



GRADE ONE, 2009 - 2010

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 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 15-minute outside recess while work jobs are carried out by older students, then there is a 25-minute period of quiet reading, listening to a story read aloud by an older student or a teacher, or writing.

First graders have PSD twice a week with either kindergarten or 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 that 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 that are being practiced during the week will come home as part of my Monday Message to parents. 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.

By the end of the year, the children are independent readers and enjoy reading early chapter books.

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.

SCIENCE: In January and February first graders will study 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. After the March break and during the month of April, first graders will explore a unit called Secret Formulas. They will be creating cola, paste, and toothpaste after they have investigated the properties of a good product. This provides a lot of hands-on learning to the delight of the kids. In the late spring, we will be joining the second grade for a unit on astronomy. On the first Thursday night 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.

FAMILY LIFE CURRICULUM: Issues relating to family life are taught throughout the year as the children discuss and work on relationships pertaining to friendship, 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 to clarify these concepts.

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 25th 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. In December, the first graders will participate with the rest of the school in an in-depth investigation into the Middle East.

STUDIO ART: In first grade art is integrated in the classroom as part of the everyday learning experience. In addition, first graders have art in the art room once per week. This time is about

learning what can be done with colored pencil, tempura paint, and crayon. We learn by experimenting and students begin to have a sense of when and why the artist will choose one medium over another. Gaining early exposure to artists from many periods and places will help them have a sense of the diversity of art in the world.

FRENCH: In first grade we will review and build upon vocabulary acquired in kindergarten, such as numbers, colors, body descriptions, foods, the alphabet, and classroom words. Through drawing, coloring, movement, miming, games, and songs, we will learn and /or expand upon topics such as the house, the town, clothing, and classroom activities and objects. We will also be doing basic writing in a book called *Chiffres, Couleurs, Verbes et Phrases*. French class meets two times a week, once for 30 minutes and once for 45 minutes, in the first grade room.

MUSIC AND TECHNOLOGY: The music program is an integral part of the TGS curriculum with all students in K-8 having three music classes per week. The primary goals are: developing an appreciation for music; singing on-pitch; reading music and playing an instrument; dancing cooperatively; taking direction and performing on stage. Basic computer skills and an introduction to music technology are also important components of the program. Students work in groups, individually, and with several faculty members throughout the year in different learning situations.

TECHNOLOGY: The computer program in first grade is designed to familiarize the students with the computer and use of the keyboard. Students will work once a week in the computer lab to create their own art designs using the programs *Kid Pix* and *Inspiration*. When learning about the human body and Native Americans, they can again access websites for more information. Each child will also have individual time on our classroom computer to further develop use of the computer as a tool for learning once or twice a week.

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.

LIBRARY: The first grade will meet in the library two periods a week to choose books and do various activities designed to help them be comfortable using the library. They will find out about different kinds of literature. They will learn the difference between fiction and nonfiction, be able to recognize the title and author of a book, and practice listening skills. As part of the Red Clover Award program, they will learn to evaluate literary material by text, illustration, and information.

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, cross-country skiing, rhythm and dance, dodgeball, and relay races are some of the activities that comprise the PSD program for the first grade.