



September 2021

Dear First Grade Families:

Welcome to First Grade! This year your student will participate in a variety of classroom experiences designed to foster their love of learning and help develop their academic, social and physical skills while embracing the CURIOSITY in ALL of US. The following is intended to be a brief overview of the comprehensive program that is offered in first grade. Due to the nature of instructional delivery at this time, we have compacted curriculum to best meet student needs.

**i-Ready Diagnostic and Personalized Path:** This year, First grade students will be assigned to their grade level i-Ready reading activities and take the i-Ready math diagnostic. This diagnostic is a short series of questions that will help teachers know how to group students to best address their needs and build on their strengths. The i-Ready diagnostic is administered on the computer. Once your student has finished the assessment, the program creates a personalized series of games and learning activities. We ask that each student spend 10 minutes each day on their reading and math i-Ready activities. To learn more about i-Ready, please go to [www.aacps.org/iready](http://www.aacps.org/iready).

**Literacy:** AACPS embraces a balanced approach to literacy instruction at the elementary level; whole language and phonics instruction are both valued. A compilation of learning blocks work in tandem to address the variety of needs of developing readers and writers. These include:

- **Foundational Literacy Skills:** AACPS uses two different foundational literacy skills programs: *Fountas & Pinnell Phonics, Spelling and Word Study System* and *Wilson Foundations*. Data from an early literacy skills screening is used to place students in the program that best meets their unique needs. Both programs provide instruction that is aligned to the Common Core State Standards.
  - **Foundational Literacy Skills- Wilson Foundations:** *Wilson Foundations* uses a multisensory approach (using more than one sense at the same time) to teach beginning reading and spelling skills. *Wilson Foundations* teaches students to use sounds, letters, and words in reading and writing. Students receive direct instruction from the teacher in a whole or small group setting in order to learn new skills and practice previously taught skills.
  - **Foundational Literacy Skills-Fountas & Pinnell Phonics, Spelling and Word Study:** *Fountas & Pinnell Phonics, Spelling and Word Study System* teaches students to use sounds, letters, and words in reading and writing. Students receive direct instruction from the teacher in a whole group setting in order to learn new skills and then work independently or in small groups to apply the skill.
- **Literacy Centers:** This student-centered time provides an opportunity for students to further investigate, and practice skills and concepts taught during other times of the day, including Foundational Literacy Skills, Interactive Read Aloud, Explicit Comprehension, Shared Reading, and Science and Social Studies.
- **Shared Reading:** Shared Reading is an interactive reading experience that helps build a community of readers. During Shared Reading, students read the book with the teacher. A variety of big books and poetry are used to engage students in repeated readings. As they read or reread the book, the teacher models reading, thinking and asking questions about the book to support the skills and strategies needed to become successful readers.
- **Explicit Comprehension:** Explicit Comprehension instruction provides students with skills and strategies they use to understand grade level texts. In Explicit Comprehension, students engage in a short lesson in which teachers model a new skill or strategy with a familiar book prior to giving students the opportunity to try it out with a partner or independently with a new book. Teachers check in with students during the independent time to monitor progress and assess students' understanding of the lesson.
- **Interactive Read Aloud:** Interactive Read Aloud instruction provides students with a daily opportunity to interact with complex books. During Interactive Read Aloud, students meet in a common area to listen as the teacher reads aloud and shows how skilled readers read, think and talk about books. The teacher pauses as he or she reads to share

his or her thinking with students and asks questions that prompt students to discuss the book and develop a deeper understanding of content and ideas.

- *Writer's Workshop*: The *Units of Study for Writing Curriculum* is used to teach Writer's Workshop. Writer's Workshop provides student choice and ownership of writing. During Writer's Workshop, students engage in a short lesson in which teachers model a new skill or strategy prior to giving students the opportunity to try it out in their independent writing. As students write independently, the teacher works with small groups of students or individual students to apply the skill or strategy to their own writing or provide feedback.
- *Guided Reading*: Guided Reading instruction provides students with an opportunity to read books at their reading level based upon the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System. Students meet in small groups to receive direct instruction from the teacher. After a brief introduction to the book, students read the book independently, whisper reading in the early grades and transitioning to silent reading. After students read the book, the teacher uses questions to engage them in a discussion of the book. This differentiated instructional time provides teachers an opportunity to target students' precise strengths and needs as developing readers.

