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## FIRST GRADE SYLLABI SAMPLE

### LANGUAGE ARTS - Hillary Martin

The First Grade students experience a balanced literacy program. This approach integrates reading, writing, listening, art and communication skills within thematic units of study based on the children's interests, teacher and student goals and current events. The children are encouraged to develop specific skills during whole-class, small group and individual literature extension activities. Communication with others and the ability to express oneself in a caring, supportive environment is encouraged and fostered. Students are encouraged to interact and learn along with other Lower Building students.

#### Method

The classroom is a print-rich environment that surrounds the children with the printed word. Quality children's literature from a variety of genres and authors is easily accessible. Large language charts of songs and poems are learned, and Big Books with predictable and repetitive print are read. Morning Meeting activities, such as greetings, sharing, songs, poems, games, news and announcements, and daily jobs encourage the children to be active readers. Morning Meeting is a simple and powerful way to build community, increase student investment and improve academic and social skills. Some of the daily duties include reader of the week, historian of the day and attendance taking. In addition, there are mini-lessons, which are focused, whole-group lessons designed to teach a specific skill in grammar, spelling and phonics. There are small-group literature discussions, which focus on the meaning of print and the development of reading strategies. Individualized reading and writing conferences give children the opportunity to develop their natural expression.

#### Course Content

- **Reading**

Children will read a variety of books, reference materials and magazines from the classroom collection, the Lower Building library books, books from local libraries and books they bring in to school. Some opportunities for reading include: Whole-class reading, Independent Reading, D.E.A.R Time Reading, Practice Read and Guided Reading. **Whole-class reading** takes place when language charts, stories, poems and Big Books are read. Picture books and chapter books are read to the children each day either during morning session, as a class, small group or with a teacher or peer. For **Independent Reading**, children have the opportunity to share books they can read at school with their families when they bring home Weekend Book Bags each week. These bags contain both fun materials and reading materials that match their appropriate reading level. **D.E.A.R time** (Drop Everything and Read) is an individual quiet reading time that occurs each day when *everyone* stops to read. This activity models the importance of reading.

Children are introduced to the reading process through exposure to repetitive and predictable print. The Sunshine book series published by the Wright Group, as well as other books, help children move towards independence and fluency in reading. These books are organized by levels that change in complexity in the number of words and lines of text on the page, size of the letters and spaces between words. The vocabulary also becomes more challenging in each subsequent level. The Sunshine books and many other books are used during **the Practice Read** program. Here children read independently and are asked to read the books to teachers, peers, and parents and practice the skills they are learning. **Guided Reading** is an independent and small group reading time that organizes the children into reading groups that change with the progress of the readers. The teacher supports and extends each reader's development of reading strategies and skills as the levels of text become more challenging. The goal is for the children to develop a variety of skills and

meaning from the text as they become confident, fluent and independent readers. Students have an opportunity to strengthen their reading through activities such as “reading around the room”. Students use pointers, fly swatters, binoculars, etc. to find certain letters, letter patterns or words.

Each month the class focuses on an Author of the Month. This in-depth study of authors familiarizes the class with the individual writing and illustrating techniques of specific authors. Through research articles, journals, videotapes and writing letters to these authors the children learn that many authors write from personal experience. This knowledge encourages the children’s interest in the writing process, exposes differences in authors’ styles, and develops a genuine love for reading. A few of the authors we may investigate this year are Suse MacDonald, Dr. Seuss, Robert Munsch, Leo Leoni, Eric Carle, Tommy DePaola, Bill Peet, Mercer Mayer, and Jan Brett.

- **Writing**

Children begin by exploring print through various sources. They explore print in the environment as well as in their daily lives. Students learn that writing can be in many forms and for many purposes. Each student will have the opportunity to create original pieces as well as work with the writings of others.

Students practice their writing skills using the writing process in a method called Writer’s Workshop. Writer’s Workshop provides a hands-on approach to learning using the following stages of writing: brainstorming, prewriting, writing, sharing, proofreading, conferencing, editing, rewriting, and publishing. The children learn that writing is a form of communication that we all use daily. Children feel comfortable with what is familiar and therefore are encouraged to write about their personal experiences, which may include field trips, letters to family and friends, poems, trips with family or friends and hobbies. Children have the opportunity to take part in writing and illustrating class books, rewriting favorite books, and “publishing” their own topics, genres and writing tools. Children are encouraged to share their writing with a teacher and the class throughout the year. From time to time they will have the opportunity to share their writing with children of different ages during Morning Session. Students learn to use tools, manipulatives, word lists, various paper, etc. to enhance their writing and to encourage independent learning and confidence.

