

GRADE 1 STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

By doing, exploring, investigating, and practicing, children develop habits that lead to lifelong learning habits that lead to lifelong learning.

First grade children are whirl-winds. They climb, run, wrestle, and often try to do things too hard for them. At times they will be impulsive to extremes. They may also be inattentive and forgetful, but they can just as surely be affectionate and loving.

They love to play to the exclusion of dressing or eating. They love even more to win. When they do win, they may boast about their victories. These human whirl-winds need a sense of security, of being loved regardless of what they say or do. Generous praise for good behavior will go much further than criticism of their errors.

Because they love to talk about their own interests, they need a good listener. Opportunities to broaden their experiences, chances to see themselves as readers/writers; and enjoying educational trips will feed their natural curiosity and need for self assurance.

Curriculum

First graders continue to build on the basic language arts skills curriculum begun in kindergarten. *Open Court* is our first grade reading program. Reading instruction includes phonemic awareness training (listening for sounds), phonics and skills-based instruction, using leveled and phonetic readers, anthology books for comprehension strategies, and a variety of children's literature.

Students will begin to learn narrative and expository (factual) writing beginning with sentence structure and then progressing through the stages of the writing process. Student writing shows evidence of written conventions such as basic punctuating and capitalization.

In addition to recognizing and writing numerals, the first grader's math experiences will also include investigation into strands like measurement (counting by twos, fives, and tens, telling time to the half hour, recognizing the value of coins and bills), functions (detecting simple number patterns), logic and language (classifying and sorting objects using more than one attribute and making inferences from given information).

Meanwhile in science, a first grader will explore, observe, and experiment in a number of hands-on activities. In life science, they will explore living things in their own environment and learn about the basic needs of plants and animals to grow and survive. They will observe and measure weather conditions and learn the earth's shape and composition in earth science. In physical science they will classify matter by color, shape, size, and kind (living and nonliving). They will also observe matter in various forms of solids, liquids and gases.

In first grade the social science curriculum focuses on developing democratic values: respect for the rights and opinions of others and for rules and regulations. As they learn to use maps and globes, first graders recognize that their neighborhood is part of a larger community. They also become acquainted with the economic concepts of goods and services needed. First graders will also develop skills that demonstrate the elements of fair play and good sportsmanship. Students will compare and contrast the varied backgrounds of different cultures found in America.

A wide range of topics aimed at developing lifetime habits of good health - the very thing parents want them to do - constitute the health and physical education program and curriculum. Health topics include nutrition and the importance of exercise, units on the circulatory system, injury prevention and safety, and environmental health. Physical education focuses on developing motor skills, knowledge of games and rules along with guiding students to make appropriate decisions, working in groups, and building self-esteem.

In the visual and performing arts curriculum, a first grade lesson may include handling and manipulating art tools like brushes and scissors, matching tone and pitch, developing an awareness of line, shape, and color, or using rhythm instruments for basic beats. These lessons instill a capacity for enjoying and participating in all of the arts and respect for originality in one's own creativity. Students also learn that art reflects, records, and even shapes history, and plays a role in every culture. Through the arts curriculum, the first grade student becomes sensitive and responsive to the artistic expressions of others.

Perspective

The first grade academic curriculum is age appropriate, experiential, and integrated. The acquisition of knowledge and construction of skills, feelings, and attitudes define academics for first graders. Modern research has found that young children are like natural scientists, driven to make sense of the world. In this view, all children are capable of sophisticated thought processes.

Learning depends upon incorporating what they study into their own experiences and understanding how the world works. The learning environment in first grade does this by making children active learners. By doing - exploring, investigating and practicing - children establish habits that lead to lifelong learning.