

GRADE ONE  
2007-2008



The goal of the first grade program is for the students to become successful learners and it is our belief that children learn best by doing. First graders build skills and confidence through active learning individually, in small groups, and through shared activities. The class works together to build an atmosphere that allows for a friendly and safe place to learn throughout the year.

The day begins at 8:20 with a 20 minute homeroom meeting, a very important start to the day when social skills are practiced, news and announcements are made, math and calendar skills are developed, and sharing takes place. The time directly after meeting is devoted to reading, writing, and spelling, followed by snack and a 20-minute recess. After the 10 morning break, math is usually taught, depending upon the schedule. Throughout the rest of the day, music, art, PSD, French, social studies or science, and computer usage activities may be scheduled. After a 30-minute lunch at noon, there is a 20-minute outside recess while work jobs are carried out by older students, then a 25 minute period of quiet reading or listening to a story read aloud by an older student or a teacher.

First graders have PSD once or twice a week with second graders as well as their own class once a week with Deb Gray as their instructor. Homework is a part of the first grade program from late September until late May. A short packet of material, which promotes practice of math, and/or reading skills, is sent home on Monday or Tuesday to be returned on Friday. In order to promote the lifelong love of reading, 15 minutes of reading per night is recommended. The child can read aloud or silently, or listen to a story. Decodable reading booklets need to be read every time a new one comes home. Spelling words, which are being practiced during the week, will come home in backpacks. Reviewing these words at home will help students to increase their spelling skills more easily.

**READING AND LANGUAGE ARTS:** In the first grade Open Court Reading Program, explicit phonics and comprehension skills instruction is balanced with extensive reading of both decodable texts and quality literature. In addition to explicit skills, from the very beginning, the children experience a wide variety of literary forms and genres in a program that emphasizes phonemic awareness, reading, writing, spelling, and success. Throughout the year, the children bring home short decodable booklets to reread at home. These stories allow them to practice the vocabulary and skills they have been working on in the reading program and are a vital part of developing their reading skills. Advanced readers will work with the same reading program at a more accelerated rate. In addition to the regular reading program, all children will also experience immediate success and continued growth through reading “instant” readers: books which incorporate rhyme, rhythm, repetition, and predictability. The writing program involves both reading and writing, using the child’s own language and experiences to write simple stories. Children learn early to edit their own work for

punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. Stories can be shared during author meetings within our classroom and with other grades, and are brought home for family sharing. Invented, or temporary, spelling is encouraged, with correction of spelling promoted as spelling skills are taught and new words are learned. In the spring, first graders become enthusiastic older reading buddies to the preschoolers once a week. By this time in the year, they are independent readers and enjoy their roles as “big” kids.

**MATHEMATICS:** An understanding of mathematical concepts is developed through the use of manipulatives, active exploration, and problem solving. Activities include studying patterns; classifying; weighing; measuring; telling the temperature; telling time to the half hour; using pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters; dividing things into parts or fractions; using the calendar; learning the addition and subtraction facts through ten using strategies and games; using calculators as a tool; working with geometric shapes; and exploring place value. Pattern blocks, tens blocks, Unifix cubes, coins, counters, rulers, scales, and a wide variety of other manipulatives are used for the exploration that is so essential for concept development in the early years. Math concepts and skills are learned through the Everyday Mathematics Program.

**SOCIAL STUDIES:** Beginning in early September, the first graders will study Native American cultures, focusing on such topics as food, shelter, clothing, geography, customs, traditions, and legends to gain an understanding of how people meet their basic needs and develop culture. Through storytelling, crafts, movies, music, dance, games, and a museum visit, we hope to gain an appreciation of the Native American heritage. Our visit to the Mashantucket Pequot Museum in Connecticut on September 28th will give us insight into the culture of the Woodland people past and present. First graders will also perform a Native American play in November, along with a Native American feast to culminate their studies.

**SCIENCE:** When studying the human body, each child will make a life size paper model of his or her body, adding body parts as they are studied. We’ll be doing some investigative experiments with our senses for hands-on activities. We watch age appropriate videos to further enhance our learning. In the spring the first graders will become laboratory scientists and creative inventors as they make their own paste, toothpaste, and cola. In small cooperative groups they will employ the scientific process of investigation to study the attributes of the product, test its ingredients, and then mix ingredients to create their own personal “secret formula”. In June, each first grader and a parent will join the rest of the class at the Montshire Museum overnight Camp-in Program, to experience more fun and excitement learning about science.

**ART:** The goals of the visual arts program are to creatively and expressively manipulate a variety of materials and to gain an awareness of self and environment through this process. Many different mediums will be introduced throughout the year. Students will explore various aspects of visual perception such as texture, line, color and form. Our art studies will often be interconnected with other classroom studies and will include sketching outdoors, drawing, painting, working with clay, weaving, mask-making, papier mache, collage, and creating three-dimensional constructions.

Students meet twice a month for an hour with the art teacher in the art studio.

**SOCIAL CURRICULUM:** The social curriculum at TGS is designed to complement the academic curriculum and help maintain a healthy social and learning environment. This includes a series of “Community Life” classes at all grade levels that complements and reinforces the classroom based social curricular activities and goals. We define a healthy school community as a place where people have a sense of belonging, where adults and students extend and receive respect in their relationships with each other, and where people feel both a sense of support and personal challenge to help them learn and grow as human beings.

The Community Life classes help highlight and develop important community skills such as cooperation, team building, personal and social responsibility, deep listening, mindful speech, emotional literacy, respect for diversity, conflict resolution, stress reduction, relaxation, self-awareness and problem solving.

Each year the first grade participates in the school’s community service program by conducting its own activity, which is to raise money for a worthy cause. This year we are going to raise money for The Windham County Humane Society. After earning the money, we take our contribution to the shelter so we can visit the animals too. The children may also participate in other community service offerings during the year, such as the Thanksgiving food collection for Morningside Shelter.

**PHYSICAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT:** The first graders will work daily on developing the components of physical fitness, cardiovascular conditioning, endurance, strength, flexibility and balance. Through a wide variety of activities students will learn a common vocabulary and practice the rules of sportsmanship, listening skills, and cooperation. During the year we will work on goal setting and achieving goals. Tag games, soccer, tumbling, cross-country skiing, rhythm and dance, bombardment and relay races are some of the activities that comprise the PSD program for the first grade.

**COMPUTER:** The computer program in first grade is designed to familiarize the students with the computer and use of the keyboard. Students will work with Alli once a week in the computer lab to create their own art designs using the programs Kid Pix and Kidspiration. When learning about the human body and Native Americans they can again access web sites for more information.

**FAMILY LIFE CURRICULUM:** Issues relating to family life are taught throughout the year as the children discuss and work on relationships pertaining to friendships, self-concept and personal safety. During our unit on the human body, the children learn appropriate names for the human reproductive organs and their functions as well as the process of growth and development from conception. Age appropriate books are used at this time to clarify these concepts.