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NAME: Pam Justus
SCHOOL: McConnell Elementary
CLASS: 2nd Grade
SCHOOL PHONE: 423-843-4704
Meet Mrs. Justus:

The first thing you should know about me is that I love my job. I teach because I love it and I love children. I feel very fortunate to be at a school as wonderful as McConnell. This will be my 18th year at McConnell. I taught 2-? years in Walker County (2nd grade) before I had my children and I took a position for the last 6 weeks at East Ridge Elementary in 6th grade. Other than that, I have been at McConnell with 2-? year in 6th grade and the rest in 2nd, (my love.)

I am married and have 2 grown and married daughters and 2 stepsons. Last April my daughter made me a grandmother by giving birth to the most beautiful baby girl. I have a 15-year-old cat and a 5-year-old cockatiel.

I love to read. My favorite genre is mystery. I enjoy art when I have time. After putting it aside for 15 years, I am brushing up on smocking now that I have a baby to smock for again. I also enjoy computer art.

I grew up in Nashville, TN and went to college at Tennessee Technological University in

Cookeville. I have lived in Chattanooga since graduating from college.



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Our Classroom Mission

I pledge today to do my best, in Reading, Math and all the rest. I promise to obey the rules in my class and in the school. I'll respect myself and others too. I'll expect the best in all I do. I'm here to learn all I can, to try my best and be all I am.

A web site
"Helping Parents and Educators Create Responsible Kids"





Accelerated Reader

The Accelerated Reader Program (AR) is a school incentive program to encourage students to read more. It is linked with the Stars Reading Program that gives us the somewhat accurate grade level of each student based on tests taken. Each grade level is given a point goal for children to reach so they can receive their AR Card. Kindergartners must have 5 points, 1st graders must have 10 points, and 2nd graders must have 15 points with at least 80% accuracy. It is common in K and 1st for parents to read and help the children take the tests. In second grade we transition children to take their own tests. Sometimes students need help logging on to the site and with some of the reading. Ultimately, students should take the tests by themselves.

The AR Card is the first school wide incentive that children reach. When they receive their card, they also earn AR dollars to spend at the AR store. For every 2 points they earn, they are given \$1. Five dollars is awarded when they get their card. For example, when a child in second grade reaches 15 points with 80% accuracy, they will receive \$5 (for the card) plus \$7 for the 14 points. The next time money is given the 15th point will be added in. The AR store is not open all the time and money will be given out approximately every month. The only other school wide incentive is the child's name is put on the marquee out front when they reach 100 points.

Teachers in different classes and grades have their own incentives after the reward of the AR card. In our class I have a collection of prizes awarded for every 10 points (after the card) up to 75 points. Starting at 75 points and continuing at 10 point intervals the student will get to have computer time one morning instead of morning work. At 100 points, the whole class will help celebrate with a popsicle party.

Accelerated should not be confused with the verb excel, which gives the idea of advanced achievement. All students have the opportunity to receive the Accelerated Reader Card regardless of their reading ability. They do not need to **excel** in reading in order to reach this goal. Students are encouraged to earn a card because it helps readers learn to enjoy reading and hopefully become better readers. Much time has been invested in this program as a means to reach and encourage all readers of every level.

I will send home a Stars reading report and an AR report every so often so you can look over your child's progress. Please look at the level of books read and the percent of accuracy (the number correct.) Most picture books are only worth .5 of a point. Because the points are printed .5 students sometimes think they will receive 5 points for a book. Usually picture books and most books on 2nd grade level will have 5 questions, and some will have 10 questions. If a child misses 1 question on a 5 question test they will earn the grade of 80. If they miss 2 questions, they earn a 60. Although the AR may report this as a passing grade, we at McConnell do not accept that as passing because of the Hamilton County grading scale.

Compare the level your child should be reading from the Stars test, to the level that they are reading. All of the books that say "MH Edition" are books with our reading series. Students should read from 3 levels of books: easy, just right, and challenging. If a student has a high-grade level equivalency they should not always be expected to read that high of level of books, but should not read lower than 2nd grade books as a rule. I know that you do not have book levels at home and the list is too extensive to copy for you. If you have internet access you can visit this site: <http://www.renlearn.com/store> and click on the block that says "Quiz Store". You will be brought to a page where you can enter a book title. Here you can enter any title you like and see if it has an AR level assigned. Remember that just because it has a level does not mean that we have the test on our system. We do have an extremely high number of tests. You can send in a list of books and I will check them for our tests. Most of the books in the library and in our classroom are AR books and

have level stickers on them.

