

**FIRST GRADE  
CURRICULUM**

# VILLA ACADEMY CURRICULUM INFORMATION

## FIRST GRADE

### READING

Reading is a developmental process where children use strategies that help them understand meaning. The First Grade curriculum integrates the best aspects from a variety of programs to provide a well-balanced literacy program. Strategies include semantics, grammar and structure, phonics, illustrations, and patterns. Students participate in a variety of activities to improve phonemic awareness, reading, comprehension, word attack skills, and appreciation for literature. They learn how to use story patterns and illustrations to predict or to decode unknown words. The reading curriculum includes:

- *Independent Reading*: Students are involved in reading individually during the day. Material read is developmentally appropriate and is both child- and teacher-selected.
- *Shared Reading*: Students experience stories, poems, chants, and choral readings as a group. The teacher reads and models daily speech, vocabulary, familiar phrases, expression and timing, word patterns, and the enjoyment of literature.
- *Guided Reading*: Students interact with the teacher to discuss decoding strategies, practice skills, respond, share, and make connections with their own experiences to a book at their unique instructional level. They may then participate with their group or individually in an activity involving writing, creating, or performing.
- *Reading Conference*: The teacher meets individually with the student and observes and evaluates his/her reading fluency, comprehension, and decoding strategies he/she uses.
- *Phonics*: Students learn consonants, short and long vowels, blends, and digraphs as well as how to decode words. Phonics skills are learned in the context of reading, using games, hands-on manipulatives, and literature-based activities.
- *Sight Word Reading*: Another reading strategy is exposing students to a variety of sight words to build a quick visual memory. Sight words are words that do not follow phonics rules, cannot be sounded out easily, and occur frequently in primary texts. A large sight vocabulary improves reading speed and fluency.

### WRITING

The emphasis is for students to experience the writing process at their level and encourage the continuum of writing development. The process includes:

- Prewriting
- Drafting
- Editing
- Publishing

Children learn how to write by writing. Teachers provide frequent opportunities to write through *interactive/group writing, journal writing, guided writing, and independent writing*. By encouraging children to use invented spelling, students can write with less inhibition and see themselves as writers. The Six Traits Plus One model of writing is introduced to First Grade students through reading quality literature and their own writings.

Special attention is given to proper formation of letters and spacing in handwriting using the *Zaner-Bloser Program*. Correct handwriting is reinforced in writing and in spelling. In January, students begin a formal spelling program using the Rebecca Sitton program. This allows students to begin to notice spelling patterns within words.

## HANDWRITING

Handwriting is taught in a developmentally appropriate manner using the *Handwriting Without Tears* curriculum. (www.hwtears.com) The goal of handwriting instruction is to make legible and fluent handwriting an easy and automatic task for all students. Using a multisensory approach, instruction is based on what children already know and how they learn best. Teacher modeling, guided practice, and consistent child friendly language and habits facilitate and strengthen handwriting from year to year.

In first grade, students review the correct formation of all capital and small letters using age appropriate manipulatives and songs, as well practicing using a student workbook. Legible and fluent handwriting in first grade is the primary goal.

## MATH

Using the *Everyday Mathematics* curriculum, students discover that the world of numbers is more than just computation. Mathematical thinking is an unfolding process and develops individually with each child. Through a hands-on, concrete approach, students develop their ability to *think visually, make connections between ideas, apply strategies to solve problems, see patterns, and make estimates.*

Students also learn basic mathematical facts, consistent with the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) standards, with an emphasis on understanding and applying the following core concept/skill areas to real world situations.

- Numeration and Order
- Operations
- Measures and Measurement
- Reference Frames
- Algebra and Uses of Variables
- Exploring Data and Chance
- Geometry and Spatial Sense
- Patterns, Function, and Sequences

## SCIENCE

Using The *FOSS* Program, children experience the scientific process by observing, making predictions, recording data, and comparing results.

Using an inquiry approach, the children explore the life, earth, and physical sciences. Units of study include: Pebbles, Sand and Silt; Solids and Liquids; and Insects.

In addition to the *FOSS* Program, hands-on experiences, literature resources, and role-play are incorporated to enhance children's understanding of scientific concepts.

