

# The First Grade Handbook 2017-2018

Mrs. Davis  
Miss Knapp  
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Mrs. Wentz

# Intro

First grade is going to be an exciting academic year for your child. It is the most important year in your child's academic growth. First grade will be the base of your child's entire future learning. This year you will be amazed and proud of the rapid progress your child will make. In order for this year to be a success, I need your help and constant support at home. In school, we have prepared an organized and structured environment to best promote your child's academic growth. We hope the following information will help you to better understand how our classroom will be managed and make for a smooth and successful year.

\*\*\*This handbook has general information that is common for all first grade classrooms. Each teacher may run her classroom a little bit differently. Please be sure to review all information your child's teacher provides to better understand your child's classroom procedures.

## Prerequisite Skills

To help make the transition successful we have compiled the following list of things your child should know before entering first grade in August. If your child is still approaching mastery of some of these skills, please work with them at home on these things:

- Able to independently tie shoes
- Able to independently zip coat
- Able to state full name, address, phone number and birthday

## Curriculum

### Literacy by Design

Our reading series consists of many big books and leveled readers that teach a variety of concepts. Each student will practice at his/her appropriate level. The first few books are very repetitious with lots of pictures. If your child brings home a book to read, don't be alarmed if he/she has memorized it. This is a process from which reading begins.

The reading series that we use is Literacy by Design. Your child will be spending about 90 minutes a day on reading, 45 minutes in a whole group setting, 45 minutes in small group instruction and literacy activities. The components that make up Literacy by Design are: shared reading, modeled reading, vocabulary, phonemic awareness/phonics, spelling, comprehension and writing.

## Fundations

Fundations is taught in conjunction with our Literacy by Design reading curriculum. These two programs support one another in providing your child a well rounded approach to reading. Literacy by Design is our core curriculum. Fundations further supports the phonics, phonemic awareness and spelling components of reading.

In Fundations, students learn new spelling “phonics” skills and apply them to a variety of words. This program incorporates exciting kinesthetic skills and hands on learning through the use of magnetic tiles, white boards, Baby Echo, and sky writing. Students benefit from this reinforcement through the repetition of these activities.

Unlike a traditional spelling test, students are not given a list of specific words on which they will be assessed. This tells us whether they understand the concept taught and can apply it to a variety of words, which is a very valuable skill. Fundations tests take the place of our weekly spelling test. On the Fundations assessments, students are tested by writing sounds, words, trick words, and sentences. These assessments are intense and require a lot of practice, which we do daily in class. If you notice that your child is having difficulty with these practices, please reinforce these skills as he/she may benefit from additional practice. Practice sheets are sent home at the beginning of each new unit focusing on the new concepts we are learning and should be used as a valuable resource.

We are excited to be contributing to the success of your child’s reading and spelling experience through this valuable evidenced based program!

## Daily 5

The Daily Five is a way of structuring part of the reading block so every student is independently engaged in meaningful literacy tasks. These research-based tasks are ones that will have the biggest impact on student reading and writing achievement, as well as help foster children who love to read and write. Students receive explicit whole group instruction and then are given independent practice time to read and write independently while the teacher provides focused, intense instruction to individuals and small groups of students.

When it is up and running smoothly, students will be engaged in the Daily Five, which are comprised of:

- Read to Self
- Work on Writing
- Read to Someone
- Listen to Reading
- Word Work

Your child will be taught to select “Good Fit Books” or books they can read, understand and are interested in. They will be spending most of their time actually reading, which research supports as the number one way to improve reading. The motivation and

enjoyment of reading will skyrocket when this gift of choosing their own books is accompanied by extended practice and specific reading instruction for each individual child.

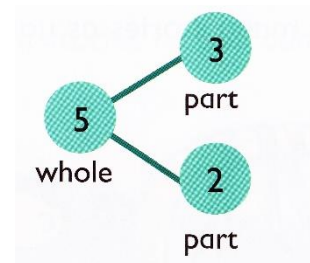
## Mathematics

Math in Focus is the series that was chosen in 2012 to best accommodate the needs of our students as they work to meet the Common Core Math Standards. Math in Focus is based on the Singapore Mathematics Framework. The framework is built around mathematical problem solving, and focuses on attitudes, metacognition, processes, concepts, and skills. The benefit of Math in Focus is that students will learn the “why” behind the math concept before they learn the “how”. Students learn math in a concrete manner first, then move toward a pictorial approach, and finally in the abstract.

