



## Lower School - 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Overview

First grade at St. George is a time for exciting transitions and is a year packed full of important milestones as students begin to develop new academic skills. Students experience highly visible progress in reading, language arts, math, and social skills. At the completion of first grade, students are strong, independent thinkers and ready to tackle the next challenge.

**Reading:** The first grade reading program focuses on word attack skills, oral reading fluency and reading comprehension skills. First grade uses a variety of research based reading curricula to introduce grade level vocabulary and extend comprehension. Students are exposed to vocabulary rich read alouds, participate in shared reading, and practice independent reading. Students will learn to read both silently and aloud in class. In addition, online reading programs are utilized for enrichment and motivation.

**Spelling/Phonics:** In first grade, students focus on the 72 Orton phonograms. These are the most commonly used phonograms in the English language, and allow students the skills they need to “break the code” to successful reading. The first grade spelling program uses words from the *Extended Ayers List* which reinforces the Orton phonograms as well as the rules of the English language.

**Grammar/Writing:** In grammar, first grade students focus on learning to write complete sentences. Students approach sentence writing through a variety of skills. In addition to capitalization and end marks, first grade students use nouns, verbs and adjectives to enhance sentence writing and transition into story writing. When students write about what they know, they become proficient writers. Students will start the year drawing pictures and writing their own stories. A strong element of the writing program asks students to express their creativity through an abstract drawing called a “squiggle”. When students begin to understand the rules of spelling and grammar, the content begins to take shape. As the year progresses, the stories gain depth and complexity. It is not uncommon for students to gain momentum throughout the year as they work towards “publishing” their original writing. As a continuation from kindergarten, the handwriting curriculum focuses on correct D’Nealian manuscript formation.

**Math:** The first grade *Dimensions Math* curriculum deepens students’ understanding of mathematical concepts. The math program is developed around the premises that problem-solving and mathematical thinking are the key factors to being successful in math. Manipulatives are used to support students’ understanding of mathematical skills and to develop strong number sense. These skills include counting and place value, addition and subtraction of whole numbers, fractions, money, concepts of time, odd and even numbers, word problems, measurement, geometry, estimating, pre-algebra skills, probability and logic, and graphs. First grade students will also fluently master the addition and subtraction facts to twelve.

**Science:** First graders experience science through hands-on investigations, literacy-rich activities, and interactive digital tools to empower students to think, read, write, and debate as real scientists and engineers. These experiences engage students in relevant, real-world problems where they investigate scientific phenomena, engage in collaboration and discussion, and develop models or explanations in order to arrive at solutions.

**Social Studies:** First grade utilizes the *Core Knowledge History and Geography* curriculum. This curriculum explores map skills, geography, and history. Students develop an age appropriate understanding of ancient history while learning about the early civilization of Mesopotamia. First graders also participate in a pioneer unit study. During this unit, students learn what it was like to live among pioneers. Current events are emphasized along with special holidays throughout the year.

**Social and Emotional Development:** The St. George social and emotional curriculum is based on the *Responsive Classroom* model. This curriculum takes a proactive approach that focuses on creating a loving and respectful classroom community where each child feels valued and known by his or her teachers and peers. Every day begins with a morning meeting where students are greeted by name and invited to share about a given topic. During this time, teachers introduce a variety of social skills that include: identifying feelings of self and others, resolving conflict, showing kindness, listening and responding, regulating emotions, practicing empathy, being a good citizen, and standing up for what is right. These skills are then discussed and modeled frequently by children and teachers alike. This approach provides each student with the tools to grow his or her own emotional intelligence, while also creating an environment of connectivity and care.

**Co-Curricular Classes:** Students attend the following co-curricular classes: physical education three times a week; music twice a week; art, library, Spanish, science lab, and STEAM once a week; and recess daily. Students also attend a developmentally appropriate chapel daily.