

First Grade Curriculum Overview



Chester Academy
2008-2009

Dear First Grade Families,

Welcome to the wonderful world of first grade! It will be an exciting year filled with new opportunities for learning. This booklet has been prepared to provide an overview of the First Grade curriculum at Chester Academy. It is not meant to be all-inclusive. Instead, its purpose is to provide basic information about the curriculum and encourage parents to participate in their child's educational experience.

As you read this overview, there are a few points to keep in mind. First, the educational experience is intended to help students acquire essential qualities descriptive of a well-educated person and fundamental to life long learning and success as described in our school mission statement.

Second, in many ways, the curriculum is always "under construction". At Chester Academy, we are committed to continuously renewing the curriculum so that our students have the best possible education. We pay particular attention to current research and educational findings and incorporate the New Hampshire State Goals into all areas of instruction.

Third, our students receive the best possible education through the cooperative efforts of home, school and community. If you have any questions please contact your child's teacher. Email is the best way to contact the teachers. Open communication allows us to work as a team to provide the best educational environment for your child.

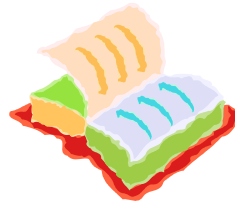
Finally, we recognize that our students will live their lives in this new century. We are committed to providing an educational program that prepares them for the challenges and opportunities that await them.

Sincerely,
The First Grade Team

First Grade Teachers

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Language Arts



Reading:

Program/ Materials:

The reading program for the primary grades is the *Scott Foresman Reading Street* 2007 Edition. This program provides a research-based approach to reading instruction, guided by frequent assessment, enabling teachers to plan and differentiate for individual student reading levels. *Reading Street* has an equal mix of fiction and non-fiction reading selections. The priority skills in first grade are: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Reading materials for first grade students include: Five anthologies, a classroom library of leveled readers for small group instruction, decodable readers, big books, songs and rhymes, charts and graphic organizers, sound spelling cards, reader's theatre anthologies, practice workbook for phonics and skills, assessment tools, and high frequency vocabulary cards.

Instructional Delivery Model:

At Chester Academy, students are involved in a 3-Tier reading model, consisting of three tiers of reading instruction. Movement through the tiers is a dynamic process, with students entering and exiting as needed. Mid-year, students will have the opportunity to be part of reading instructional groups formed with students from across the grade level. Students will work with others who have similar reading needs to ensure that instruction is a "good fit", and will provide the best opportunity for growth.

- Tier 1 - Core Classroom Instruction

A core reading program grounded in scientifically based reading research. Students receive instruction in a 90 minute reading block each day, consisting of a thirty minutes of whole group instruction, followed by a sixty minute reading group time, where students are taught in 3-4 flexible small guided reading groups.

- Tier 2 - Strategic Intervention

Tier 2 is designed to further meet the needs of some students, where the core reading program is not enough. They are provided with additional small group reading instruction daily.

- Tier 3 - Intensive Intervention

A small percentage of students require more support in acquiring vital reading skills than Tier 2 instruction can provide. For these students, Tier 3

provides instruction that is more explicit, more intensive, and specifically designed to meet their individual needs



Placement/Groupings/Assessment:

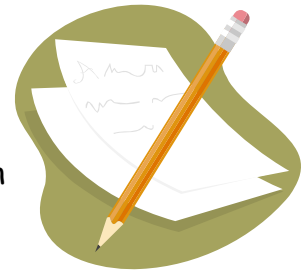
The children are grouped according to their reading level. They are assessed with several different tools. Placement is determined by the following assessments:

- DIBELS, which is the *Dynamic Assessment of Basic Early Literacy Skills*. This is a set of standardized, individually administered measures of early literacy development. They are designed to be short (one minute) fluency measures used to regularly monitor the development of pre-reading and early reading skills.
- Weekly Fluency Assessments - Each student is given a short passage to read aloud at his or her instructional level. The reading is timed and the teacher marks any variations from the text. Initially these assessments include only high frequency words and some key skills. Fluency will be assessed as the student progresses to the level of reading connected text.
- Scott Foresman Reading Street Assessments include: measuring performance in phonics/phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension; Benchmark tests - given at the end of each unit and at the end of the year to determine whether the student is above or below, on or above the expected level; Weekly group selection tests; and informal progress monitoring throughout the week, to check progress during instruction and to identify students' needs along the way.
- G.R.A.D.E. - This reading assessment measures vocabulary, comprehension, and listening comprehension skills. *G.R.A.D.E.* stands for Group Reading and Diagnostic Evaluation.



