First Grade Course Description

Overview for Parents

**Teacher:**  Allie Skaperdas

**Content Goals**

Our main objective in first grade is to provide your child with an engaging and supportive environment in which to explore and learn. Helping your child build genuine self-confidence and develop a love of learning is of paramount importance to the first grade team. Age-appropriate organizational skills and work habits are also modeled and encouraged in first grade.

Academic goals in first grade include improving your child’s literacy. Activities designed to strengthen decoding skills as well as practice with reading comprehension will occur on a daily basis. Your first grader will also be introduced to a wide variety of literary genres and writing techniques. Grammar lessons compliment our writing program with lessons on the basic writing mechanics and the parts of speech. Practicing handwriting is a priority in first grade. Your child will use the D’Nealian handwriting program, where letter formation leads more easily into cursive writing, beginning in second grade. In spelling, your first grader will learn the common sight words, as well as the beginning spelling and phonics rules.

In math, your child will learn basic arithmetic skills and will explore different strategies for problem solving. Students will be exposed to a rich and diverse history curriculum with a special emphasis on geography and ancient cultures. Science lessons will focus on concepts and materials supporting physical, earth and life sciences.

For character education we use the Core Virtues program. Core Virtues was created by the founder of Crossroads Academy, Mary Beth Klee. Every month we introduce a new virtue such as respect, loyalty, and gratitude. We bring these virtues to life through oral reading of high quality literature and through modeling.

**Expectations for Students:**

Our principle expectation is that our students will try their best. This includes taking responsibility for their school work, homework, and classroom jobs as well as caring for their school environment and classmates. We show respect and courtesy toward our students and expect that they will emulate this behavior. Finally, we want our first graders to enjoy school; we will be encouraging enthusiasm, participation, and initiative.

**Homework Requirement**

Homework is integrated into the first grade program at Crossroads Academy. Your child is asked to spend time reading every day. Depending upon his/her ability level, this may include reading aloud a decodable book or other simple text book that may be sent home with your child, having an adult read a high interest selection aloud and/or independent silent reading. All children would benefit by a combination of these activities. In addition, math and phonics/word work homework is generally sent home Monday through Thursday. Handwriting practice, grammar, or spelling may also be assigned. Additional work related to other topics will at times be sent home as well as assignments designed to meet the needs of individual children.

**Contacting the Teacher**

If you leave a voicemail for me at school before 3:00 I will do my best to return your call the same day. You may also e-mail me at allie.skaperdas@crossroadsacademy.org.
First Grade Curriculum
2018 — 2019

Crossroads Academy
Teacher: Allie Skaperdas

Language Arts and Literacy
The goal of first grade is for children to emerge as readers and writers. Reading is about making sense of words to comprehend text. To support student growth, we use the Core Knowledge literacy program, which strikes a balance between both whole language and phonics. The language arts curriculum is integrated into all subject areas so children have numerous opportunities to practice reading every day. Picture books, poetry, chapter books, nonfiction, and informational articles are learning vehicles. Teachers College Reading and Writing Workshop programs are also used to supplement the Core Knowledge literacy program.

In Language Arts, first grade students...
- Receive direct instruction in phonemic awareness, comprehension strategies, handwriting, and spelling.
- Participate in a writers’ workshop.
- Learn to write using invented/creative spelling or taught spelling skills.
- Begin to master sight words through the use of reading journals, phonics, and reading.

Mathematics
The math program at Crossroads Academy, Math in Focus, allows students to investigate and explore mathematics in a hands-on, multisensory manner. Through real-world experiences, students build their understanding of mathematical ideas. First graders learn mathematical skills and strategies as well as strong number sense.

In Mathematics, first grade students...
- Use multiple math tools and manipulatives to explore new concepts and strengthen math skills.
- Value multiple problem-solving approaches, solution methods, and thinking strategies.
- Engage in hands-on building to solve problems.
- Communicate ideas and results using numbers, pictures, and words
- Discover math connections in the world

History
In history, students will explore maps to understand ways in which geography influences who people are and how they act. The content focus of the Core Knowledge curriculum is the basic elements of civilization. We begin with an overview of geographical vocabulary and the geography of the world, and move on to investigate the development of early civilization. Then, first graders progress to the founding of our country. Students will demonstrate their understanding through experiential learning activities such as an Ancient Egypt Museum.

Science
The science program within Core Knowledge encourages students to think like scientists—ask questions, participate in investigations, and formulate conceptions of the way the world works. It is both hands-on and minds-on. Through science, students learn important critical and analytical skills. They learn to find, pose, and explore problems, which bolsters critical-thinking skills.

Core Virtues & Social Emotional Learning
At Crossroads Academy, the Core Virtues sequence teaches basic moral, civic, and intellectual virtues. In first grade, the sequence emphasizes: respect, responsibility, wonder, joy, diligence, honesty, generosity, perseverance, courage, faithfulness, compassion, openness to inquiry, and humility.