Keep in mind that I do not think children should be taught that we read only to take tests. I want children to know we can read for pleasure and that it is truly a thing of joy. So when we visit the library, students will get to check out 2 books. I will ask that one book be a level appropriate AR book and one be a book of interest to them. The book of interest will most likely be the wrong level for them, but it is what they wanted to read. You many have to help them read this book or read it aloud to them. I cannot stress enough the importance of you continuing to read to them even if they are excellent readers.




Reading

This year we will be using a balanced reading approach called the Four Blocks Literacy Model. It consists of 30 – 45 minute blocks of time in each of the following: guided reading (comprehension and fluency), self selected reading (comprehension, fluency, individualized reading instruction), working with words, (phonics, spelling, decoding strategies), and writing (writing process, grammar, punctuation, capitalization, parts of speech, etc.) There is much documentation available that shows how important it is to offer young children a balanced literacy program that includes equal time in all areas each day. I have spent a lot of time this summer learning more about this approach and am very excited about it. We will be using our 2nd grade McGraw Hill anthologies as well as other children's literature through trade books.

There will be many other opportunities for improving reading skills. The following lists several:

- Accelerated Reader – Students will have opportunities to accumulate points for prizes through this computer program. I have many AR books in our class that may be read during free time and also during self-selected reading.
- Students will be bringing home a poem or song occasionally to read to an adult. It is to be signed and returned the next day. If the student has difficulty reading, it is perfectly fine for an adult to assist, but an adult signature must be on the poem or song, indicating that the student did his/her best.
- From time to time we will read individual children's books in literature groups. The books will be selected on the children's reading level.
- In the homework folder there will be a list of the Dolch 220 Sight Words. These are words that need to be recognized quickly on sight. They are critical to reading success. You can help your child by making flash cards and "drilling" each day. You might start with the first 10 – 15 until they are mastered, then add the next 10 – 15. Some children will come to 2nd grade already knowing these words. Others will need varying amount of practice.
- There will be other lists for your help in the homework folder. Refer to them as needed.



English

Second grade English consists mostly of knowledge of nouns, verbs, adjectives and pronouns. These are on second grade level and will be practiced at great length during the year.

Also included are punctuation and capitalization skills. Antonyms, homonyms and synonyms will

also be studied throughout the year.



Math



We will be using the newer edition of Everyday Math curriculum. This will be supplemented with other materials as needed by the students. We will also be using Number Corner everyday. This program trains students to think through problems and patterns.

Rocket Math is a supplemental program for learning math facts. My goal is for students to make it through the addition section by Christmas and the subtraction section by the end of the year.

Topics of study for math are money, time, fractions, addition and subtraction with regrouping, ordinal numbers, calendar, place value, word problems, and forms of measurement as well as others.



Writing



There will be many opportunities to improve writing skills throughout the year. Besides journal and letter writing, the following are some of our projects:

~Writing Club – Students engage in a variety of writing (fiction, non-fiction, research, letters, etc.) with parents helping the classroom. We write for about an hour with parents helping with spelling, punctuation and ideas with children get “stumped”. This has been very successful in the past and the children love it. This is a very low key, no-stress kind of writing for us all. We try to do this at least once a month at the beginning of the year.

~Tadpole Times- Hopefully we will be writing a class newspaper that informs readers about things going on in our classroom.

~We will have our visiting Royalty, [Prince Pierre](#). He will visit our classroom and take trips home with students. Students will write about their adventures in our class log.



Spelling

Spelling will consist each week of 10 words with a particular focus from our reading curriculum. Sparkle words will be added each week for fun. They add to the spelling grade if correctly written on the Friday test. They do not subtract points if incorrectly written.

After the first six weeks there will be 10 more words added each week. These are based on the most frequently used words in writing. These words will count towards the spelling grade each week.

We will practice the words at school and also for homework. Students will keep individual “word banks” at their seats and add to their word bank weekly. Once a word has been on a spelling test, students are expected to spell that word correctly in their writing. They may refer to their word bank or to the class word wall, but they are expected to spell them correctly on the “neat sheet” phase of their process writing (after editing). Students are not to worry about correct spelling while writing a first draft. They should focus on the content and form of their writing until editing takes place. These words are called “NO EXCUSE” words.

They will get one spelling sheet a 6 week period. It will be in their Frog Homework Folder and should not be taken out.



Our science curriculum consists of many exciting units that integrate all subjects.