Writing:

In the *Scott Foresman Reading Street Program*, first grade students participate in shared and interactive writing. They learn conventions of capitalization and punctuation in writing and grammar through "daily fix-its." Also, they practice writing sentences, journal writing, writing in response to literature, and are introduced to the writing process, which includes: prewriting, developing first drafts, revising, editing, proofreading, and publishing. In first grade students are introduced to narrative, expository, descriptive and persuasive writing.



Spelling: Word lists are derived from the phonics sequence in the reading program and the high frequency/sight word lists. Formal spelling lists and tests will begin in November to assist in the transition from sound spelling to conventional spelling.

Handwriting

The handwriting program for First Grade is *Handwriting Without Tears*. This program is research based, programmed instruction with the following unique features:

- Developmentally based
- Differentiates to meet all children's needs
- Multi-sensory methods
- Developmentally based sequence of learning
- New skills are put into immediate practice
- Built in review promoting mastery and fluency.

This is a "top down" method is used for teaching handwriting in first grade. Students are taught the correct formation of letters in a structured manner. Modifications are made in the writing program to meet individual needs of the child.

Handwriting is assessed for proper letter formation and spacing with an emphasis on neatness and legibility. There is limited time for formal instruction and practice at home is encouraged. Children should avoid practicing cursive writing to prevent the acquisition of bad habits.



Mathematics

In first grade we use the *Scott Foresman - Addison Wesley Mathematics* program which provides a variety of experiences that promote mathematical understanding. Students progress from the use of concrete objects (manipulatives) to mathematical symbols and abstract processes as they learn mathematical concepts; develop the ability to communicate mathematical ideas; make connections between mathematical abstractions and real-life situations; and refine the ability to solve problems.

The *Scott Foresman - Addison Wesley* program strives to meet all learners through various methods such as hands-on activities, literature connections, reteaching, daily review, real-world applications, technology, ideas for "early-finishers" and writing which allows students to answer open-ended and extended-response questions. The "problem of the day" provides opportunities for review, discussion, collaborative thinking and informal assessment. Students are also exposed to opportunities to explore and relate what they have learned to the world around them through the *Discovery Channel Store* videos entitled, "Discover Math in Your World" and the *Dorling Kindersley* book pages throughout their workbooks. In addition, the *Scott Foresman - Addison Wesley* program provides a letter home to families for each chapter to help families practice and reinforce what is being taught at school.

Concepts which are addressed include:

- Whole Numbers - one-to-one correspondence, relating sets of objects to numerals, ordinal numbers, comparing and ordering, place-value, skip counting, counting money, comparing amounts of money
- Whole Number Operations and Applications - estimation and mental-math strategies, counting on and back, meaning of addition and subtraction, basic facts and fact strategies, fact families, adding and subtracting money
- Geometry and Fractions - identifying and comparing two and three dimensional shapes, symmetry, parts of a whole, parts of a group
- Measurement - choosing appropriate measuring units, time to the $\frac{1}{2}$ hour
- Data Analysis - reading and making graphs
- Algebra - patterns, number equations with missing addends
- Mathematical Processes - problem solving strategies, classifying and sorting

Social Studies

The focus of the Social Studies curriculum for first grade targets socialization skills students need to work and play cooperatively. Social Studies is integrated into all curriculum areas. The first grade Social Studies curriculum encompasses the following:

- Cooperation and Sharing
- Socialization and Manners
- Self Awareness- character education
- Citizenship- responsibilities, rules and rights
- Community- Home, School, Town
- Jobs and Occupations
- Introduction to Maps and Globes



Students will have opportunities to expand these concepts through such activities as stories, discussions, field trips, guest speakers, dramatics, music and theme units.

