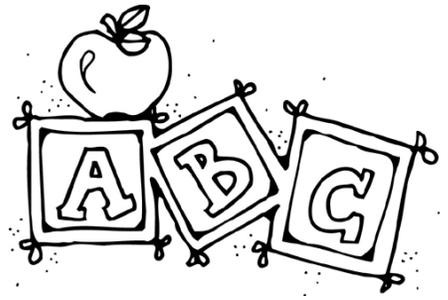


Dear Families,

We would like to take a few minutes to describe our first-grade program for this year.



## Curriculum and Instruction

All Adams 12 Five Star Schools, grades K-12, have implemented standards-based education. The academic standards outlined by the State and District provide the framework for all classroom instruction, defining what students should know and be able to do at each grade-level. The Colorado Academic Standards are available to view at [www.cde.state.co.us/standardsandinstruction/index.asp](http://www.cde.state.co.us/standardsandinstruction/index.asp).

## Language Arts

Five Star Comprehensive Approach to Language and Literacy, or **CALL**, is a framework for literacy instruction in K-3 classrooms. The framework consists of seven elements: interactive read aloud, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, interactive writing, writing workshop and word learning, plus literacy centers.

**Reading Aloud** is the single most influential factor in young children's success in learning to read. Read aloud improves listening skills, builds vocabulary, aids reading comprehension, and has a positive impact on students' attitudes toward reading. In the classroom, a specific time is set aside to read a book specifically chosen from the rich array of children's literature. Read aloud books are to be matched to the students' interests and listening ability.



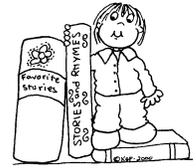
**Shared Reading** is a rewarding strategy in which the learners see the text, observe an expert reading it with fluency and expression, and are invited to read along. Shared reading replicates the experience of storybook reading where a child sits on an adult's lap and listens or follows along as the adult reads aloud. In the classroom, shared reading involves using enlarged text with the whole class to support children as they develop and grow as readers. Shared reading for beginning readers occurs when someone who is already a proficient reader (the teacher) reads with someone who is still learning to read. Shared reading for the more proficient readers allows the teacher to focus on comprehension and introduce content area concepts, vocabulary, and advanced literacy skills.

The purpose of **Guided Reading** is to give students opportunities to practice strategies for reading increasingly challenging books. Teachers support children as they get meaning from the text while using problem solving strategies to figure out

words they don't know, deal with various types of sentence structure, and understand new concepts. Teachers use questions and coaching statements to reinforce and prompt the students as they use these strategies. The goal is for students to use reading strategies independently.

**Independent Reading** is critical to successful reading development.

Children learn to read by reading. Time must be set aside for students to independently read from easy or just right texts in order to practice strategies and develop fluency. Children need to experience what it "feels like" to be a reader. To become lifelong readers, students need to choose to read, select materials, and respond to what they have read. Independent reading is the ultimate goal of a successful reading program.



**Interactive Writing** is a cooperative event in which teacher and children jointly compose and write text. They share the duty of scribe. The teacher uses the interactive writing session to model reading, writing, and spelling strategies as he or she engages children in creating a model text. Students are engaged in the encoding process of writing and the decoding process of reading, all within the same piece of text. While the scribe is writing, the teacher instructs children in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, content, or handwriting.



**Writing Workshop** is critical to the success of the writing program and is supported by a variety of ways. Teachers provide direct writing instruction through focus lessons. They write for their students in order to model writing expectations and crafting possibilities. Students then have daily practice time to orchestrate all they are learning about writing. The writing process (brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) provides the structure for most writing instruction. A time to share writing is a necessary part of the writing workshop. Students are motivated to write when they have a real audience. Share time also offers a chance to reinforce the day's writing lesson.

We will be using the **Spell to Excel** Spelling Program this year for the **Word Learning** component of **CALL**. This program focuses on two basic instructional approaches: **word study** and **word walls**.



Word study and word wall activities will help students learn spelling generalizations and patterns that they can apply to spell new words. **Spell to Excel** will include the following types of activities:

- 1) Word study will require students to learn common spelling patterns. As students learn these patterns, they will be able to apply them to new words.
- 2) Students will learn spelling strategies to help them spell unfamiliar words.