**Mathematics:** AACPS Mathematics PreK-5 program implements the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards. These standards are a set of high-quality academic goals which provide rigor, focus, and coherence to prepare our students to be college and career ready by the time they graduate from high school. Instruction will include these mathematical domains:

- *Operations & Algebraic Thinking* – apply properties of addition and subtraction equations, solve problems and understanding the relationship between addition and subtraction.
- *Number & Operations Base Ten* – understand place value in two-digit numbers and continue work with addition and subtraction within 100.
- *Measurement and Data* – measure lengths indirectly and nonstandard unit lengths, tell and write time to the hour and half hour, and represent and interpret data
- *Geometry* – reason with shapes and their attributes, partition circles and rectangles into two and four equal shares (halves, fourths and quarters).

AACPS values creating a positive math culture in the classroom by inspiring success for all students through growth mindset and risk taking. AACPS embraces opportunities to make math visible with the use of concrete manipulatives and representations to develop conceptual understanding. Math is a social experience as students engage in meaningful conversations with their peers.

AACPS strives to inspire students to see the beauty in math through games and real-world problem-solving. Students can practice mathematics at home including counting steps from the house to the playground, counting items while they clean their room, cooking with a family member and through basic play. It is important for students to continue their math learning at home using their Ready Common Core student instruction book, i-Ready My Path and First In Math.

**Science and Social Studies:** The Science and Social Studies learning block is designed to actively engage students in interdisciplinary applications and learning. Using the platform of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and Social Studies C3 standards, students develop questions and investigate inquiries as scientists, social scientists, environmentalists, engineers, and informed citizens. Throughout the learning block of Science and Social Studies, students are encouraged to observe, collect, and evaluate data and evidence to communicate conclusions and take informed action about topics being studied. Students are applying their classroom learning to real world scenarios and digging into how to make a difference in their communities. All lessons are designed to investigate, study, and answer a daily Exploration Question. Other MSDE standards/lessons being addressed within the Science and Social Studies block are: Health, Guidance, Counseling, Financial Literacy, Environmental Literacy and the MSDE Primary Talent Development Lessons.

**Environmental Literacy:** Maryland Environmental Literacy Standards are integrated into curriculum through engaging units that connect students with their local natural world. Students will be using the Monarch butterfly as a context for learning environmental issues, math, science, social studies and language arts. Live caterpillars are raised in the

classroom and released as butterflies in the fall, students are learning about their lifecycle, migration, plant growth and how humans impact them.

**English Language Acquisition Program (ESOL):** English Language Acquisition instruction and ESOL classes meet the requirements of Title III of ESSA. The goal of English Language Acquisition instruction is to enable English Learners to construct meaning from oral and written language, express complex ideas and information, as well as access grade-level instruction across content areas. In order to accomplish this goal, the ELA curriculum is based on WIDA English Language Development (ELD) standards:

- Language for Social and Instructional Purposes
- Language for Language Arts
- Language for Mathematics
- Language for Science
- Language for Social Studies

The WIDA English Language Development standards framework represents the social, instructional, and academic language that students need to engage with peers, educators, and grade-level content curriculum. As such, the framework for teaching language is integrated with the Maryland State Standards for College and Career Readiness, as well as National and State Content Standards. All students who have been identified as eligible to receive English Language Acquisition services will take WIDA's ACCESS for ELLs, the annual assessment to measure English Language Proficiency.

**Technology:** Students increase their creativity, communicate and collaborate with others and gather, evaluate and analyze information and data using computers. They solve problems and make decisions in a manner that demonstrates their understanding of the social, ethical, and human issues related to technology.

We are looking forward to an exciting year of learning for your first grader. If you desire additional information, please contact your child's teacher.

Sincerely,



Walter R. Lee, III

WRL/pmw