Some changes from the traditional approach are: 1) part-part-whole strategy, 2) a strong focus on learning the why, 3) assessments that include routine and non-routine problems.

Example of the part-part-whole strategy:

This is called a Number Bond.



Example of a strong focus on learning the why:

Students will spend much time in school discussing why three pieces (part) combined with one piece (part) make four pieces (whole). The teacher will begin by working with concrete objects to model this concept. Students will manipulate real objects. Next, the teacher might use manipulatives such as cubes or counters to demonstrate the concepts. Finally, students will work with the numbers that represent these amounts to write number sentences ( $3+2=5$ ). It is critical that students work through and understand fully each step.

Example of routine and non-routine problems:

Routine =  $3 + 2 = \underline{\quad}$  (Answer: 5)

Non-routine =  $3 + \underline{\quad} = \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad}$

(Multiple answers would be accepted as long as both sides of the equation are of equal value.)

## Second Step-Social Emotional Curriculum

Second Step is a classroom-based social-skills program for children that teaches socio-emotional skills aimed at reducing impulsive and aggressive behavior while increasing social competence.

Puppy and Snail help first-graders learn self-talk for calming down, how to invite others to join in, and other skills for learning and getting along in school. Colorful lesson cards are accompanied by new songs and videos, while Brain Builder games implicitly teach executive function skills.

Make sure to join [www.secondstep.org](http://www.secondstep.org) with the activation key SSP1 FAMI LY71 to watch videos about the *Second Step* program and get information about what your student is learning.

## HAWK TIME

Students in grades kindergarten through fifth at Hickory Grove Elementary School participate in a daily, thirty minute intervention block. HAWK Learning Time includes a variety of educational practices, but is not limited to the following; interventions for struggling learners, differentiated instruction, enrichment opportunities, and independent studies.

Helping  
All Students  
With Achieving  
Key Learning Targets

## Accelerated Reader

Accelerated Reader (AR) is an online based reading quiz program, which encourages children to build their comprehension skills. In first grade, we view AR as a supplemental reading program. Each student will work with the teacher and as the child builds strong enough reading skills the teacher will start him/her on the AR program. Once your child has been introduced to the program, he/she will bring home a letter with more information. Every child will get the opportunity to try AR.

## Progress Reports

Progress reports are given at the mid-point of each grading period. Each child will receive a report at the mid-point of the first grading period. After that, progress reports will only be sent home if there is a special area of concern and/or if he/she has shown considerable growth. If your child does receive a progress report, please sign and return a copy to school.

# Report Cards

Our standards-based report cards are given four times throughout the year. At the end of the first grading period, parent conferences will be held and the report cards will be explained at that time in more detail. The grades are based on a number system (1,2,3,4), depending on your child's level of that skill at that time in that particular subject area.

# Special Classes

Art – 50 minutes, once a week, with Ms. Johnson

Music – 25 minutes, twice a week, with Mrs. Buckley

PE – 25 minutes, daily, with Mr. Leiner

World Language – 25 minutes, twice a week, with Senorita Walden

Library – 30 minutes, once a week

Technology – 25 minutes, once a week, with Mrs. Connor

# Homework:

## Reading

In first grade, we can't stress enough the importance of reading each night! Ten minutes a night goes a long way in helping your child become a successful reader! In addition to nightly reading, we also encourage students to be familiar with the week's trick words (These are sent home in our weekly newsletters.) Trick (a.k.a. sight) words cannot be sounded out, but rather they need to be memorized. It will make a *great* difference in your child's reading progress! Having a strong grasp of trick words helps your child become a fluent reader which in turn helps his/her comprehension. At the beginning of each Foundations unit, a packet will be sent home. It is expected that the activities in this packet are practiced each night in order to be prepared for the Foundations unit test.

## Math

It is also important for students to have a strong grasp of number sense and addition and subtraction concepts. This is the foundation in math upon which we will build this year. Math practice packets are an excellent tool, along with the Moby Max website which students may access at home. Additional math activities will be provided by individual teachers, these activities will provide you with an opportunity to help your child become more proficient with the skills learned in school.

