

1st Grade Handbook

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1st Grade Beliefs and Expectations

In first grade our expectations are that a student...

- will do his/her best
- be cooperative
- will respect others
- will respect property

Each teacher will develop specific beliefs as appropriate to her/his class in order to help the students meet the expectations listed above.

We also adhere to the broad district discipline policy that you receive a copy of in the fall. This discipline policy lists specific age appropriate consequences for different violations of the discipline policy.

1st Grade Goals

First grade brings major changes for children. It is the first all day school experience for most children. At Glacier Hills we want to make the transition from Kindergarten to First Grade as easy as possible.

We want all first graders to feel safe, accepted, and comfortable in this new situation. One way we will do this is by meeting all our children at the end of the summer for some reading and writing activities. They become familiar with the teacher and the classroom. The pre-school Open House also makes the start of First Grade easier. The children get to find and explore their classroom making the first day a little less scary.

Our major academic goal is reading. We want to provide a strong start to this important subject. We will encourage many home activities to support what is happening at school.

1st Grade Procedures

School Bags

We suggest that your child carry a backpack or school bag to school each day. This protects belongings and books in bad weather and helps to get those important papers and messages home each day. Try to look through your child's bag each night. Each teacher will also specify a certain color "take home" folder. Check this folder for papers and notes from the teacher. You may send papers and notes back to school in this same folder.

Tennis Shoes

Tennis shoes need to be worn or changed into on days that we have gym. The safest shoes are those that tie or use Velcro.

Name on all personal belongings

We recommend that you put your child's name in all jackets, hats, etc. and on all other belongings your child brings to school.

Notes from home

Please send a note to school in any of the following situations:

- absence from school

- injury or illness preventing outdoor or physical activity

- change in plans for going home from school

Lunch or milk money

Send lunch and milk money in an envelope marked with your child's name, the teacher's name, and your child's lunch account number. We appreciate your help with this procedure.

Parent volunteers

We really appreciate your willingness to become involved at school. Please make sure to return the volunteer sign up sheet as soon as possible. We will contact you at party time and at other times that we need home and classroom work.

Birthdays

All first graders will have the chance to celebrate birthdays with their class. Summer birthdays will be celebrated in the spring or at the child's half birthday

during the year as determined by the teacher. Sending a treat is optional, but if one is sent, it *cannot* be homemade.

Special person

In each classroom, the children will have a turn to be the Person of the Week, Special Person, etc. Your child's teacher will send home information about what takes place in the class.

Dismissal

If you will be picking your child up after school, please remember that coming early can be very disruptive to the class. Many closing activities are taking place. Check with the teacher or office to find out about the dismissal time.

Newsletters

Watch for a monthly grade level newsletter. Each first grade teacher will also send home brief newsletters at their discretion.

Classroom beliefs

Each first grade classroom will be a place where respect for others is very important. The classrooms

will foster an atmosphere in which children are able to learn and feel safe. We will help children understand what behaviors make our classrooms pleasant and enjoyable places. Each teacher will determine the specific rules and procedures for her room that follow the school and district wide discipline policies.

Snacks

Since first graders take some time to adjust to a full day of school, we will allow the children to bring a nutritious snack. Crackers, fruit, or cheese are examples of good snacks. We would prefer that you not send drink boxes. Drink boxes sometimes create a mess in or on the desks. The drinking fountain is available for a child who is thirsty.

Curriculum

The First Grade curriculum is very child centered, allowing for a great deal of student activity. At most times of the day you will find children actively involved in reading books in small groups, with partners or individually, writing in journals, using math manipulatives, doing science experiments, or quietly enjoying a teacher read story.

Most first grade work involves activities worked on and completed in class, so there is not daily homework. Please understand that getting homework for a trip while school is in session is not always possible because of this. The best thing you can do for your child is to have him/her keep a journal to share with classmates and take along plenty of books to enjoy.

First grade curriculum areas include:

Language Arts

Reading, Writing, Word Study, Handwriting

Math

Science

Health

Social Studies

Language Arts

Reading

District 196 uses materials by Houghton Mifflin and *Reading With Meaning* by Debbie Miller as a resource. Both series provide good literature, skills instruction and integrated themes, but they offer different strengths. Houghton Mifflin has marvelous literary anthologies, well organized in rich themes with good student and teacher support materials for skill instruction. Debbie Miller's book provides direct classroom ideas and strategies. We also use many individual leveled reading books for use in skill and strategy instruction. Together they provide the depth and breadth of resources for classroom teachers to best meet the needs of all our students.

