

First Grade Curriculum Guide for Parents



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1st Grade Curriculum

1st Grade Language Arts

Reading

There are five aspects to reading instruction in first grade.

The first aspect involves decoding words phonetically; the second, understanding the context and meaning of the text; and the third, writing responsively.

The fourth aspect of the reading curriculum is an individualized reading program which we call our “DEAR” (Drop Everything And Read) time. Students read independently for 20 to 30 minutes each day. In addition, first graders read to their teacher individually during DEAR time.

The fifth aspect of the first grade reading curriculum is the at-home reading program called “Book It.” Students at this age need to read independently at home for a minimum of 10 minutes per day. Individualized monthly goals are given to each student.

First graders also practice oral fluency by reading to their teacher, to each other, to the whole class, and to themselves, sometimes using a “Toobaloo” device. A “Toobaloo” is a device whereby a child reads into a curved pvc pipe which sends the sound right to their ear - kind of like a phone to yourself. It is a fun way to really help with diction, spelling, pronunciation and sounding out words.

Writing

During first grade, there is a continued emphasis on the writing process (pre-writing, drafting, revising, proofreading, publishing) with a special focus on the pre-writing and drafting steps. Some of the skills that are taught include brainstorming ideas through a word or idea web, writing in a complete sentence (one whole thought) using conventional capitalization and punctuation, and using words learned through weekly spelling lists that are now on the Word Wall or spelled phonetically in draft form.

Part of the assessment for each writing project includes the use of a simple rubric such as: Did you use a complete thought to write your sentence? Did you begin your sentence with a capital letter? Did you end it with punctuation? Students' writing is published and shared in a variety of ways.

The Daily Oral Language program is used to help the students practice and review a wide variety of grammatical and mechanical skills. At their desks, students make corrections to a problem sentence on the blackboard.

Writing Projects for First Grade

Weekly journal writing in response to our reading pieces --

Assorted writing assignments include writing thank-you notes, a friendly letter and a nametag. Students also practice addressing an envelope, writing a play collaboratively, making a list, writing in response to math questions or composing their own story problems and science backpack notebook responses.

Math Journal – written responses to math curriculum questions, composing their own math problems for classmates to solve, explaining a solution for Exemplars.

Unit Work – written responses, especially with our Family Unit (writing a thank-you note, a birthday card and a friendly letter)

Students write responses for printed work pages for all units. In “Taking care of Me,” emotions are discussed and responded to with writing. For example, we read the book *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No-Good, Very Bad Day* and students write about their own “bad day.”

Science Backpacks – (unique to first grade)

Every so often, individual students take home a “Science Backpack.” Each backpack is full of books, experiments and activities related to a specific science topic like Electricity or Water. Students keep each backpack for one week to explore at home. Each student has a notebook dedicated to the science backpack program. In this notebook, students write about their experiences with the backpacks. All year long, they add to the notebook, which rotates through all seven topical backpacks.

Spelling

As students become older, conventional spelling becomes more and more important. Our first-grade spelling curriculum is integrated with reading. That means that the spelling words are taken directly from the reading selections. Each week, students receive a basic list of words based on a spelling or phonics pattern. Then, each student individualizes his/her list by adding words that he/she needs to learn to spell. These words may be misspelled words from recent writing assignments or words that the student is interested in

learning. In addition, students learn at least one new vocabulary word each week that they have collected from their individual reading.

Public Speaking and Listening

Students are given a variety of opportunities to develop and strengthen their skills in public speaking by sharing writing pieces. For example, first graders dress up as endangered animals and present a report on that animal to their classmates and parents. Opportunities are given for positive peer feedback in addition to the teacher's feedback.

1st Grade Mathematics

First grade uses the Scott-Foresman/Addison-Wesley math curriculum. In addition to the textbook, students are taught Exemplars, which is a simplified method of teaching how to think and communicate mathematics thinking to young students. It is both enjoyable for the students and helpful in preparing them for the mathematics and algebraic concepts that they will encounter later, in middle school. Student also have the opportunity to work on a variety of math stations such as weighing, measuring, counting coins, estimating, learning place value and numeration in constructing their own calendars, creating their own number sentences for addition/subtraction with manipulatives, exploring geometric solids and symmetry.

Students continue to review and show mastery of all the basic addition and subtraction facts by using a variety of math manipulatives. They range from simple wooden counters and "wrap-ups" to sliding dogbone-shaped self-checking number sentences and timed self-checking math facts books with built-in timers, among others.

Units = Science and Social Studies topics

Units are Ann Arbor Christian School's approach to learning science and social studies. First-grade units are not based on a textbook but rather on hands-on, teacher-created lessons which are correlated with reading and writing projects.

Taking Care of Me Unit

In learning about self-care, hygiene, and health, hand-washing is demonstrated and practiced. Also covered: proper sneezing and nose blowing; eating nutritious foods; tooth brushing, bathing, proper rest, visits to the

doctor and dentist; and exercise for a healthy heart. We define and discuss “handicapped.” Emotions are defined and role played and the class discusses how to handle emotions in an appropriate Christ-like manner. Students make emotions puppets to enact situations.

The Family Unit

Students identify family members and words for family members. First graders fabricate paper models of their own houses/pictures of family members. This coordinates with Grandparents’ Day during which students make a shoebox model of their bedrooms, with the help of their grandparents and/or grandfriends. This fun project fosters conversation and creative problem solving between the generations. The class discusses and dramatizes ways families work out problems, share responsibilities and love. We also discuss the family of God to which all Christians belong. We celebrate Jesus’ birthday with a Christmas service project such as gathering mittens for poor children.