## SOCIAL STUDIES

The "*Storypath*" program is used in First Grade. *Storypath*'s narrative structure helps students understand concepts that they often find difficult to comprehend in traditional social studies programs. The story structure and inquiry, guided by unit goals, provide the framework for students to make connections, integrate skills, and acquire complex content through problems they encounter. Units of study include: Families and Their Neighborhoods, and The Parade – Celebrating Cultural Diversity.

## RELIGION

The students will be led to discover God the Father's unique love for them and that Jesus is the Son of God who tells us about our Father, and that the Holy Spirit helps us to be holy. Students journey together towards a deeper understanding of Catholic beliefs and traditions. Topics include the creation story, Trinity, Jesus' life, special saints, sacraments, liturgical seasons, and living the faith. Textbook: *Blest Are We* by Silver Burdett Ginn Religion

## SPECIALISTS

First Grade students participate in a varied schedule and see specialists in the following areas:

**Art:** 60 minutes — *once a week*

**French:** 30 minutes — *twice a week*

**Library:** 40 minutes — *once a week*

**Music:** 30 minutes — *twice a week*

**PE:** 30 minutes — *twice a week*

**Technology:** 45 minutes — *once a week*

### TECHNOLOGY

Once each week, Lower School students come to Villa's iMac computer lab to build their computer literacy skills and experiment with a range of programs, applications and equipment. Assigned projects undertaken in this class integrate with the students' classroom curriculum throughout the school year.

Kindergarten and First Grade students learn how to maneuver through several different programs initially. At the beginning of the year, students get to know the keyboard and essential keys such as Delete, Return and Shift. Students learn to use various tools within the *KidPix* program by completing projects based on stories read in class. In the spring, students begin to publish booklets using *EasyBook Deluxe* that reinforce their developing literacy skills.

### FRENCH

The French program presents language in meaningful situations and builds continuity with the development of specific themes. Students use the language to communicate and to express. By incorporating Total Physical Response (TPR) and storytelling methods, students respond with physical activity to increasingly complex teacher commands. This develops oral comprehension and facilitates language acquisition and retention.

A variety of methods are used, including a whole language method and limited immersion. The majority of class time is conducted in French.

### MUSIC

The purpose of our music program is to expose students to a wide range of musical experiences so they may develop a foundation for lifelong appreciation of music. This is accomplished by providing students with learning experiences so they develop the skills described by the Association for the Supervision of Curriculum Development (ASCD) benchmarks while learning concepts related to the elements of music. The activities designed to provide such experiences are singing, playing Orff and other percussion instruments, moving to music, listening, and performing.

### ART

The objective of the Kindergarten through Third Grade visual arts program is to encourage artistic and aesthetic growth through teaching observation, use of a variety of art media to express and communicate, application of the creative process to solve problems, understanding and use of art elements and concepts, and the appreciation and enjoyment of the artistic process. Art history and cultural arts are also an integral part of students' art curriculum.

## LIBRARY

The goal of our program is to develop students who value learning and have the skills, strategies, and processes to be independent users of information. The library curriculum provides learning opportunities for students to develop skills in information literacy, literature appreciation, and responsible library behaviors.

### Information Literacy and the Research Process

- Identify central question and generate sub questions
- Locate relevant resources
- Use illustrations to identify relevant parts of resources
- Interpret and organize information
- Summarize information in simple sentences and illustrations
- Apply findings to answer a research question

### Literature Appreciation and Reading for Meaning

- Identify and compare elements of a story
- Retell story in own words
- Compare genres: realistic, fantasy, folklore
- Respond to a variety of literature genres
- Listen and respond to stories with various views, cultural origins and perspectives, including WCCPB nominees, Cleary nominees and Caldecott winners.

### Library Responsibilities

- Identify and explain proper care of resources
- Select appropriate types and numbers of resources
- Locate resources using classification system
- Understand the organization of library and purpose of resources

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

First grade students continue to develop skills and build a solid movement foundation. They are excited about physical movement and actively participate in physical education. First grade PE continues to focus on developing gross motor skills, coordination, teamwork, following directions and playing in a structured environment.