



Extraordinary Education. Timeless Traditions. Inspired Lives.

## What to Expect: First Grade at Denver JDS

First grade focuses on skill development across all disciplines through a hands-on approach, aimed at fostering a love of learning. Through completion of a research project, storytelling and writing, and projects, students demonstrate lessons learned and apply that learning. Students build community through collaboration and character development through our Words to Live By (*Divrei Chaim*) and values (*middot*).

### Literacy

Our first graders take solid steps toward fluid reading. Their reading material varies from simple rhymes to classroom news to patterned stories and beginner nonfiction books. By the end of the year, most students read grade-level chapter books, and some read above grade level. Our teachers provide explicit instruction and support by working with students as a whole class, in small groups and one-on-one. First graders engage in the writing process and learn more about the different purposes for writing including opinion, informative/explanatory and narrative. First graders have an opportunity to write in a variety of genres and share their work with their classmates.

Our **Learning Resource Center** and **Gifted Learner Program** support Denver JDS teachers in challenging students across the academic spectrum and provide direct student support. Inside the classroom, flexible grouping and differentiation allows students to all be supported and encouraged to reach their potential. Additionally, through our **Focus on Growth Initiative**, teachers work with students to set individualized academic and social-emotional goals for the year, focusing on personal growth.

Denver JDS develops and fosters future-ready skills within our students to prepare them not only for today's world, but for the world of tomorrow. With an emphasis on creativity, communications, collaboration, critical thinking, and communities, we equip our students with the skills they need for success in any content area.

### Math

Our Math in Focus curriculum emphasizes mastery of basic mathematical concepts, number sense, mental math and problem solving. First grade students begin to engage with abstract mathematical concepts, developing strategies for adding and subtracting whole numbers and exploring measurement using non-standard units for length and weight. Geometry focuses on composition and decomposition of shapes and comparing their attributes.

### Science

Using the Full Option Science System (FOSS) curriculum and project-based learning, students in first grade explore the scientific process through units such as "Solids and Liquids," "Pebbles, Sand, and Silt" and "Insects." In each of these units, students learn to find answers to questions about the natural world on their own through observation, description, and hands-on activities.

## Social Studies

The concrete world of family, school, and neighborhood frames first grade social studies, which focuses on patterns and chronological order of events of the recent past, as well as American symbols, civics and familial and cultural traditions of the United States. Fully integrated with Jewish values, our conflict management program, *Kelso's Choices*, models appropriate problem-solving strategies to promote healthy interactions with peers.

## Service Learning

First graders take part in the school's K-5 Helping Hands service learning program, through which they have the unique opportunity to consider how their Jewish identity helps them to understand the world around them, and how that identity carries with it a responsibility to make a positive difference in their world.

## Jewish Life and Learning

First graders revisit Jewish holidays they learned in kindergarten and learn about the associated blessings, history and customs of each. Students also learn about the Jewish calendar and *gematria* (the numerical value of each number), continuing with study of the weekly Torah portion with a focus on exploring the connection between different sections of the text and integrating Hebrew vocabulary into the study. Project-based learning fosters the students' interest in and knowledge of Israel. In *tefilah* (prayer), students learn to chant the weekday morning prayers and take turns leading the class. Additionally, our first graders participate in *Chagigat HaSiddur* celebration, each receiving the prayer book they will use throughout their time in the Denver JDS Lower Division.

At Denver JDS, instructional and educational technology are a key means of extending and enriching teaching and learning. **Technology** is infused throughout every one of our classrooms as a vehicle for enhancing student learning.

## Hebrew

First grade brings the introduction of *Ivrit b'Ivrit* (Hebrew taught in Hebrew). Students begin with the Tal Am Hebrew curriculum, focusing on the four basic literacy skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Teachers use a variety of creative and colorful media to engage students in learning, including songs and melodies. By the end of the year, most students can write short Hebrew sentences and stories, and they are introduced to Hebrew script. Each day, first graders conduct short conversations in Hebrew. Israel and its importance to the Jewish people is an important theme in our first grade Hebrew classroom.

Our *Divrei Chaim* (Words to Live By) and *middot* (Jewish values) are lived everyday at Denver JDS, both inside and outside of the classroom. They are used as a basis of community building and character development across the curriculum.