

Parent Expectations for First Grade Literacy

First graders enter the school year filled with expectations about the classroom experiences that are in store for them. Students settle in and know the rules - even though they aren't always attentive to them. Most first graders bring a can-do gusto to their schoolwork. They expect to learn - and they expect help when they need it.

First graders often come to school with different literacy experiences. Those children who come from literacy rich environments will find reading and writing easier than will children less experienced in literacy. Rich literacy experiences may also improve the rate at which students acquire new literacy skills. It should be noted that literacy skills are important not only for students' academic success, but also for their social and emotional well-being.

What to expect:

- Those first graders who have had an array of literacy experiences are well prepared to meet the first grade literacy standards.
- Some first graders have some catching up to do. If students who are behind show rapid growth toward meeting kindergarten standards, and continue to make progress on the first grade standards, they will most likely develop competent literacy skills.
- When students read aloud, their fluency and accuracy should indicate that they recognize most words, take cues from punctuation, and understand what they are reading.
- Students should be able to read texts independently and retell or summarize a story, share new information, or answer questions about the story.
- When first graders talk about books they often tie reasons for their comments to the text.
- Reading and writing skills are linked.
- First graders reread their writing to monitor for meaning. They look for feedback from one another and from adults.
- They use language deliberately and mimic their speech as well as language of books they read or hear.
- Children who are working somewhat behind first grade expectations are not necessarily at risk in literacy development. As long as they are making progress in their writing, their literacy skills will continue to develop.
- The best indicator of whether a child is in danger of falling behind irreparably is the rate of growth rather than a particular inventory of skills.

By the End of First Grade:

- **Most students master the print-sound code.** This means that they will understand that print is made up of words, words are made up of letters, and letters correspond to sounds. When students understand this, the reading/writing puzzle begins to come together.
- **Most children can read books with elaborate story structures,** episodes, and themes.
- When the teacher reads aloud, **most first graders can extend the story, predict what will happen next, discuss the characters' motives, question the author's meaning, and describe the causes and effects of specific events.**
- **Most children will read independently** and with assistance from a classmate or teacher.
- **Students who are working at standard levels truly can communicate in writing.**

What You Can Do to Develop Literacy Habits:

- **First graders should read a lot.** They should read widely from narrative, functional, and informational genres.
- First graders should **listen to books and other texts read aloud to them every day.** Listening to more sophisticated books develops language, knowledge, and enjoyment of literature.
- This is a good resource for parents to use to determine the books that are appropriate for their child:

Books to Build On: A Grade-by-Grade Resource Guide for Parents and Teachers; By E.D. Hirsch, Jr.

- Children should **read their own writing, their classmates writing, signs, and simple instructions.**
- All students should have time to write **every day.**
- Stories should unfold; first, next, then.
- Students should focus on a topic and set up categories that will lead into paragraphs.
- First graders **still incorporate drawing into their writing** to help enhance what they wrote.