



Walla Walla Public Schools Classroom Close-Up



TEACHER NAME: Ben VanDonge

SCHOOL: Sharpstein Elementary

Position: 5th Grade Teacher

YEARS IN DISTRICT: 2 years

Q. How do you start the week with your 5th grade students?

A. Every Monday morning we start with sustained silent reading and then transition into Cognitive Content Dictionary (CCD). We usually start a new Harcourt story every other Monday. On the off Monday we work on a focus skill from the most recent Harcourt story.

Q. Why do you put so much emphasis on vocabulary?

A. I work with many second language learners and it is important to expose them to new and difficult words. I want my students to feel comfortable and confident speaking at an educated level.

Q. How is AVID impacting Sharpstein and your classroom?

A. We keep a log of all the activities we do throughout the day. Parents know exactly what is happening at school. This tool is the best element of AVID that I see. Kids are also learning how to be better organized at an earlier age. These skills will help them in middle school and beyond.

Q. Why do you display your education diplomas in your room?

A. I refer to my diplomas probably every other week for one reason or another. We talk about what they are and how to get them. I talk about the three levels of education I have received and the different schools I have attended. We also talk about scholarships and higher learning opportunities.

Q. How do you arrange your academic groups?

A. Every student is assigned a bilingual buddy for the month. The bilingual buddy can assist them and they can also go to their table group for support. If they still need help, they raise their hand for the teacher.

Over



MOMENTS & MEMORIES FROM
BEN'S CLASS:



COMMENTS FROM BEN.

One of the main goals of 5th grade is to get students ready for 6th grade. We talk about what it will be like to go from class to class and the new expectations. I teach them they will need to show an advanced maturity. The more they talk about the transition, the less nervous they are.

I graduated from Wa-Hi in 2005 and then received the Murr Scholarship to attend Whitman College. I received a Master's in Teaching from Walla Walla University.



I am the JV boys tennis coach at Wa-Hi and the Safety Patrol coordinator at Sharpstein. I am married to Kate and she works at Coffey Communications. We have two Labrador retrievers.