

Dear 3rd Grade Families,

I am very excited about the upcoming school year. My priority is to foster a positive relationship with your child, and also with you – the families! Please contact me at any time with questions, comments or concerns. I will be spending a significant amount of time with your child and want to make it pleasant, fun, and educational for all involved! I have two daughters of my own, and as a parent fully appreciate leaving them in someone else's hands for the majority of the day. Thank you for sharing them with me!

I wanted to share a copy of my Classroom Management Philosophy and my philosophy on Failure with you, so that you will have a better understanding of how our classroom will be run.

I am looking forward to a fun and successful school year! Again, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time with questions!

Thank you for your support,

Sarah Simac

Classroom Management Philosophy

My classroom management philosophy is simple, based on mutual respect, and can be summed up in one word: relationships. I believe in relationships and natural consequences. I want students in my classroom to exhibit expected behaviors because they respect me and they know that I respect and genuinely care about them. Children do not misbehave or make poor choices to upset others. There is usually a reason for a child's behavior. If a child is exhibiting negative behavior, we (the child's family and myself) will work together to set up a plan to help the child be successful in our classroom.

In our classroom, we will not have a token economy or reward system. We will spend a significant amount of time in the beginning of the school year (however long it takes!) to establish routines and practice expected behaviors that are safe, respectful and responsible. Ours will be a "student-led" classroom where the children will share responsibility and ownership of their learning, materials, and classroom. Our classroom is just that, OUR classroom.

We will work hard to build a student-led classroom. A student-led classroom is one in which students make decisions and choices throughout the day without always consulting the teacher. Everyone in our class will have equal power and say in what happens (keeping in mind that the teacher's word is final). I want our class to be a class of risk-takers, and active leaders and doers instead of passive followers.

"...A student-lead classroom can have a tremendous impact on the educational experience for both students and teachers in so many ways. Students retain more of what they learn, due to their active participation in the learning process, as well as their continuous feedback from both the teacher and their peers. Teachers are afforded daily opportunities to observe and give students feedback throughout the learning process...children learn best by doing, by questioning, and by figuring out solutions on their own..."

-Paul Solarz

Freedom to Fail

This year, I will be teaching your child many things. One of them will be to successfully fail. Failure is often looked at exclusively as a negative thing. When treated as a necessary step toward innovation, failure can help students to promote and establish a growth mindset, build resiliency and a life-long learning mentality, and prepare for the real world. Fear of failure is one of the leading causes of anxiety for students. I will frame failure through a growth mindset for your child. When we talk about the word FAIL – we will refer to it as the First Attempt In Learning. I want students to understand that failure is okay. If I do not give them the opportunity to fail, they'll never know how much they can improve.

Students learn best through authentic experiences connected to the real world. I will provide as many of these learning experiences for your child as possible. Failure can only move students in the right direction if they have clear expectations and objectives. I will maintain high expectations for your child this year and consistently push them out of their comfort zones and constantly striving to reach their fullest potential.

If your child comes home and says, "Mrs. Simac wouldn't help me!", please know that it is my job and passion to help them. I most likely wouldn't give them the answer that they wanted, but will steer them to it with guidance, feedback, and constructive questioning.