# Classroom Management

Each of our classrooms monitor behavior a little bit differently. We all have a fair classroom management approach. We strongly believe that if a student is not following the classroom rules he/she cannot be learning to their personal potential. The purpose of our classroom rules is to keep us safe and to promote a positive learning environment.

\*\*\*\*\*Please see your individual teacher's classroom management form

## Communication:

We strive to keep communication open between teachers and parents, as it is "key" to a successful year. We utilize many avenues to foster our communication. Please be familiar with the following:

- Take home folders: Each student has a take-home folder that he/she will bring home in their backpack each night. This folder serves two purposes; to carry important papers home and to bring important papers back to school. It is important to check this folder nightly as it will contain students' reading log, behavior calendar, and other important papers from that day. At home reading will be monitored through a form which will be kept in your child's take home folder. Please help your child document his/her homework minutes on their monthly homework log. Then, if you have lunch money, a transportation change, or other forms to be sent to your child's teacher, please send it back to us in this folder.
- Newsletters: A newsletter will be sent home weekly. It is generally sent home on Fridays, though may be an alternative day if it is before a large break (for example, the Wednesday before Thanksgiving break). It is imperative that you be familiar with the information in our newsletters as it contains important information for that week.
- Website: We also have a first grade website to help foster communication. This website is set up to help you throughout our first grade year. Newsletters, curriculum information, educational websites, etc... are all on our website to help keep you informed. If you have a question throughout the year, please first consult our first grade website, as it is set up for your instant resource.  
[www.hgesfirstgrade.webs.com](http://www.hgesfirstgrade.webs.com)
- E-mail: You may contact your child's teacher through e-mail as needed. Please know that our first priority is teaching our students and though we may glance at our e-mail throughout the day, we often don't send a response until after the school day. If it is an e-mail regarding transportation, please also let the office know. Then, if we don't see the e-mail prior to the end of the school day, they have been notified and will let us know.

First grade teacher's email addresses

Mrs. Davis- [jdavis@dunlapcusd.net](mailto:jdavis@dunlapcusd.net)

Miss Knapp- [rknapp@dunlapcusd.net](mailto:rknapp@dunlapcusd.net)

Miss Mehl- [amehl@dunlapcusd.net](mailto:amehl@dunlapcusd.net)

Miss Renne- [mrenne@dunlapcusd.net](mailto:mrenne@dunlapcusd.net)

Mrs. Wentz- [jwentz@dunlapcusd.net](mailto:jwentz@dunlapcusd.net)

## Library

Studies have shown how imperative it is that a child read 10 minutes every night. In order to promote a love of learning and give students a wide range of books to read, we have two library options at HGES.

HGES Library – Students will visit the library once a week and may check out one book at a time. If that book is returned before the next library visit, then the child may check out another book. While we will guide students toward a range of books, the book a child chooses may be a book that should be read aloud to the child by an adult.

First Grade Library – Students will be allowed to check out books from our 1<sup>st</sup> grade library. We do not always see the books your child chooses to bring home, so occasionally your child may come home with a book that is not a good fit for his/her independent reading level. Please talk with your child about why this book is not appropriate and encourage him/her to choose a book that is more appropriate next time. If this happens on a consistent basis, please send a message to your child's teacher and we will look more closely at the situation. Remember, your child should read two books each night (or in the case of a chapter book – 2 chapters). Obviously, 10 minutes is a minimum, so if your child wants to read more, please encourage him/her to do so!

Please take good care of the books that are brought home. Not all books are brand-new, but they are the only books we have for children to check out. We are always looking to improve our library, if you have books you would be willing to donate, please feel free.



## Book orders

Scholastic book order forms are sent home about once a month. Several different Scholastic order forms may be stapled together with a parent letter. The parent letter will explain how to order the books online. We encourage you to take advantage of these affordable books by quality authors. Through your orders, we receive free books for the classroom. In addition, if you decided to place your order online, we will automatically receive a free book. Please don't feel obligated to order. Many book order forms will be sent home throughout the year. If you would like the books you order to be a surprise gift for your child, please send your child's teacher a note or email. She will be glad to leave the order for you in the office or send it home in a large sealed envelope.

## Volunteers

We love to use parent volunteers in our classroom. Please refer to the Hickory Grove Parent Volunteer Guideline Form and sign up with your child's teacher, if you are interested in volunteering.