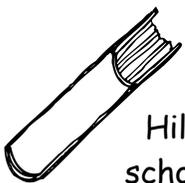
- 3) We will also establish "no excuse" words. Students will be expected to learn these words and use them correctly in **all** of their writing. These "no excuse" words will be memorized because they are common words which often do not follow a pattern.
- 4) The word wall will be used to help students identify spelling patterns and to use as a resource for their daily writing.

The goal is to learn the generalizations, not memorize lists of words. Students' spelling grades will be assessed through mastery of the spelling patterns in their daily writing and the score on the weekly test. The focus of assessment is on learning the pattern and applying it to independent writing and other words. A spelling list will be sent home each week and you are encouraged to work with your child in learning the pattern of the word.

You are an important partner in your child's learning. There are many ways you can help with spelling. Some activities that you might try at home include:

- Read books to your child, including song books, alphabet books, and rhymes.
- As you read, have your child follow along, looking at the words.
- Ask to see your child's weekly spelling words, and then ask about the similarities or patterns of the words.
- Dictate the weekly words to your child and have him or her tell you the pattern.
- Talk about the tricky parts of words.
- Help your child notice letter patterns or how words are alike and different.
- Show pride in your child's attempts by noticing what is **right** about the words, not just what is wrong.
- Play word games such as *Boggle*, *Scrabble*, *Wheel of Fortune*, etc.
- Encourage writing at home for real reasons - letters, notes, lists, etc.

**Literacy Centers** are designed to engage children in meaningful, independent work that reinforces literacy instruction. Students are offered differentiated work choices that provide opportunities to practice independently what they've done with support in guided teaching context. While students are purposefully engaged, the teacher assesses students' reading progress and conducts guided reading groups, reciprocal teaching groups, or book clubs.



The **School Library** is an integral part of your child's reading program at Prairie Hills Elementary School. Students will be allowed to check out books from the school library. Students may keep the books until their due date, but are encouraged to read the book and return it the next day. Returning the book the next day helps

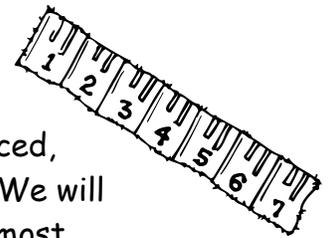
to prevent books from becoming lost, but most important- it will increase your child's enjoyment of reading, because s/he will be able to check out new books, when current books are returned. A shared book is a fantastic experience. Family enthusiasm and enjoyment of a book creates a growing environment for young readers. And you'll love it!

**Reading Homework** is required at least four days weekly (10-15 minutes each time). Students are to complete their "Books I Have Read" form after completing their reading homework. This form is part of the student's homework responsibility. Most nights your child will be bringing home his/her book from guided reading group. This is the book s/he should be reading at night. If he/she does not have a book from reading group, s/he should read other selections. A good choice would be the small books they'll be bringing home weekly that are stapled together and are your child's to keep. Please help your child find a safe place to keep these books, so they can refer to them often.

First graders also need to have stories read aloud to them in the comfort of their home. Choose a chapter book to read as a family. Brothers and sisters can join in. By hearing you read, your child picks up on the rhythm of language. Your child will be exposed to words that he/she will see later in his/her own reading

## **Mathematics**

Math will be taught using the Everyday Math Program. This is a quick-paced, spiraling program based upon the NCTM standards (national standards). We will often introduce a new concept, and then move on to another skill before most students have mastered that concept. The concepts are reintroduced and reviewed many times throughout the year. In each unit, there are certain skills marked *beginning*, others *developing*, and still others as *secure*. This is explained further in the *Home Links Family Letters* packet.



There is a *Math Home Link* with most daily lessons. These are homework pages reviewing the skill worked on that day. The Home Links always have a brief description of the skill for parents. It is important for students to follow the steps learned at school for completing the Home Links, so they do not become confused. The homework reinforces that day's lesson.

The students do their daily math work in a workbook and it is advised that the pages not be torn out in case we have to refer back to previous work. This means that you will not see a lot of daily math work come home in weekly folders.

## Science, Geography, and Social Studies

The curriculum is integrated in a manner so that students can develop a deep, well-rounded understanding of concepts that were introduced in the kindergarten, and will be expanded upon in first grade.

