Welcome to Kindergarten. Kindergarten is a very important milestone in your child’s life. I understand that you and your child may have excitement or apprehension (or a little of both) about school. Hopefully, this information will let you know what to expect this year and answer any questions you may have. If you have any other questions or need any clarification, please feel free to send me an email or give me a call.

I would like to first introduce myself. My name is Kimen Allen and this is my 8th year teaching Kindergarten. I am originally from Louisiana, and moved to Orlando, Florida after I graduated with a Zoology degree from Louisiana State University. I spent seven years training animals at Sea World and Discovery Cove working with many animals from Killer Whales to River Otters before I realized my calling as a teacher. I have two children, Kaydence (8) and Cristian (6) who are both students at Blankner.

I am so excited about working with you and your child and helping him/her learn how much fun school is and the joy of reading. Kindergarten is a crucial foundation in a child’s future academic endeavors. It sets the standards and precedents to student’s learning goals and a love of learning. I hold high expectations and standards for my students, my parents, and myself. You will be absolutely amazed by your child’s abilities and knowledge base by the end of this year. Expect great things!

### Parent/Teacher Relationship

I believe that a good parent/teacher relationship is necessary for maximum school success. Throughout the year we will communicate through notes, telephone calls, newsletters, progress reports, report cards, emails and conferences. I encourage you to contact me if you have any questions or concerns at any time. The best way is through a note in your child’s home notebook or through email, and I’ll get back to you as soon as possible. As we get to know each other, you will likely end up with my cell phone number and I never mind your calls if situations arise that cannot wait until school hours.

### Parent Participation

I absolutely adore teaching Kindergarten and I know this year will bring many wonderful memories to you and your child. I became a mom before I became a teacher and you will usually see it reflected in everything I do. My style of teaching is very hands on and educationally entertaining. It does, however, require lots of preparation, time and resources. I truly appreciate any way that parents can get involved and volunteer, no matter how big or small. Whether it is in the classroom, at home helping prepare activities, or sending in goodies, there is always a way we can use your help. Throughout the year there will be a variety of special classroom activities, awards ceremonies and celebrations. I encourage you to attend these when possible and support them by sending in needed supplies or treats. Your involvement and support makes your child feel important and sends the message that school is important. As a working mom myself, I know it’s hard to make everything and I will work with to make sure that you’re child does not feel left out—whether it is a special note or treat from you or maybe even a phone call mid day. It is Orange County policy that all volunteers (INCLUDING THOSE WANTING TO ASSIST IN FIELD TRIPS) fill out the additions form and volunteer...
application for approval. Please let me know if there is an area that you are interested in, and I will do my best to accommodate you. Thank you!!!

**School Attendance**

Your child’s regular and prompt attendance to school is crucial to his/her success. Most kindergarten learning activities are group oriented and involve interaction with classmates. Therefore, it is next to impossible to make up work at home. Please view school as a priority, and see to it that your child attends everyday and is not late to class except in cases of illness or emergency. If your child does need to be absent, there will not usually be lots of make-up work that I can send. I try to give as few worksheets as possible and focus more on creative learning.

**Changes in Transportation**

You must ALWAYS send in a written note if your child’s transportation changes. Do not rely on your child to tell me this information because children often become confused and relay messages incorrectly. If no written note is received, your child will be sent home by his/her usual method of transportation. If there is a need to change things in the middle of the day, you’ll need to contact the front office and they will get me the necessary information. **THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS!!!**

**Money**

On occasions it will be necessary for your child to bring money to school. Always send money in a sealed envelope in your child’s folder with the following information written on it:

1. Your child’s first and last name
2. The amount of money
3. The purpose for the money (lunch, book $, party $, etc.)
4. Teacher’s Name

With so many children to keep track of and several reasons to collect money, this helps me out tremendously and reduces the likelihood of errors. Also, if the envelope is left on the bus or dropped in the hallway, this will help the money be returned to our classroom. You are welcome to send in lunch money for several days, weeks or months in advance. The cafeteria will provide a notice when your child’s money account is low and I will send these in your child’s homework notebook.

**Lunch & Snack**

Our lunch is from 11:45-12:10, and we have snack time in the morning. I will send home a snack calendar at the start of each month. Usually twice a month it will be your child’s turn to bring in a snack. I ask that you send in a class size portion of snacks (bag of pretzels, box of goldfish, cheese sticks, apple slices, etc.). During the first few weeks of school, Kindergarteners mistake snacks for lunch. Please let you child know if they are to purchase a proper lunch. I also will try to make rounds and ensure that all students have one as well.
Birthdays

Birthdays are special occasions for young children. I will schedule your child for snacks on his/her birthday and parents are welcome to send in or bring in store bought cupcakes/special snacks to share. Also, if you are going to send party invitations to school, please send one for each child in the class (without names on envelopes) or invitations to only the girls or only the boys depending on the party.

