

First 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. First grade uses the *McGraw Hill* reading series, the *Spalding* reading series, and teacher selected readers to introduce vocabulary and develop comprehension. Students participate in whole class and small group reading instruction. They learn to read both silently and aloud in class. First graders begin to choose books of personal interest for independent reading enjoyment. The *Raz Kids* online reading program is utilized for enrichment and motivation.

Spelling/Phonics

The first grade spelling and explicit phonics programs focus heavily on the 72 *Orton* phonograms. These 72 phonograms are the most commonly used phonograms in the English language, and equip the students with the skills they need to ‘break the code’ to successful reading. The first grade spelling program uses words from the *Extended Ayres List* which also focuses on the *Orton* phonograms as well as the rules of the English language.

Grammar/Writing

Students first focus on learning to write complete sentences correctly. In addition to capitalization and end marks, students learn to use nouns, verbs and adjectives to enhance sentence writing and move into story writing. Story writing is emphasized from the beginning of the year when students are asked to draw pictures and write the stories their pictures tell. Students are also encouraged to express their creativity in abstract drawings called “squiggles” throughout the school year. As students begin to master the rules of spelling, grammar, and sentence writing, the content begins to take shape. By the end of the year, students are successfully able to write lengthy stories. This creative approach to writing has inspired many of our students to get excited about writing. 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 grade students use the *Harcourt Science* curriculum. The students use the textbook to introduce a variety of science topics during the year. Units of study include matter, force, rocks, magnets, animals, and the solar system. The students visit the St. George science lab on

a six day rotation. This teacher led lab time allows the class to deepen understanding of concepts by participating in the scientific method within hands-on investigative activities.

Social Studies

First grade utilizes the *Core Knowledge* curriculum. This curriculum explores map skills, geography, and history. In first grade, *Core Knowledge* begins to develop an understanding of ancient history, including the early civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt. In addition, first graders will participate in a unit of study about pioneer life in America. 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 a developmentally appropriate chapel daily. They also regularly attend the following co-curricular classes: art, library, music, Spanish, STEAM, and physical education.