Throughout the year students will keep a journal filled with their thoughts, feelings, experiences, stories ideas and writing prompts which might later become more developed stories. Included in this journal are their sketches, lists, brainstorm, story-maps and webs.

- **Phonics**

Phonics skills are introduced using the Lindamood Phoneme Sequencing Program (LiPS Program). This is a reading and spelling program that focuses on the development of phonemic awareness. Phonics also occurs in the context of reading and writing. Poems and stories are used to illustrate phonemic awareness instruction. Extra practice is provided through songs, games and language activities. Students practice their language skills through participation in literacy Workboard Centers.

- **Spelling**

The children use invented spelling as they write to develop phonemic awareness and sound-letter identification. This approach encourages children to be risk-takers as they think and write freely and creatively while developing a sense of confidence and familiarity in reading and writing. The phonics instruction the students receive encourages them to look for common patterns in words and phrases and apply this knowledge to spell unfamiliar words. The children learn to spell high frequency words conventionally when these words are used in their daily writing and communication. Students practice these words during songs, movements, games and activities. A *Word Wall* in the classroom provides a reference for words they use frequently in their writing. Once the words appear on the wall the children are responsible for spelling them correctly. A spelling program that focuses on independent spelling levels is introduced during the second semester. We use the *Rebecca Sitton* spelling program as it allows children to be introduced to many different words, while focusing in on some primary words. It allows for students to see and use the words in several different contexts and with different materials or manipulatives. *The Quick-Word Handbook for Beginning Writers*, classroom dictionaries and the classroom word wall and a student “tool box”, are all used as references.

The kids also are involved in another spelling program called *Words Their Way* which allows children to work on spelling skills individually and in smaller groups. It is a word study for phonics, vocabulary and spelling instruction. A spelling inventory is done several times a year to assess what the child needs to work on. Students learn spelling skills, strategies, patterns and more during word sorts, games and exploration.

Students have a “toolbox” filled with letter strips, number lines, decoding strategies, word lists etc. They use these to support their writing, assist with spelling, provide an alternative resource and encourage a variety of reading strategies.

- **Handwriting**

Good handwriting and the correct formation of letters are emphasized as practice with lower and upper case printing occurs. Children are required to write on lined paper that decreases in size as each child’s abilities improve. This

approach provides the students with a hands-on experience. They have ample opportunities to practice the formation of letters and words using a variety of techniques and materials. The main handwriting source we use in first grade is called *Handwriting without Tears*, this is a hands-on approach that provides alternative ways of forming the letters such as using chalk, paint, shaving cream, salt, sugar, tracing letters, wikki sticks, clay, play dough or building letters with blocks. Children continue with the program that they began in Kindergarten.

- **Listening**

Stories are read aloud to students several times a day. Chapter books and poetry are an integral part of the curriculum. Children have the opportunity to listen to books on cassette tape at the listening center during Worktime, free choice and other times of the day. Children are encouraged to listen to directions, and to wait their turn to speak during class discussions and meetings. In the beginning of the year we have special activities focused around listening skills. This patience will form a sense of community, respect, and confidence in the students as well as allow them to learn from each other. Students are encouraged to read books aloud to one another and the whole group. Stories are followed with a discussion of characters, setting, plot, problems, and solutions. Students are read to from a variety of genres and authors.

- **Speaking**

Children have several opportunities to develop their speaking skills in both formal and informal situations. The classroom environment encourages children to share their opinions and concerns during class meetings, book talks, and cooperative group projects. First Grades have the opportunity to share weekly during the morning meeting. Informal situations such as snack, recess, lunch and transitions encourage children to develop social skills in peer settings. The students learn the importance of communication and expression. They are able to express their individuality and feelings. After projects period in February the students have the opportunity to share their projects with their peers. Students are also able to share their work during morning session.

