Welcome/Introduction

Dear First Grade Families,

Welcome to a brand new school year! My name is Maureen Yetter. I will be your child’s first grade teacher. I have been teaching since 1997. I have been teaching at Alanson Elementary since 2000. This is my 15th year here in Alanson. I am proud to be a VIKING!

I graduated from Michigan State University in 1994 with a Bachelors of Arts in Communication, and a Bachelors of Science in Human Ecology, Family Community Service. After college I worked in childcare centers. I taught skiing to children in the winter and taught swimming at summer camps. I quickly realized I wanted to be a teacher! I went back to school at the University of Detroit Mercy, and received my Education Degree along with my Early Childhood Endorsement. I was enrolled in a unique two year program where I also studied the arts of singing, watercolor painting, storytelling, and handwork. All of these disciplines help bring subjects alive for young children! I am a lifelong learner and am currently in school at Grand Valley State University pursuing my Master’s Degree in Early Childhood Education. Educating our youngest learners is my passion!

I am married to my Husband Eric Yetter. We have two girls ages 9 and 12. We love living in Northern Michigan and take advantage of all this beautiful area has to offer. We love to ski in the winter and swim in the summer. We frequently hike in the woods and bike the beautiful trails around us. Our girls keep us busy as we navigate parenthood and all the questions and difficulties being a parent brings with it.



My educational philosophy is this: I believe that all children have the right to an excellent education. I believe that early childhood (0-8) is a unique time of development with many tasks that must be achieved. I believe that my classroom is a safe place for children to learn, grow and make mistakes. I try to bring the subject matter alive through imagination, storytelling, drawing and movement. With the ever changing demands of the state curriculum I work hard to meet all of the standards set before us. My room is a vigorous place of learning softened with a feeling of fun and imagination. I strive to create a classroom environment that feels like a family, a school family. We celebrate each other’s strengths and learn from each other’s mistakes. We help each other become the best we can be!

**Policies**

**Classroom Management**

A healthy, happy classroom environment is so important to the learning process. It is important that respect is present within each and every one of us. Our school wide motto is SAFE, RESPECTFUL, ACHIEVERS! We will spend the first weeks of school learning what it means to be safe, what it means to be respectful, and how to be an achiever!

We will also begin the year with all of us making up our classroom rules together. We will decide what is important to us as a unique group of learners. The classroom rules will be posted and chanted along with movements each morning!

When children present challenging behavior my first step is to make sure that I repeat my directions very clearly. Sometimes a child may not hear the direction, or not really understand what is being asked. I will repeat the directions once. If I am still having a particular issue I will then to make classroom adjustments to try to help the child make better choices. This may involve re-arranging seating, or placing the child closer to me so I can help them make good choices, or having specific tasks for the child to do during transitions! We know that prevention is the best behavior strategy.

I also use our classroom behavior chart. It is a chart on the board. It has 6 sections. From the top down it goes

* Outstanding
* Great Job
* Ready to Learn
* Slow Down
* Teacher’s Choice
* Parent Contact

This is a visual to help the children see how they are doing. All children start on Ready to Learn every day. They can move up to reward good behavior, or down to show the children they are not making great choices. Slow down is a visual warning and I ask the child to think about what they are doing and we talk about how they can make better choices. If your child moves to Teacher’s choice, a consequence might be a time-out in the classroom or 5-10 minutes at recess to go over their behavior. The children really respond to this chart and love to see their names go up! Outstanding is for consistent exemplary behavior and I send a note home when your child gets there!

If there continues to be repeated behavior issues I will make contact with you. We will make a plan to help your child be successful in the classroom. Parent help is always a good thing, and I think of us as a team doing what is best for your child.

**Parent Participation**

I welcome all parents to participate in the classroom. I can always use help! Some of the specific areas I need help with are:

* Preparing projects (cutting out and getting materials ready), filing graded papers, and stuffing Monday Folders.
* Another specific area would be working one on one with children. You can come in and read with children, or work on flash cards with addition and subtraction.
* Center time is another time when I can always use another adult in the room!
* I am looking for two parents to be my room parents to help with various things throughout the year, such as holiday projects or making phone calls, etc. Please think about doing this! Being a part of your child’s education is valuable!

If you would like to help out in the classroom please just send me a note or email and specify what you would like to help with and days and times you are available!

**Friday Folders**

This year we will be doing Friday Folders. Every Friday a Folder will be sent home with your child. In the Folder will usually be a school newsletter, a classroom newsletter, your child’s work and other important community event notices. Please go through the Folder each weekend, and then sign and return the Friday Folder on Monday. This is a very important way for us to communicate with our families!