Book Orders

Your child will be bringing home a form to order Scholastic books every month. If you wish to order, simply fill out the form and send in the correct payment. Please do not send cash, make your checks payable to the book company, and remember to place it in a sealed envelope. These orders are convenient for parents to buy quality books for your child at a low price. As an added bonus, for every dollar amount that is spent on books, we earn bonus points used to purchase books and materials for our classroom. Book orders will be due back two weeks from when they are sent home.

Library

We are fortunate that the students will be able to visit and check out books from the school library. Please reiterate that the student is responsible for the safe keeping of this book. I strongly suggest keeping the book inside the backpack when not being read. There are many sad faces when children are told they are unable to check out a book due to the fact they left their previously checked out book at home.

Homework and Folders

Each child will receive a folder that will be his/hers to take to and from school daily. The folder will be labeled with your child’s name and mine. This notebook will contain letters from school, sight words, and take home books, and important classroom information. PLEASE TRY NOT TO LOSE THIS NOTEBOOK OR DAMAGE IT IN ANY WAY! In the event that this does happen, it will need to be replaced immediately. As you receive your child’s folder, please look through it each night. Homework will be given for the week on Monday/Friday before weekend and due on Friday. On rare occasions, family projects are assigned and may be due several days later. Homework should take no longer than twenty minutes a night, although please remember that each child completes work at a different rate. This is especially true at the beginning of the year. Homework will consist of handwriting worksheets, sight word and poetry reviews, as well as skill reviews. I will send sight word flashcards home during each nine weeks when I feel the children are ready. Please keep them and review them several times throughout the week. In class, we first ask students to identify the letters, the sounds, and then blend the sounds together. The goal of the sight words is to have the students identify the words without having to go through these steps. We will also have “tricky words” which do not sound like they are spelled (ex. was, love, could, all, here, etc.). Beginning in October, students who are ready to read will receive a book and activity sheet as part of their homework and will begin writing simple sentences to tell their favorite part of the book. Last, any unfinished class work will be required to be completed as homework as well. Also note, ample time is given to complete class assignments and that children are not permitted to play at free choice centers until work is complete.
Grading

The Kindergarten grading scale does not follow the typical A, B, C, D, and F grades. Students will be given N’s for Needs Improvement, W’s for working on the skill, and M’s for mastered the skill. Many W’s will show up on the first report card, and will diminish throughout the year as we continually practice them. When reviewing your child’s graded work you will find the following grading scale. I give ✓'s to papers where I feel students have tried their best (cutting on the lines, tracing before coloring, following handwriting lines) and completely understand the skill. The ✓ indicates the child may have made a couple of careless errors or did not put forth their best effort. A ✓- means either the student did not understand the concept or failed to put forth the needed effort. I try to have all work graded and sent home with the kids in their Friday folders—usually every 2 weeks. Please take out and review their work, sign that you’ve reviewed it, and return the empty folder on Monday.

Work Expectations

It is my expectation that each child gives assignments their best effort. Whether coloring, cutting, or writing, work should be completed in a neat fashion. While coloring I always ask the children to trace on the black line prior to coloring. Research has shown that by tracing before coloring improvements in handwriting and fine motor skills can be seen. Typically the following phrases will be used in the classroom: “Trace before you color,” “color before you cut,” and “glue along the edge”. Please note that it is very important for students to complete their own work, including writing their name. As the children begin to learn their color sight words, please make sure the children are using the correct crayons to complete assignments. For instance, if the instructions ask child to color the capital R’s red, the children should used the R.E.D. crayon, not brick red, red orange, or any other color. I ask that when students are writing that they use a pencil only, and pay careful attention to the top, middle and bottom dotted and solid lines when forming the letters and numbers. If you find that your child is reversing the direction of a letter or number, just remember that this is very common and children will need repetitive reminders and demonstrations of the proper way to form them correctly.

Behavior

Establishing good classroom discipline is essential to each child’s success. Every child should feel that the classroom environment is safe and secure, free from all threats of physical or emotional harm. It is important that each child learns good self-discipline, good work habits and conflict resolution skills. Children will first learn the purpose of our classroom rules and develop the idea that our class is a community for learning, growing and becoming friends. We will also discuss logical consequences if a class rule is broken. Usually, this will entail a child moving their “alligator” and/or receiving a time out, but also apology letters, cleaning or replacing damaged property. I utilize a great deal of positive reinforcement and rewards in my classroom. There are many opportunities for children who are making “good choices” to grab items from the treasure box, have a special lunch with the teacher, ice cream parties, and much more. However, children do not always make “good choices”. In my classroom, students will start each day by placing their “alligator” on the bottom tier of the wipe board. The bottom is green, after several warnings depending on the situation of “bad choices” either in the classroom, lunchroom, playground, etc. they must move their “alligator” to the middle yellow tier. If the offensive behavior continues, the child will be asked to move their “alligator” to the top red tier. In these situations, children will be required to sit in time out or help clean up the area if they choose instead of recess or free choice centers. At the end of the day, children on green will receive an alligator stamp and will color their alligator on their weekly chart green as well. Children on yellow will not get a stamp and will color their alligator on their weekly chart yellow. Children on red will receive a note with an explanation from me to be signed and returned. On the occasion when your child receives a note, please discuss with him/her the reasons and help your child think of ways to prevent the problem from happening again. In last resort
instances, I will call parents and have a child visit the principle’s office. Please note that children’s “alligators” can be moved back down throughout the day with an improvement of behavior, unless the child has hit another child. Children who stay on green all week or only had one yellow day will be rewarded with a trip to the treasure box. We also have a compliment chain where for every compliment our class receives throughout the day at special areas or in lunch or line, we add a link to the chain. When the chain reaches the floor, we will have an ice cream and movie party. I also have a McDonald’s party when all students learn their home address (complete with city and state), home phone number, and birthday (complete with year).