**Evaluation**

Daily observation of the students occurs during the year. A portfolio of each child's work is maintained to chart a progression of development year to year. Formal and informal evaluation tools are included in the portfolios. Children take part in selecting samples of their work for their portfolios. Running records of reading progress accompany the portfolio. Narrative reports and parent conferences occur during the year to keep parents informed. At the beginning of the year student and parents create goals for the students to strive to achieve. Throughout the year parents, students and teachers get together to discuss the progress of these goals and make adjustments as needed.

**Resources**

Guided Reading by Irene Fountas and Gay Sue Pinnell, Word Matters by Irene Fountas and Gay Sue Pinnell, Reading Process and Practice by Constance Weaver, Invitations by Regie Routman, Phonics That Work: Strategies for the Reading/Writing Classroom by Janiel Wagstaff, An Observation Survey by Marie Clay, The First Six Weeks of School by Paula Denton and Roxann Kriete, Rules in School by Kathryn Brady, Mary Beth Forton, Deborah Porter and Chip Wood, The Morning Meeting Book by Roxann Kriete

**MATHEMATICS - Hillary Martin****Method**

The First Grade students are involved in a hands-on approach to math, which emphasizes inquiry, dialog, discussion, experimentation, and discovery. The goal is experiential learning. The children are exposed to lessons that involve investigations, explorations, games, activities, discussions and written work to reinforce and practice mathematical concepts. Children work individually and in cooperative groups to solve problems. The use of math manipulatives and connected activities with children's literature contributes to this integrated first grade math program. Students are exposed to a variety of strategies and manipulatives. They are then encouraged to find what works well for them. Verbal interaction is a large part of the math experiences. Students are encouraged to share their strategies, findings, thoughts and experiences with their peers in an informal discussion. Literature plays an integral part of the mathematics program in the first grade. Students will also see how mathematics is used in everyday life.

**Course Content**

During the year the students will accomplish a variety of goals. A few of the skills that the students learn include: Exploring data and chance, graphing, sorting, classifying, counting, daily routines, place value, fractions, geometry and spatial sense, measures and measurement, time, money, operations, patterns and their functions, sequences, number stories, and the use of calculators. In addition, the students practice writing and recognizing numbers and their value.

## **Resources**

Mathematics is taught using a program called *Investigations*. We have recently adopted the latest version of *Investigations*. The program is supplemented with a variety of texts, approaches and strategies.

## **SCIENCE - Hillary Martin**

### **Goals**

The goal of this course is to help children become aware of their natural environment and hone their observations skills, to gain a better understanding of the environment and their role within it. Children's interests will guide this hands-on approach to learning science. The scientific method is emphasized and practiced in which students make predictions, form hypotheses, conduct experiments, list observations, draw conclusions, and share their discoveries. Inquiry drives exploration and learning. The students begin to gain knowledge from a variety of sources in and outside the classroom. Children will be free to explore the world around them through active experiences.

### **Method/Content**

Children make scientific discoveries during field trips and explorations of the school property. Sant Bani's property provides ample space for inquiry based experiments and activities. Experiments occur in and out of the classroom and a variety of resource materials are available for research. The science themes that may be covered in first grade include trees and leaves, weather and seasons, conservation, the human body and the five senses, nutrition, and plant and animal life in a variety of habitats and microhabitats. Other topics will evolve out of the children's interests and ideas.

### **Resources**

Books, magazines, our natural environment, real manipulatives, tools, objects, teachers, science experts are the main resources of this course as well as our own minds and bodies. We will have a few special guests come and share their life experiences and relationship with science. Students will be able to see how science affects our lives. We also will be taking several relevant local fieldtrips to support their understanding.

## **SOCIAL STUDIES - Hillary Martin**

### **Concepts, Themes and Methods**

We spend the beginning of the year building our classroom community. This involves learning about each other as individuals, as members of our families, and as members of our class and school. Strong emphasis is placed on creating a caring, supportive, and cooperation classroom community. The values of respect, honesty, and responsibility are modeled, practiced and fostered through *Responsive Classroom's* activities. Each individual should feel comfortable and confident sharing and expressing himself or herself. We discuss natural feelings, honest expressions and how to treat one another respectfully. We have many discussions and reminders about how to make a classroom function smoothly. The children are responsible for managing many of their own classroom routines. They are exposed to a democratic form of government when students vote on a variety of issues and concerns that arise during the school year in and outside the classroom. Children have an opportunity to role-play and brainstorm strategies for coping with conflicts and dealing with a range of emotions. Stories and poems are read about friendship and other themes. Current events are discussed and news is shared about home and school events during the morning meeting. Students will also learn cooperative skills through joint Social Studies units with the Second Grade.

