



August 2022

Dear 5th Grader & Family:

Welcome to the Balak-Stutzman-Thiesen Team! This year, Mr. Balak, Mr. Stutzman, and Mrs. Thiesen will be your fifth grade teachers. Among us, we have over 30 years of teaching experience! We LOVE working together to create a safe and connected place for students to learn and grow. On our team, you will experience personalized learning while studying interesting and authentic topics together. We know you will especially love the technology, STEM challenges, book clubs, and raising trout!



This year, you can expect to use your Chromebook everyday to support our learning and growth, including the development of an individualized portfolio which will be a lens into our 5th grade learning. We will use Seesaw, Schoology, Google apps, ConnectED, among other educational websites. We will also learn about your digital footprint (have you Googled me yet?), using technology safely and responsibly, and digital organization. You will be amazed at how many new technology skills you will learn by the end of the school year.

Over the summer, we would like you to do a simple project that we will share with one another during the first week of school to help us get to know each other better. Go to the website [site.dart.com](http://www.site.dart.com) and use your School/Chromebook credentials to make an account. Create a word cloud all about yourself to the one shown to the right. If you choose to do so, you and your family can print it at home or email it to eric_balak@spioneers.org or brittany_thiesen@spioneers.org. Need help? Find and send me a message on Google Chats (formally known as Google Hangouts), and I'd be happy to guide you through the process!

In preparing for 5th grade, there are a few items that you may want to consider. Because much of our work will be done on our Chromebooks, binders for our team are optional! You will want to have personal earbuds/headphones for your Chromebook. Through experience, we have found 5th graders will need a better quality pair last the whole school year since we use them daily. Additionally, students over the past years found that they preferred having wireless mouse use with their Chromebooks too.

Another way to prepare for 5th grade is to practice and grow your skills over the remainder of summer. For math, you can login to ST Math through Clever to review 4th grade concepts, and/or get a jump-start in 5th grade skills by working <http://kahnacademy.org>. For English Writing Arts, the best way to practice your reading and writing skills is simply READ and WRITE! In fact, I challenge you to at least one 'justight' book during the month of August! For writing, I encourage you to check out the video writing prompt and just write or type your response! We GROW through practice and mistakes!

It is going to be an amazing adventure and we cannot wait to get started! In fact, we have already begun planning this year. We are looking forward to building our community together and learning tons!

Your teachers,
Mr. Balak Mr. Stutzman, & Mrs. Thiesen