Our Father’s World Unit

This unit includes preparing a passport and ticket and taking pretend trips to Australia, China, and Mexico. Students listen to music and language from these countries and try some ethnic foods.

Students learn about “technology” as a way of doing and “science” as a way of finding out. After doing a “Huff ‘n’ Puff” experiment, students conclude that materials have properties that are useful for a specific purpose.

Good Steward: Environmental Issues Unit

First graders read “The Wartville Wizard” and pick up litter around the school. In learning about man-made and natural waste, pupils do an activity “Will it decay or will it stay?” and do a filtration experiment. A “Reduce, reuse, recycle” game helps kids learn. Kids dress up as an endangered animal and recite a report for parents.

The Weather Unit

Students keep a daily weather chart, learn about measuring temperature and make a barometer. A lesson on how rainbows are formed links to a Bible verse about rainbows. When learning about wind, first graders make a wind sock and pinwheel. After reading the book “Flash, Crash, Rumble and Roll,” students discuss storm safety.

1st Grade Bible

The Bible curriculum, based on *Biblical Choices* by Standard Publishing, aims to teach Biblical knowledge and understanding as well as to give practical applications in living as disciples of Jesus. During the first semester, we learn about Creation, the fall of man, the flood, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

During second semester, we begin with Joseph and continue to the birth of Jesus, his disciples, his miracles, his death and resurrection and ascension to heaven.

As the students examine people and events and their right and wrong choices, we learn how important it is to obey God. They also have the opportunity to learn about how God planned for our forgiveness and remission of sins through His son, Jesus' perfect sacrifice. In addition, students will learn how to apply Biblical lessons to their own lives and memorize weekly verses of scripture, which generally tie into the lessons.

Our desire is that the students memorize various foundational Bible passages in addition to passages students can apply to their own daily lives. Both individual-class service projects and whole-school service projects are part of the school year.

A daily morning devotion that includes singing, scripture reading, a lesson and prayers is part of each day. Students are given opportunities to learn how to pray for the needs of others in a small-group setting as well as how to journal or write letters to God as they have an independent "quiet time."

Students experience corporate worship in chapel services twice a month. One is a K-8 chapel and the other a K-5 chapel. Students are assigned to multi-age "chapel families," in which older students serve as mentors. Also, older students often put on skits and perform for younger students during chapels.

1st Grade Art

The art curriculum helps students learn to recognize, enjoy, and process the aesthetic and cultural diversity present in God's creation. Students explore different mediums for artistic expression including drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, design, textiles and performance. Projects are largely integrated with classroom units to help reinforce learning and to promote cross-curricular connections. Art history and aesthetic criticism are also integrated to expand critical thinking and awareness. Units develop creative problem-solving in order to help students find and express their unique voice in the world.

In First Grade, we emphasize teaching students to observe and respond to their surroundings. Our art classes reinforce the classroom curriculum and develop enthusiastic learners through applied art activities. We work to develop fine-motor skills and to build confidence by using a wide variety of media and techniques. Students are engaged with artworks from different historical periods, cultures, and artistic philosophies in order to broaden their perspective on the possibilities of art. Throughout this exploration, the teacher works with students to help them express their ideas both creatively and clearly.

1st Grade General Music

The music curriculum helps students learn to recognize, enjoy, and process the aesthetic and cultural diversity present in music. Students explore different instruments for music expression including body percussion, percussion instruments (shakers and whackers), handbells, singing, and Orff instruments. Music instruction is integrated with classroom units to help reinforce learning and to promote cross-curricular connections. Music history and music criticism are also integrated to expand critical thinking and awareness. Units develop the understanding of rhythm, melody, harmony, timbre, form, notation, expression, and performance.

In first grade, we emphasize teaching students to observe, participate in, and respond to music. Our music classes reinforce the classroom curriculum and develop enthusiastic singers through applied music activities. We work to develop listening and music-making skills and to build confidence by using a wide variety of music and techniques. Through the exploration of different styles of music and different ways of making music, the teacher helps students to grow in the understanding and use of music in their daily lives.

First grade music skills include:

- Steady beat
- Perform accompaniment rhythms on xylophones and Orff instruments
- Read and write basic music notation
- Singing on pitch
- Echo songs
- ABA form

1st Grade Physical Education

Physical Education helps students develop in cognitive, psychomotor, affective, and spiritual domains. The P.E. program at AACCS encourages individual potential, leadership, and participation, which will promote lifelong fitness. Students grow in an understanding of rules, safety, and strategies of games and activities. Both individual and team sports allow for the expression of sportsmanship and sensitivity needed to function in a diverse society. Physical Education reflects the high value God places on human life and the respect we should have for ourselves and for one another. Students are encouraged to model behavior that Christ would exemplify.

Our P.E. instruction includes fundamental skills/movement patterns; attributes like balance, rhythm, and creative movement; motor abilities like coordination, quickness, power, speed, agility and flexibility; fitness (movement, body awareness, muscles, bones, regular exercise); sports skills like playing performance and proper technique; and knowledge and understanding of rules and procedures.

A wide variety of offerings keep students of all skill levels interested in physical activity. Units range from dance and gymnastics to football and basketball at age-appropriate levels. K-5 students look forward to once-weekly P.E. class while 6-8 students enjoy P.E. twice a week.

While technically not part of our physical education program, AACCS offers elementary school children encouragement to get daily exercise with what we call "Mileage Club." As long as the weather allows and we have sufficient volunteer parent supervisors, students can spend all or part of their lunch recess accumulating miles while walking or running on a set course outside the school. Students can earn awards for meeting mileage milestones like 25, 50, or even 100+ miles!