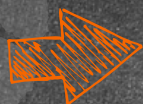


PORTRAIT OF A PANTHER:

First Grade



Typical first graders are enthusiastic, curious learners who are expanding foundational literacy and math skills while developing independence and confidence. They thrive with structure, clear expectations, hands-on learning, and opportunities to practice social skills. Their physical energy, emerging emotional regulation, and growing cognitive abilities shape their school experience.



Academic Expectations

Core Literacy Skills: First graders develop increasing stamina for reading simple texts with accuracy and expression. They apply phonics skills, decode multisyllabic words, read high frequency words with automaticity, demonstrate understanding through retelling, identifying key details, and making simple inferences. Writing includes complete sentences, basic conventions, and the ability to express ideas through short narratives, opinion pieces, and informational writing.

Core Math Skills: Students deepen understanding of number sense within 120, demonstrate addition and subtraction fact fluency, solve addition and subtraction problems (including word problems), and demonstrate early place-value concepts. They begin working with measurement, time to the hour and half-hour, simple data displays, identify coins and values, and foundational geometry (20/30 shapes and attributes).

Interdisciplinary Knowledge: In science, first graders explore patterns in nature, weather, plant and animal needs, and properties of materials. In social studies, they learn about community roles, rules, traditions, maps, and basic economics (needs/wants). Students learn about digital citizenship.

Learning Behaviors: Students show growing independence with routines, follow multi-step directions, persist through tasks with support, take risks in learning, and begin to organize materials with guidance.



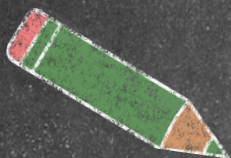
Social & Emotional Development

Self-Management: First graders are improving in emotional regulation but may need reminders to name feelings, use calming strategies, and transition between activities. They can work independently for brief periods.

Social Awareness: Students begin to recognize the feelings of others, show empathy in simple ways, and demonstrate an early understanding of fairness and group belonging.

Relationship Skills: Peer relationships are increasingly important. Students practice sharing, taking turns, resolving conflicts with guidance, and participating in collaborative play and learning.

Responsible Decision Making: Learners start to evaluate simple consequences, make choices that follow classroom expectations, and practice problem-solving with teacher support.



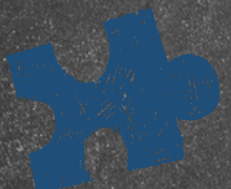
Physical Traits & Development

Gross Motor Skills: Most first graders show strong balance, coordination, and control during running, jumping, skipping, and organized games. They enjoy active play and movement breaks.

Fine Motor Skills: Improved hand strength and coordination support writing, drawing, using scissors, and manipulating small objects.

Physical Growth Patterns: Students experience steady but varied growth rates; some may show uneven coordination as their bodies develop.

Stamina & Activity Levels: High energy levels are typical. Students benefit from movement, structured transitions, and periodic opportunities to refocus.



Cognitive Milestones

Attention & Focus: First graders can sustain attention for 10-15 minutes on engaging tasks. They are learning to shift focus more independently.

Memory Development: Memory improves, allowing students to follow multi-step directions, recall learned routines, and retain basic academic concepts.

Reasoning & Problem Solving: Children at this age begin using simple logic, identifying patterns, sorting/classifying objects, and explaining their thinking using basic language.

Perspective Taking: Students recognize that others may have different thoughts or feelings and begin to understand simple cause-and-effect relationships.

Implications for Instruction & Support

- Provide predictable routines and visual supports to foster independence.
- Offer hands-on, movement-based, and multisensory learning experiences.
- Teach and reinforce social-emotional skills through modeling, role-play, and collaborative activities.
- Incorporate regular movement breaks and structured transitions.
- Use small-group instruction and differentiated supports to meet varied academic readiness levels.
- Celebrate effort, progress, and learning behaviors to build motivation and confidence.



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