District 196 uses a balanced language arts program. We recognize the importance of organized, explicit skills instruction that includes phonemic awareness (sounds in words), phonics, and decoding skills as well as the necessity of strong literature and rich and varied experiences with oral and written language. Explicit instruction along with immersion in wonderful literature provides for the most powerful and effective student learning. All grade levels use Phonics by Fountas and

Pinnell as an element of our reading program.

Writing

The emphasis of the writing program is on the writing process. First graders are introduced to a variety of strategies to help them become effective writers: pre-writing, drafting, responding, revising, editing, and post-writing. They will learn to write small moments, how to directions, all about books and poetry. They will start to become comfortable with writing for a variety of audiences and purposes. First graders will have experience with group writing as well as individual writing.

Word Study

The Word Study curriculum has three components: studying phonetic principles, generalizing spelling patterns, and memorizing high frequency words (Must Know Words) used in reading, writing and vocabulary development. The goals for the Word Study program are to develop early literacy concepts, learn common word patterns, learn how to memorize words, develop word awareness and interest, learn spelling strategies, and to develop a spelling consciousness.

Handwriting

We are using the District 196 Curriculum. A copy of the correct letter formations are at the end of this handbook.

Math

The Scott Foresman-Addison Wesley math curriculum teamed with Investigations, a problem solving, number sense units of study is used at Glacier Hills. This math program will provide students with a strong background to prepare them for higher-level math concepts. It is a very hands-on approach to first grade math instruction. We will continue to use Cognitive Guided Instruction (CGI) philosophy as well. Children will be using different math tools and strategies to solve addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Children will be developing number sense as they use manipulatives and strategies such as direct modeling, counting on, number relationship and grouping to solve story problems.

Science

We use the FOSS science curriculum. First grade topics are Air and Weather, Solids and Liquids, and Plants and Seeds. The curriculum allows for a lot of

hands on investigation and activities.

Social Studies

First grade social studies begins by focusing on the child and the family and what is familiar. Also studied are the countries of Nigeria, China, and Mexico.

Computers

First graders have regularly scheduled computer time. They will work with several graphics and beginning word processing programs.

Specialists

First graders have regularly scheduled classes in Music, Physical Education, Art, Library, Science and Spanish.

Arts and Science Magnet Experiences

Include:

- ✓ Art fair; residencies
- ✓ Art Specialist for all students to create product during the learning process
- ✓ Musical explorations
- ✓ Exposure to drama, improvisation
- ✓ Science instruction designed to enrich traditional learning
- ✓ Hands-on lab experiences in all science areas
- ✓ Technology lab and media center equipped with opportunities for research into inquiry focus
- ✓ Dynamic elective program of student choice in the arts and sciences to begin mid-fall
- ✓ Spanish instruction for beginning understanding of language and culture

Frequently asked questions

My child is so tired after school. All summer she had so much energy. Is something wrong?

Your first grader will come home very tired at the beginning of the school year. Remember that for many this is the first all day experience. Make sure your child is getting plenty of rest. Still it is not unusual to see a sleeping first grader in any of the classrooms during those first weeks.

My son does not want to tell me anything about his day. Is he having a bad experience?

The day is packed with so many activities that his "brain might be tired" when arriving home. He may not want to tell you about the day immediately. Let him take a break and tell you about the day at supper or bedtime. Ask questions such as:

What was one thing you really liked today?

Tell me your special class today, (art, music, gym).

What book did your teacher read today?

The question "What did you do in school today?" may be too overwhelming for some children.

My child is bringing home an almost full lunchbox. Isn't there enough time to eat lunch?

Many parents are concerned that their child does not have enough time to eat lunch because a lunchbox is coming home full. The children do have as much time as they need to eat. However, many are so excited to go out to the playground to play with their friends that they do not take the time to eat much of their lunch. This will gradually settle down so it should not be a worry. A good after school snack should take care of those hunger pangs.

We will also have an "at home" reading program. Selected books will be sent home in a ziplock bag for your child to read to you. Please sign and return the parent form which will be enclosed in the bag. This program will begin in October.

Please go over any papers that come home with your child. Thank you in advance for helping your child with the math and reading homework papers that will be coming home. By working together, we can provide your child with a successful, fun year in first grade.

The First Grade Team