Minimum Kindergarten Competency Requirements

Language Arts:
- Recognize 50 sight words
- Recognize all upper and lowercase letters and identify their sounds
- Sequence events in a story
- Demonstrate an understanding of phonemic awareness (rhyming, initial and ending sounds, segmenting words, and blending sounds)
- Write complete sentences on a topic, using some invented spelling (beginning, ending, and some middle sounds) and some conventionally spelled words

Math:
- Count to 100 by 1s, 2s, 5s, 10s
- Identify numbers 0-100, out of order
- Solve addition and subtraction problems to 10
- Identify coins and their value
- Identify and describe 2D shapes and 3D shapes
- Recognize and create patterns (AB, AAB, ABB, ABC)

Language Arts

This year will be a most important year for developing skills necessary to become good readers and writers. Our reading program has several components, each designed to foster reading skills, develop an understanding of concepts of print, and enhance the enjoyment of stories and other literature while students nurture self-confidence in their ability to become sound readers.

Shared reading takes place in circle time as an opening to lessons in language arts, math, science, and social studies. Just as it is important to read with your child at home every day, it is also important for kids to be read to in the classroom. During language shared reading, alphabet books are read to reinforce the letter and the sound(s) that it makes. Later in the year we will begin to focus on word families. To develop phonemic awareness, we will use poetry and books, as well as song and familiar nursery rhymes. After a story has been introduced to the class, language arts skills will be introduced and practiced through a variety of activities, songs, and games. This whole group portion typically lasts thirty minutes.

Directly following shared reading, students will transition into guided reading groups. There are four stations each day, they always will come to me, and then rotate through any of the following: seatwork, computers, listening, reading, writing, games, or art. Your child will rotate through all four stations, with each one lasting about fifteen minutes. The students are grouped according to their ability in letter and sound recognition, reading speed and fluency. Please note that these ability groups are fluid and flexible and students are not predetermined to be in a particular group throughout the year. As student’s abilities change, they will be shifted into other groups to meet their academic needs. There will be 4-6 students in each group on the same ability level allowing me to individualize the activities and lessons on your child’s personal academic needs. This
allows all students to be challenged while reinforcing needed skills to allow for successful experiences and personalized attention.

In October, depending on your child’s reading ability, I will begin the take home reading program in the children’s take home folder. Students will be allowed to bring home a book for the week that has been taught during guided reading or selected for them based on their reading level. This is a great chance for students to share with their families and boost their confidence in their reading skills. More information will be sent home at a later date on this program.

Reading and writing are directly linked. Each student will maintain a writing journal in the classroom. We begin journaling with whole group writings to introduce the concepts that letters make words, words make sentences, left to right, punctuation, capitalization and spacing. Later we will use prompts to begin writings and free choice writings. Journal entries are in two parts divided by a line in the middle of the page: the top is pictorial representation of the story and the bottom is the written portion. It is a great idea to begin a home journal and encourage students to write during their free time. Please note that words do not necessarily need to be spelled correctly. Look for inventive spelling, meaning that the students have sounded the words out and written the letters to the sounds heard in a particular word. For instance, a child might spell the word love as “luv”.

**Math**

This year your child will build mathematical concepts by manipulating objects and through real life experiences. Mathematics is incorporated into many everyday classroom routines. Concepts your child will be learning include counting, graphing, patterning, sorting and classifying, making comparisons, addition, subtraction, telling time, and measurement. Additionally your child will learn to read and write the numbers to 100. Concepts will be introduced in whole group. On Wednesdays, we will use math concepts in our guided reading rotations. Also, I will make small groups based on needs in a particular area and pull children for extra help when viewing a skill. Students will be expected to apply and extend what has been introduced through independent and cooperative work. This approach to mathematics stresses understanding and concept development, rather than memorization and repetitive arithmetic drills.

**Science and Social Studies**

Science and social studies curriculum is taught through a variety of thematic units each week. In our class newsletter, I’ll keep you informed on what theme we are working on so that you can ask your child questions at home. Science and social studies activities in the class are usually very hands on and I try to involve Internet research as much as possible. We make lots of “crafts” and focus our writings around these subjects to reinforce concepts learned. On Fridays, we will do a science experiment and dive into the process and wonders of this realm.

Finally, in closing, I would like to say that I am looking forward to a great year working with your child. Any information I left out or if anything changes, I’ll send home a note in your child’s home folder. Thank you in advance for your support throughout the school year.

Sincerely,

*Ms. Allen*