



Amanda Bess

Walla Walla Public Schools Classroom Close-Up



TEACHER NAME: Amanda Bess

SCHOOL: Green Park Elementary

Position: Bilingual First Grade Teacher

YEARS IN DISTRICT: 3 years

Q. How does the transitional bilingual program work?

A. The program is for students in K-3. The school screens families to determine the primary language spoken at home for placement in the program. As students go up in grade level they are exposed to more English before they transition to English only in Grade 4. We still provide ELL support to those students in need in grades 4 and 5.

Q. How much English do you use in first grade?

A. In first grade, we start using the Second Steps curriculum so students begin to understand the rules of the English language. We mainly use Spanish. In first grade at Green Park there are two English only classrooms and one transitional bilingual classroom.

Q. Why is it important to teach students in Spanish as they learn English?

A. When Spanish is the primary language in the home, it is Spanish language that is used for accessing the new language -- which is English. In order to build the background, we must teach in the students native language so they can make an easier transition to the English language. We believe it is important for students to maintain content instruction while they are acquiring a new language. We don't want them to fall behind academically just because they don't understand the language.

Q. What results are you seeing from students who exit the program?

A. I see students who are proud of who they are and what they have learned. I see kids who keep their Spanish language and have also learned high quality English. These are kids who are readers and writers in two languages. They are truly bilingual.

Over



MOMENTS & MEMORIES FROM
AMANDA'S CLASS:



COMMENTS FROM AMANDA.

Bilingual skills will open up many doors for my students. They will have a strong base in two languages. They will have more opportunities for employment and cultural experiences by participating in this program.

I grew up in Portland, OR and went to Grant High School. I graduated from Portland State University with a major in Spanish. I have a Master's in teaching from Concordia U.



I am married to Chris, a local chiropractor, and we have four children. We love to be outdoors, ride bikes, hike and go camping. We have lived in Walla Walla nine years and love this town.