

March 6, 1989

Dear Observing Parent,

Hopefully this brief narrative will answer some of the questions you might have about the 1/2 optional classroom.

First, the learning environment: We try to maintain a classroom which is bright, cheerful and interesting to look at. We use tables which can be easily folded and moved to provide large areas for activities requiring open space. The tables also provide seating possibilities which encourage cooperative learning. A collection of books, games, and other learning aids are accessible to the students. They can make choices for their usage during times when individual assignments are completed.

The curriculum is one that is somewhat basic, which I feel is necessary for the beginning school years. Reading is taught in small groups according to abilities on a daily basis with individual written assignments which assess comprehension and provide stimuli for skill building using phonetic as well as whole language approaches. We use basal texts as well as appropriate children's literature.

Language Arts: This area comprises much of our program. The students of first and second grade age are learning when and how to express themselves, how to share and to learn from their own as well as other's experiences. Each child has a special week for sharing with the class. Time is allotted daily for creative writing and reading some of what is written to their classmates.

I use the Math Their Way Approach to teaching basic math concepts on the first and second grade levels. Many concepts are taught in a very general way using everyday type situations and occurrences like changes in temperatures, counting calendar days and days of school, and stating equations for the number of the calendar day. Junk collections and other manipulatives are used for working with number. The students work at their own paces on worksheets for practice, review and reinforcement. Small grouping is done for instruction in certain skill areas from time to time.

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The computer is used for basic keyboarding skill work as well as practice work for reinforcing basic skills in reading and math. Parent volunteers are used often to work with individual students on any unfamiliar programs. However, as the students become more familiar with more programs they can work on their own.

Science is taught in short units with provisions made for individual observations, comparisons, and experimentation with the idea in mind that students learn by doing.

Social Studies are integrated into our total curriculum. Many books are selected for storytime which relate to the goals and skills noted in our social studies curriculum guide. Some special units are also covered throughout the year.

Spelling is accomplished on an individual basis. Students work on their particular list of words. At the end of the practice activities, the students take a spelling test to see if they can write the words from memory. If so, they go to the next list. If not, they complete more practice activities using the words misspelled.

The atmosphere in this classroom is a relaxed one, but the students are aware of the teacher's expectations. They are learning to accept more and more responsibility for their learning. That is getting assignments, completing them on their own when possible, and seeking help when necessary. When corrections are necessary on a returned assignment, students are expected to follow thru with conferencing with the teacher.

The students who fit best in this program are self motivated and capable of staying on task although many other things are taking place around them.

If you have other questions or desire to conference with me at some other time, please feel free to call and set up a time before or after school.

Thanks for the interest you've shown in our program.

Sincerely,

Ann Wells

Ann Wells

1/2 Optional Teacher

Eagle River Elementary