### Topics of study will include:

Space Systems: Sun, Moon and Stars

Waves: Light and Sound

Plants and Animals: Structure and Function

Responsible Citizens

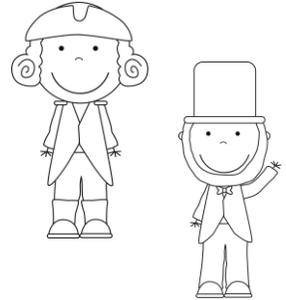
School and Family - Past & Present

Community Workers

Personal Financial Responsibility

Family Traditions and Celebrations

People and the Environment/Maps and Globes



## Friday Folders

On Fridays, your child will bring home a folder with the week's work, homework pages, and correspondence from the office or me. Inside the folder is a comment sheet for you to sign indicating that you have seen the work. There is also space for you to write comments or ask questions. We will get back to you with answers to your questions as quickly as possible. This is our line of weekly communication. You may keep what is sent home but PLEASE have your child return the folder on Monday.

## Homework

First grade is a busy and exciting time. Parents are a child's first teacher. Therefore, it is important to establish a strong connection between home and school. One way we can accomplish this is through daily and weekly homework. Homework is given on a regular basis and is usually about ten minutes, **plus** reading ten to fifteen minutes. Completion of daily homework is highly encouraged. Additionally, all homework is reviewed.



The purpose of homework is:

1. To give the child additional practice on developing skills.
2. To keep parents informed about what their child is learning.
3. To give parent and child an opportunity to work together on an assignment.
4. To teach children responsibility for doing and returning homework.

Your child will bring home a "Daily Homework" page. It will be filled out with checks next to the items your child is responsible for that evening. Please assist your child by setting up a homework plan that will let your child know:

-When s/he is to do her/his homework (i.e. when he/she gets home from school, after dinner, etc.)

-Where s/he is to work (it is very important that your child have a quiet place in which to work)

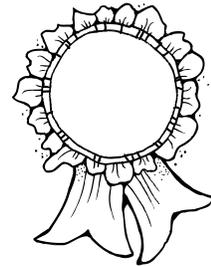
-What s/he is to do when finished (Children want to know that you are interested in their work, so please look over your child's work and talk with him/her about it.)

If your child experiences difficulty completing a homework assignment, please let your child's teacher know since homework is intended to be a review of familiar skills.

Please note, it is the School's policy that homework not be given ahead of time if a child will be out-of-town.

### **Classroom Discipline**

Your child deserves the most positive and safe educational climate possible for his/her growth. Together we can make this happen. The children will be reviewing our school wide LARKS: "Meadowlarks sing when we care for ourselves and each other on the inside and outside."



## Prairie Hills Behavioral Expectations/Rules:

### Learner:

Productive  
Successful  
Competent

### Active Mind:

Thoughtful  
Creative

### Respectful:

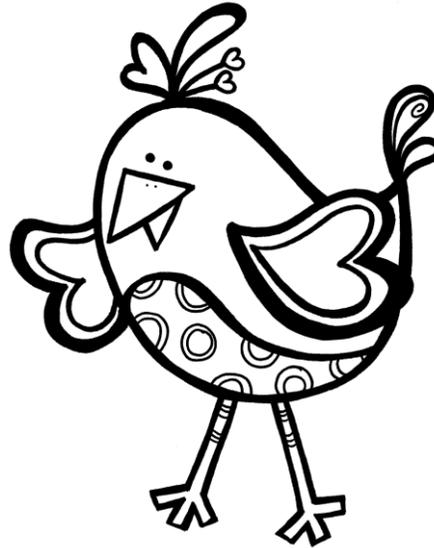
Good Citizen

### Kind:

Ethical

### Safe:

Healthy



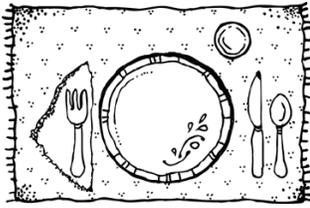
In our classrooms, the students are always expected to do their best. We will establish a self-monitoring system to help students make the best choices.

### **Birthdays**

Birthdays are so exciting when you're in first grade! You may send treats in for your child's birthdays, but please make sure they are individually wrapped treats such as brownies, cookies, boxes or packages of fruit, ice cream bars, etc. **There isn't time to serve up treats such as cakes and scoop-out ice cream.**

Summer birthdays will be celebrated in May. Look for information on this later in the year.

