



Sara Van Donge

# Walla Walla Public Schools Classroom Close-Up



TEACHER NAME: Sara Van Donge

SCHOOL: Garrison Middle School

Position: Reading Teacher

YEARS IN DISTRICT: 11 years

Q. How does the work you are doing in the 6th grade reading class improve learning?

A. This is a Tier II reading class. We meet daily for a block of time during 6th and 7th periods. We work on syllables, silent reading, read aloud, reading comprehension and fluency skills. These are really good readers who just need a little extra help. They are making terrific gains.

Q. Why do students in this class need extra help?

A. Most of these students are second language learners, so they are really strong in Spanish. When they made the transfer to English, some of them had some holes in their learning. We study rules and grammar to help them catch up as they continue their transition to English.

Q. How does having a second language help you instruct your students?

A. I am aware why they might have some misunderstandings. I know the way they are pronouncing words is linked to their Spanish. The fact that I speak Spanish helps me connect with them. I also encourage them to continue reading and writing in Spanish. It's really important for them to also keep up with their Spanish.

Q. How does having a background in elementary dual language help?

A. It really helps me appreciate this grade level and how much they can do in middle school. Students are not that different from elementary to middle school. They have the same needs and behaviors.

Q. How does assessment data help guide your instruction?

A. At Garrison we work as a team to analyze the data to determine if a student needs additional help. We use a variety of assessments to help us make good decisions in order to meet student needs.

Over

**MOMENTS & MEMORIES FROM  
SARA VAN DONGE'S CLASS:**



**COMMENTS FROM SARA...**

The block schedule allows us the time to focus on one area. We can spend an entire day on one area. This helps students see the content from a reading and writing perspective. It also helps us to know each other better.

I always wanted to be a teacher. When I was a little kid I played teacher. It's magical and so positive. I love everything about being a teacher.



Garrison is a wonderful place. The students are happy. They treat each other kindly and laugh a lot. Come visit. The staff is amazing and students are working hard and learning.