**Field Trips**

Each year we take two to three field trips. Field trips are a wonderful way to take what we are learning about and go get real world experiences with that subject! I will let you know two weeks ahead of time when we will be going on a field trip. Permission slips will be sent home in Monday Folders. Please fill them out and return as soon as possible. There is usually a small fee associated with the trip. Please send the money in a labeled envelope with your child’s name on it.

If you would like to attend the field trip with us, please let me know right away. I will accommodate as many chaperones as I can, depending on the bussing situation!

**Illness**

If your child is going to be absent due to an illness please call the office in the morning.

Please follow the parent handbook regarding illness. I will repeat the policy here. If your child has a fever, your child must be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school. This is the same for vomiting. Your child must have had no vomiting for 24 hours before returning to school. We work very closely together in the classroom and share materials. Following this procedure will help everyone to stay healthy!

My personal policy on coughs is that if your child is coughing so much that it is disrupting teaching and learning I will send them down to the office to call home. If they are coughing so much and can’t stop with the help of a few drinks or a cough drop sent in, then they need to be resting and getting better! You can send cough drops or medicines into the office with specific instructions about use.

Let’s all follow this policy so we can all stay as healthy as can be!

**Homework**

In first grade we will begin homework in January after Christmas. The first half of the year the children are acclimating to the demands and working hard in the classroom each day. After Christmas vacation we will begin homework. I will send a book bag home each Monday with a book and a math worksheet. Please read the book three times with your child during the week and return the book bag by Friday. Reading familiar books over many times really helps children build fluency. The math worksheet will be practicing a math skill we are currently working on in the classroom. Helping your child get in the routine of homework and bringing their book bags back and forth are good lessons in responsibility!

**Birthday Treats**

Birthday treats are welcome and can be sent into school in the morning and left in the office. I will get the treat and pass it out at a convenient time of the day. We usually have our Birthday Celebrations at about 2:00. We then make cards for the birthday boy or girl, sing to them and enjoy their treat!

**Snacks**

We usually have snack everyday at about 10:00 in the morning. These growing children really need this snack time! At the beginning of the year I usually ask that each family send in a box of healthy snacks to share with the class. As our supply dwindles, I will send another note out asking for more donations. With all of our wonderful families working together, we never run out! Some examples of a treat you may bring in are; cheese sticks, cheez-its, pretzels, saltine crackers, carrots, celery, applesauce, raisins, animal crackers, apples, bananas, oranges, graham crackers. These are just some suggestions.

**Daily Schedule**

**First Grade Daily Schedule**

This is a general schedule of our daily routine. It can change for many reasons, so we stay flexible!

7:50-8:00 Enter classroom, Hang up things, Use restroom, Attendance, start Math Boxes or morning work.

8:15-8:30 Circle/Morning Math

8:30-9:00 Wonderful Words/Deskwork

9:00-10:00 Guided Reading/Reading Groups/Daily Five

10:00 Snack

10:15-11:15 Daily Special, Integrated Arts/Physical Education

11:15-11:45 Lunch After lunch, I take attendance, allow for bathroom breaks, and do a movement break.

12:00-12:45 Math alternating this time with Writing

12:45-1:15 Recess

1:30-2:15 Writing alternating this time with Math

2:15-2:40 Science/Social Studies/Read Aloud

2:45-2:50 End of Day Routine/Dismissal

Tech Time with the iPad will happen daily during subject times!

**Curriculum**

**What will your child be learning this year?**

The State of Michigan has adopted the common core standards of learning. The first grade common core curriculum can be found online at [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org).

In first grade your child will be skillfully brought through a curriculum of reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies!

**Langauge Arts:** Language Arts consists of a strong phonics program based on a Recipe for Reading. We will follow a sequential phonics program that starts with the basic letter and sound identification, and proceeds through long and short vowels, beginning blends, CVC words, magic E words, consonant digraphs, basic words endings, and sentence structure and punctuation. Each week we will focus on a particular phonics skill, and our spelling words will focus on practicing theses skills.

We do not use a “basal” reader anymore. The basal readers are when all the children in the classroom would be learning to read from the same book. We know now that each child learns to read at their own pace. We use our school book room to find “just right” books for each child. Each child will have a book box filled with books that are exactly at their reading level. These book boxes are the backbone of our reading program. This is where they are practicing their phonics lesson in the text each day! The children love their book boxes and will spend at least 20 minutes a day in a period of read to self.