*Frogs and Toads	*Plants
*Bats	*Human Body
*Insects	*Solar System
*Habitats	*Matter
*Antarctica	*Soils
*Rainforest	*Balancing & Weighing
*African Savanna	*Water Cycle



Social Studies

This curriculum includes some of our favorite activities.

*Gingerbread Village – teaches cardinal directions, mapping skills and community needs, wants, good, and services

*Santa’s Workshop – a unit that teaches many economic concepts while students learn about co-operating in a factory/assembly line setting.

*Continent Study – We pretend to travel to Antarctica, South America, and Africa while studying the wildlife of those continents.

*Famous American – We learn about George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr. and others.

*All year we will be working on citizenship as we use our character traits in our daily lives.



Birthdays

Birthdays are special days for the children. Instead of sending treats to eat, I would prefer that you send a wrapped book to donate to the class library. I will allow your child to open and share the book with the class. A special nameplate will be placed in the book dedicating it to your child. This is strictly optional. I will have a special treat for your child on his/her birthday. Half birthdays may be celebrated for those children with summer birthdays.

If your child would rather have a treat, then by all means do so. Birthdays are too important to be disappointing to a second grader. Since our day is so full, if you choose to send a treat, please make sure it is something that can be handed out quickly. It is tremendously helpful if the treat is an individually wrapped treat served the last 15 minutes of the day.

Remember we cannot hand our birthday invitations unless the entire class (or all boys or all girls) is invited.



Snacks and Lunch



Students are allowed to bring a water bottle to keep at their desk as long as it doesn't leak or cause a problem. Water bottles must be taken home every day to be washed to reduce the spread of germs.

I allow my class to have healthy snacks in the morning but there are some restrictions. First of all, this will be a working snack and anything they eat must not interfere with work or cause a mess. All snacks must be healthy. There will be no sugar snacks or chips before lunch. Healthy snack could include: peanut butter and crackers, cheese and crackers, cheese, fruit, raw vegetables (no dip), granola or cereal bars or popcorn. These are just a few ideas. If your child has a question about whether I feel something is healthy, they can certainly ask. I do not want them to fill up on something unhealthy and then ruin their healthy lunch. If there is time at the end of the day when we pack up for home they can have a small snack. I do not have restrictions on this snack.

Please talk to your child about lunch and charges. I prefer my class not to buy extra things at lunch unless I know from you that it is all right. I do not want you to be surprised with an unexpected charge.

Remember that soft drinks are not allowed for lunch.



Homework Practices

We will have homework three days a week. One of the main reasons that we do this is to instill a responsible attitude towards homework. Second graders are expected to do more than first graders. That is the natural order of life. I want the students to take ownership of their work. Believe me, if

you help me get this established with your child, it will make your life easier for years to come.

Student will be reminded to take their homework folders home. They will choose to take the homework folder home or leave it at school. They must live with the consequences (which could be a checkmark and/or loss of recess time.) Make sure that once you have gone over their homework and signed the folder, the student puts it back in their backpack for the next day. If your student forgets a folder, DON'T Bring it to them unless it is a very important assignment that is required to do some lesson at school. After school, if your child has forgotten the folder, DON'T come back to school, or back to the classroom if you are picking them up from day care. I want the children to learn THEY have to get their folder. If they feel like you will "fix" their problems, why should they worry about them? Folders will be collected in the morning. I will go over the homework. If forgetting to do and/or return homework gets to be a problem, a student may lose recess time. This doesn't happen often because second graders typically are dedicated to doing their best. Please write me a note if an emergency keeps your child from doing homework.

We will begin this the first week of school. Cross your fingers that we will encourage all students to become RESPONSIBLE.

Remember, it cannot work if you give in. **BE STRONG!!!**



It's Ok to Say No

"Is it really ok to say no to my child?"

In the mid 1960's a few parenting "experts" began to question whether we ought to say this word to our children. Some worried that it would damage kids' self-concepts. Others seemed concerned that it would stifle creativity. Kids need to hear "No" from time to time. Listed below are some practical guidelines: Say "No" only when you can back it up with meaningful actions.

When we say "no" without holding our children accountable, we teach them that "no" really means "yes." Say "No" only when you can do so without anger and frustration.

Kids love to challenge us just to see our face turn red! Say "No" only when it doesn't rob your child of a good learning experience.

If a child is about to do something that's not dangerous...but will backfire for them...it's often wiser to allow them to learn from their mistake instead of saying "No."

"No" is a critically important parenting tool that wears out if it's used too often. Save it for times it's really needed.

Thanks for reading!



Thanks for reading!
Dr. Charles Fay

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