## Lunch

If your child orders hot lunch he or she will have the choice of the entrée of the day or a chef salad. This also includes a choice of white or chocolate milk. If your child just needs milk for their cold lunch, you can send them into school with money or they can use their lunch cards. In order to put money on your child's account, please send it in an envelope marked with your child's first and last name and with your child's teacher's name. You may also utilize the school's café prepay located on the district website. We would suggest weekly or monthly deposits. Each time they eat hot lunch, that amount is debited from the account. When the account is almost empty, a notice will be sent home.

## Snack

Please supply your child with one healthy snack each day. Healthy snacks may include: fruit, vegetables, cheese and crackers, pretzels, fruit snacks, granola bars, etc. We feel that it is important to instill healthy eating habits at a young age and that there are numerous benefits to eating healthy. Please, send your child's snack in a labeled separate bag from his/her lunch. Please remember, NO SNACKS WITH NUTS!

## No Peanuts Please

Due to students in first grade having food allergies to peanuts/nuts, it is important that there is strict avoidance to this food in order to prevent a serious allergic reaction. To reduce the risk of exposure in the classroom, we are asking that you not send any products containing nuts for your child to eat during snack (which is in the classroom) and for birthday treats as well. Please read ingredient labels carefully, but understand we may still double check since they are often confusing.

Since lunch is eaten in the cafeteria/lunchroom, your child may bring peanut/tree nut products for lunch. In the cafeteria there will be a section of a table designated where no nuts are allowed. This plan will help to maintain safety in the lunchroom while allowing classmates without allergies to enjoy peanut/tree nut products in a controlled environment. Please also remind your child not to share any food, eating utensils, or food containers with other students. We believe all families understand a parent/guardian's concern about safety and will join us in ensuring that the school environment is safe for all students.

## Water bottles

Your child may bring a water bottle to drink during the day if they wish. Please keep in mind that this is optional and we do have a drinking fountain in our classroom. We ask that any water bottles that are sent to school are sweat-free and filled ONLY with water.

\*If water bottles become too much of a distraction, the teacher may ask for them to be kept at home.

## Absenteeism

If your child is sick, please call or email the office before 8:30. Work will be sent home to complete upon the child's return unless other arrangements have been made.

## Vacation

If your child is going on a vacation during the school year, please notify your child's teacher as soon as possible of the dates and times that your child will not be at school. Our first grade policy states that students who are gone from school on a vacation will get their work that they missed when they get back. Our lessons are planned based on the needs of the students. It is very difficult for us to anticipate how much work will be completed during your child's absence, therefore your child's work will be sent home when they return.

# Transportation Changes

If your child has a change in their normal schedule, please e-mail the office and your child's classroom teacher before 2:00. Dismissal is the most stressful time of the day for all of us and we want to ensure that your child gets where he/she needs to go.

# Birthdays

Your child is welcome to celebrate his/her birthday in class. Please, drop off the birthday goodies and all the necessary supplies in the main office. If you want to send in a drink, we request that you send in juice boxes. Large containers of juice are too messy and time consuming. Hickory Grove Elementary School's policy is that ONLY store bought and individually wrapped treats are allowed. NO TREATS WITH NUTS!

Some good ideas are packaged crackers, fruit snacks, and other similar treats. Remember, treats don't necessarily have to be food. It can be a pencil, stickers, erasers, etc. Summer birthdays can be celebrated on your child's half-birthday. Please send your child's teacher an email or note prior to your child's half birthday if you wish for us to celebrate his/her birthday on this day.

\*Birthday invitations are not allowed to be passed out at school UNLESS one is brought for EVERY child in the class (or all the girl/all the boys). To protect your privacy, teachers are not allowed to give out family addresses for invitations.

# Field Trips:

Each year, we attend the HULT Center to learn about our health and making good choices. Additionally, we often take a second field trip during the year. Parent volunteers are not needed for the HULT Center field trip, though we love to have parents attend our additional field trip. We will let you know the dates and times for field trips when they are planned. If volunteering to be a chaperone for a field trip, siblings are not allowed to attend.

# Labeling

Please make sure your child's first and last name are visibly printed on any jacket, coat, hat, lunch box, book bag, etc... that they may bring to school. This helps us to better locate lost items.

# Parents Club

The HGES PTO has been very involved in making our school a wonderful community! Please consider getting involved. Visit their website at: [hickorygroveparentsclub.com](http://hickorygroveparentsclub.com)