We will also be using rich literature to teach comprehension. Children can comprehend stories well above the level they can read at first! I use fairy tales and legends, and classic children’s books to dive into comprehension. We ask questions and talk about characters and setting. We also find central or main ideas and messages in stories. We talk about problems in a story and the solutions that are found! We talk about “close reading”, and that the children should be following what is happening in a story and be able to re-tell the story back to an adult including language from the story and key details! They should also be able to compare and contrast characters from different stories.

WOW! First grade is full of intense learning!

I use the Daily 5 Language Arts structure in my classroom. The children learn 5 important work skills.

 1. Read to Self

 2. Read to Someone

 3. Listening to Reading

 4. Word Work

 5. Working on Writing

During the day we typical work toward two or three rounds of Daily 5. While the children are busy working on one of the five activities, I am running small groups working with students at their level! It is a very exciting program that allows children to be engaged with critical foundational skills throughout the day!

**Mathematics:** We are using our brand new program called GO MATH! This program is designed to meet the CORE standards. The children are required to write and strategize a lot more than in previous years. The four critical areas that we will focus on are:

* Developing fluency in numbers and using addition and subtraction to solve problems.
* Understanding place value and whole number relationships.
* Measuring length.
* Composing and decomposing geometric shapes.

After introduction to addition and subtraction concepts, “speedy responses” to basic number facts will be very important. We will practice this as the year continues by using computer games, interactive Smart Board activities, and timed quizzes called “mad minutes”. This fluency in addition and subtraction is very important as your children work up through the grades!

**Writing:** We are using the Lucy Caulkins Writing Program. It is aligned with the common core standards. In first grade we use the writer’s workshop. The writer’s workshop begins with a mini lesson and a shared or model of the writing skill we are working on. It is here that the children gather what they need to be successful writers on their own. They then go back to their seats and try a writing of their own! We will be focusing on 4 main areas of writing this year.

1. Narratives or “small moment” stories.
2. Opinion Pieces
3. Informative or “how to” books
4. A class research paper on animals

**Specials**

Each week your child will have Physical Education, Integrated Arts, and Computer Lab.

Physical Education:

Movement and exercise are so important for all of us! Mrs. Ristow will teach your child how to keep their heart, body and mind healthy. Each class she leads the children through a series of warm-ups and stretches! Your children will learn many basic skills such as dribbling a basketball, bumping and setting a volleyball, and throwing and catching skills. She will also teach them many agility skills. The children practice learning rules to games and being good sports and teammates! It is a 60 minute class period and they usually finish by listening to a story about healthy foods. This important hour supports all that we do in the classroom.

Integrated Arts: Integrated Arts is an hour long special. In this class your children will be taught how to express themselves through the arts of drawing, painting, and singing. They will be introduced to different media. They will also put on their Christmas program in this hour.

Computers: In first grade we will visit the computer lab once a week. We will be getting I pads in the room soon! At the computer lab the children learn basic keyboarding skills and play educational games that support reading and math skill in the classroom

**Assessments**

Each year we have three testing windows. They are in September, January and May.

**Language Arts:**

During this testing window your child will be assessed in the areas of phonics acquisition and application, reading level, and a writing sample.

**Mathematics:**

In math the children will be assessed on counting to 120, writing numbers to 120, addition and subtraction fluency, and a comprehensive Math test.

This classroom data will be used to help me target my instruction to each child. It is also used to inform my report card markings. This is very important information to me. It helps me to see which areas I need to re-teach, and how to move each individual child along in their journey to reading!

Along with my classroom testing, the children will be taking the NWEA test three times a year. This is an assessment tool that can help us in comparing how our students are doing as compared to other children in the district and the state. Although that is important information to the school, I use it see growth each particular child has made in a certain area.

The NWEA is given for two subjects, reading and math. Each test is about 45 minutes long and it is taken on the computer.

All of your child’s information will be shared with you at parent teacher conferences!

**This will be an amazing year for your child. They will be learning and growing so much. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have along the way. My email is** **myetter@alansonvikings.net****. Our school phone number is 548-2261. My extension is 103.**

**I will answer emails as soon as I can. I do check my emails daily. If you need me during the school day it is best to leave a message with our school secretary, and she will get a note to me, as I usually do not have time to check my phone emails during the school day.**

I am honored to be able to teach your child each day. Let’s have a great year!

Maureen Yetter

First Grade Teacher

Alanson Elementary School