework at this age has little to no effect on academic performance and has become a stressor for families. So I ask that you use your time in the evening to eat dinner as a family, spend time playing games, playing outdoors, reading together and getting to bed early. These are all things that researchers HAVE found make a difference for children.

There may occasionally be short assignments that come home such as practicing lines for a play, reviewing content vocabulary in science, etc.