A combination of studies allows children the opportunity to undergo a diverse and balanced learning experience where they learn about themselves and the community around them. Such areas that we may explore this year might include mapping skills, celebrations and traditions throughout the world, travel and transportation, pioneers, jobs, conservation, etc.

### **Resources**

Books, magazines, our community, family members, real manipulatives, tools, objects, teachers, local experts are the main resources of this course as well as our own minds and bodies. We will have a few special guests come and share their life experiences and knowledge. Students will be able to see how different themes affect our lives. We also will be taking several relevant local fieldtrips to support their understanding.

## **KINDERGARTEN, FIRST, AND SECOND GRADE WORKTIME – Tina Busch, Carol Dulac, Hillary Martin, and Sue Lewellen**

Worktime is a period of time allotted during the day for the children to make their own academic choices in a variety of areas throughout the kindergarten, first and second grade classrooms. Art, science, computers, books, math challenge, writing, painting, blocks, drama, and cooking are many of the subjects available for the children. Along with these areas, children will also be developing their social skills and problem solving techniques. Each area will have

activities that will encourage children to explore their natural environment in a meaningful, hands-on atmosphere. The students will be asked to plan ahead for their worktime period and reflect on the work they have done through journal writing and art.

### **MULTICULTURAL ARTS - Dana Mark**

**Drawing:** We will deepen our knowledge of color, design, and composition via the rich spectrum of rainbow colors. Using artists' beeswax "stick" crayons, rather than the wider "block" crayons used in kindergarten will help the children render their imaginations with more detail. However, our emphasis is still on color and movement, rather than lines (which tend to stereotype and cartoonize the children's artwork).

Drawing leads naturally to handwriting and helps balance intellect with artistry. The little scholar who scribbles illegible compositions can achieve more harmony between head and hands, while the dreamy, artistic child takes more interest when allowed to clothe information in rainbow colors.

**Modeling:** Sculpting figures from colored beeswax combines artistry, observation, and fine motor skills. We often sculpt stories inspired by the seasons, holidays, or social studies, each child choosing one figure, which when arranged with others, creates one larger whole.

**Music:** Singing the beautiful songs drawn from traditional world cultures, the children can often share a deep celebration of the seasons and festivals. (Some exquisite children's music has been recently composed in Europe and America, which will round out our repertoire.) We also share French songs and singing games.

Simple bells and chimes will introduce the children to beginning ensemble work. Ensemble is a French word meaning "together" and highlights the strong social element inherent in music.

Listening exercises will form a small but essential element of each class. This potent activity can help increase attention span, as well as nurture the quiet, open space within a child's being.

### **PHYSICAL EDUCATION - Maya Hardcastle**

The goal of the Physical Education Program at Sant Bani School is to explore as many different sorts of games and physical activities as possible, starting with non-competitive activities in the early grades and working up to more organized and competitive games in the upper grades.

To create an environment where, through cooperation and effort, children will be at ease while learning new physical skills and trying their best to improve those skills and want to be active.

### **HEALTH EDUCATION - Deb Stanton**

The goals of the Health Education program are twofold: to encourage students to make choices that promote physical wellness, personal safety and positive self-esteem and to foster the development of a caring community.

Cooperative games, class challenges and classroom activities will emphasize common courtesies that promote a caring environment. We will pay particular attention to fostering an awareness of physical safety during class activities and recess. For much of the first semester, the first graders will participate in a positive self-esteem curriculum called "Free the Horses." In addition, units on "fighting germs", nutrition, seasonal safety strategies, bus safety and child abuse prevention will be presented.

First grade students will have weekly class meetings in addition to their Health Education class. This is a time to share experiences and address issues of concern to the group and problem solve together.

Resources will include: *Creative Conflict Resolution: more than 200 activities for keeping peace in the classroom* by Bill Kriedler; *Free The Horses: a self-esteem adventure: Starting Small - Teaching Tolerance In The Early Grades* by the Teaching Tolerance Project; *Make Someone Smile* by Judy Lalli; *The Learning To Get Along Series* by Cheri Meiners; *Kids & Co.: Together For Safety* a child abuse prevention program.