Proper social skills are vital to the success of every lesson shared by all. Recognition and respect for individual differences and self discipline is modeled, experienced and practiced.

Social skills include:

- Learning to accept and respect others by working together
- Identifying ways to solve conflicts
- Recognizing the importance of fairness and cooperation
- Developing a sense of responsibility
- Learning to make choices and to understand consequences
- Recognizing that mistakes are a part of learning
- Developing an understanding of the need for rules and standards of acceptable behavior

The Chester Academy PBIS (PAWS) Program incorporates research based methods to teach and reinforce a positive attitude, responsibility, safety at work and play and showing respect for self and others. Paw print stickers are given out to acknowledge the students when they exhibit the target behaviors. Focusing upon and reinforcing these behaviors help build social skills throughout our school.



Science



First grade students will investigate animals, water and seasonal changes. Core concepts in life, physical, and earth sciences will be studied. Students will develop scientific process skills of observing, communicating, classifying, measuring, predicting and experimenting. Through hands-on activities, children explore various scientific concepts and begin to understand how science relates to the world we live in.

Students will:

- Identify the five senses and understand how we use them to learn. Students will participate in hands-on activities to learn about the senses.
- Travel to Squam Lake Science Center for a field trip, to observe animals in natural habitats.
- Use drawings, charts, graphs, oral language and simple writing to record observations of their investigations
- Practice Science Process skills in hands-on investigations
- Learn how to use scientific equipment properly
- Develop an awareness of seasonal changes in the environment
- Learn weather through the seasons and will graph the weather in daily calendar activities
- Identify and experiment with the properties of water
- Observe how living things need air, light, water and food to survive
- Sort and describe objects from nature by their properties such as rocks and leaves
- Classify animals- mammals, reptiles, birds, amphibians, insects, etc.
- Experiment with simple machines and understand the forces of push and pull
- Explore the seacoast ecosystem at the spring field trip to the Seacoast Science Center at Odiorne State Park.



Computer Literacy

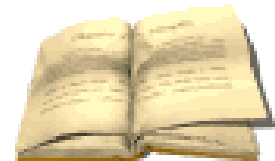
Computer literacy is integrated throughout the first grade curriculum. The first grade team and the technology integration specialist plan lessons, which incorporate the computer literacy requirements and enhance what is being taught in the classroom. First graders use appropriate software to word process and illustrate stories. The students also learn the basic parts of the computer, input and output, and improve their mouse control. Students at Chester Academy have access to the computer lab and the wireless lab. Both labs are networked and linked to the Internet. (Students must have a signed Acceptable Use Policy on file before using the Internet with the technology department.) Each student's work is saved in a folder for their digital portfolio. The digital portfolio contains artifacts that demonstrate use of technology in all the curriculum content areas.



Library / Media Center

The goal of the library media center is to ensure that students become independent users of ideas and information. First grade students are introduced to the organization scheme of the library and the difference between fiction and non-fiction literature. Sharing stories through read aloud is an integral part of the program. Students will develop an awareness of:

- how books are ordered on shelves and the use of a shelf marker
- parts of the book
- proper care of the books
- appropriate library behavior
- appreciation for a variety of genre



Integrated Arts

Art

Students will gain basic skills and develop self-confidence in drawing, cutting, painting, printmaking, weaving and the use of clay. Students will create projects using the art elements: shape, line, texture, and color. Students will also be introduced to famous artists and the art of various cultures. When possible, art will be integrated with the core curriculum.



Music

In first grade, children will be learning the difference between "beat" and "rhythm". They will also learn how to move to and through music, how to use their singing voices, and a very early beginning to reading music. We will have lots of fun learning through singing, dancing, playing instruments, and musical games. Above all, students will learn to enjoy expressing themselves through music!



Physical Education

Physical activity provided opportunities for enjoyment, challenge, self-expression and social interaction. In the first grade curriculum, students will develop skills in locomotion, teamwork, sportsmanship, safety awareness, manipulatives and fitness.