**Please do not send your child to school with personal invitations to a party. It is too hurtful to the students that do not receive an invitation.**



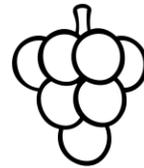
## Lunch

Prairie Hills sells lunch for \$2.40 per day, or \$12.00 per week. I would like to encourage students who plan to eat hot lunch on a regular basis to bring money for at least a week of lunches at a time to put into their cafeteria account. This helps prevent a crisis of lost or forgotten lunch money. If you do not want your child to purchase snacks from the lunchroom with this money, be sure to write "lunches only," on the message line of your check.

## Snacks & Water Bottles

Children may bring water bottles to school. Please be sure that it only contains water, as other drinks can make for a mess if spilled. The bottle should have a secure lid, to help prevent spills.

Children may bring healthy snacks such as fruit, cheese, fruit juice, or yogurt to eat or drink during recess time. Students who wish to eat snacks during recess will be required to sit while consuming the snack, so as not to choke. Trash must be thrown away in the appropriate cans on the playground, when finished. Students will not be allowed to finish snacks in the classroom, as we do not want to encourage uninvited guests (ants or worse) into our classrooms.



## Volunteers

Our classrooms are child-centered classrooms. Using this approach takes much child/adult interaction. We are looking for parent volunteers who can share an hour or more each week with us. For parents who are unable to come into our classrooms but would still like to help, you can sign up for take home projects.

## Assessment

Twice a year we will be conducting *Assessment Days*. On these days, your child will be individually assessed. You will sign up for a block of time for your child's assessment on these days. It is imperative that your child arrive on time on the day selected. The beginning of the year assessment will be used to plan appropriate instruction for your child. The end of the year assessment will be used to help measure the growth your child has made in first grade.

## **Grading**

Both formal and informal grading is used to evaluate student progress.

*Formal Grading:* All elementary, middle, and K-8 schools will implement Standards-Based Grading (SBG) for the 2013/14 school year. Some examples of formally graded work include writing samples, summative unit tests, and student projects. Students will be graded based on the following SBG scale:

4 = Advanced Understanding of the Standard

3 = Meets the Standard

2 = Approaching the Standard

1 = Does Not Meet the Standard

MIS = Assignment is missing

/ = Standard Not Assessed

Effective January 2014, parents will have the ability to view up to date information related to their student's academic progress based on the scale listed above in the Parent Portal in Infinite Campus. Information relating to how to access this information will be available to parents at that time.

*Informal Grading:* Grading of classwork (i.e. daily centers work, math journal pages, etc.) includes stamps, smiley faces, stars, and checkmarks. Some work may also come home marked with a grade based on the 1, 2, 3, 4 scale.

## **Additional Information**

Information and forms are included in this packet that will be used in each student's assessments throughout this year. These are for you to look at and use as a reference for your child's assessment this year.

### Fry High Frequency Words for Reading

By the end of first grade, all first graders are expected to know this list of high frequency words by sight. The students are tested on an ongoing basis.

### High Frequency Words for Writing

Students are expected to read and spell these words in their writing correctly, as they are introduced. They are graded on the correct spelling of these words in their writing.

## Writing Rubrics

These rubrics are used to assess a student's progress with his/her writing skills. Students are expected to have mastered the skills in the "Proficient" column by the end of first grade. Your child will have many opportunities to learn and practice these skills throughout the year.

## **Adjustment**



First grade is a difficult adjustment for some children. It's quite a change from kindergarten. The day seems sooooo long. First-graders will come home tired, so getting plenty of rest is especially important. It can take some children up to a month to feel comfortable. Anxieties may be expressed about going to school. This is caused by different factors such as: A new teacher; more intense schoolwork; a longer day; and social interactions. It is very important that your child feel comfortable and welcome at school. If your child is having difficulty adjusting, please let us know. We can work together to pin-point the problem and work it out.

## **Thank you for sharing your child with us!**

Please don't hesitate to contact us:

Angelica Potter- (720) 972- 8803, or email ([angelica.potter@adams12.org](mailto:angelica.potter@adams12.org))

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Christina Montoya-(720) 972- 8805 or email ([christina.montoya@adams12.org](mailto:christina.montoya@adams12.org))

Deirdre Clouse- (720) 972- 8806, or email ([deirdre.a.clouse@adams12.org](mailto:deirdre.a.clouse@adams12.org))

