

Hello Families!

Welcome to an exciting and unprecedented adventure in First Grade! The First Grade team is looking forward to embracing this experience with you and your child. We cannot wait to get to know our first graders and build a virtual classroom community based upon respect, responsibility, cooperation, sportsmanship, and a love for learning. Although this year may be starting under unique circumstances, we will make the best of it together!

Please have your first grader help you set up a “Virtual Learning Area” in which they can attend class every day. Help them choose a quiet place in your home that is away from other distractions (as much as possible) and provide a flat surface on which they may work. The supplies listed below will be very helpful to have near your child’s computer or iPad so they may share their thinking and effectively engage in virtual learning.

- Several sharpened pencils with erasers
- Crayons
- Set of 20 counters to be used for math (Examples: pennies, uncooked pasta, Legos, small blocks, etc.
- Headphones with a microphone
- Blank sheets of paper

Curriculum materials will come home at a later date. Students will receive a white board, math journal, phonics workbooks, etc. in coming weeks. Thank you for your help in keeping these materials clean, safe, and organized!

We anticipate virtual learning to be an adjustment for you and your child. Our hope is to help alleviate the stressors that may come with this new model of learning for you as much as we can by creating a structured routine that your child is able to follow independently. We ask for your help with this in a few ways, such as:

- Giving your child space during live (synchronous) instruction and independent activities. This way, they are not depending on you to listen to and follow directions that are intended for them. They may need a bit of extra guidance in the first week or so, as routines are established, but we appreciate you scaling back on your support and involvement as your child grows more comfortable and confident in his or her abilities.
- Encouraging your child to “show you what they know” with technology. The first week (or more) will focus on how to join meetings and use learning platforms such as Canvas and Seesaw. Curriculum will be introduced towards the end of September, once virtual learning technology skills are refined and secure.
- Allowing your child to experience productive struggle. It is expected for students to not understand everything immediately- that is why we are here! 😊 If your child is given the time and space to problem-solve without immediate assistance, they will learn that they are able to work through challenges on their own.



Much of first grade is learning HOW to be a student: listening, following directions, sharing, working with others, building fine motor skills, making friends, and learning through play. So much of this will be compromised, due to Virtual Learning. For those of you who may have extra time or the ability to extend your child's learning experiences, we compiled a list of activities that we cannot easily provide or monitor in a Virtual Learning Environment. None of this is mandatory, but it is absolutely encouraged.

- Play games with siblings or other children in your family. Build communication, sportsmanship, and sharing skills!
- Practice cutting with scissors. Try to cut various shapes out of paper or trace different types of lines/pictures on paper for your child to cut. Blunt child safety scissors are recommended.
- Practice using glue sticks and bottled glue.
- Practice cleaning up your own mess, organizing your supplies, and working neatly in your designated Virtual Learning area.
- Trace alphabet letters and numbers from 0-20 with pencils, crayons, and markers.
- Practice correct spacing between letters and words. Some students may know the analogy of “spaghetti and meatballs” from kindergarten: You should be able to fit a long piece of spaghetti (vertically) between letters of a word, and you should be able to fit a meatball between words. Use those spaghetti and meatball spaces.



Above All: MAKE MENTAL HEALTH A PRIORITY

- There will be days when your child is working independently, in a good mood. There will also be days when it is tough to get moving in a positive mindset. Those are the days when you should take a break from Virtual Learning and focus on mental health and growth. We are absolutely giving you full permission to do this and simply ask that you email us to keep us in the loop, should this situation arise.
- Since our children will be spending so much time on their digital devices throughout the school day, we will NOT be assigning homework this year! It is much more important for our first graders to spend time with family, play outside when able, and focus on staying happy and healthy in this pandemic. If you would like additional ideas to keep your child busy, please spend time READING together and refining fine motor skills by practicing some skills listed on the previous page.
- What is going on in the world today is so confusing, overwhelming, and scary – especially for our little first graders. The attitudes and behaviors we model as adults have a huge impact on how our children perceive this situation. Please allow your child grace to display the emotions they are feeling and talk to them about why they feel the way they do. Take frequent breaks in learning to allow your child to move, breathe, wiggle, and regain attention to their academic tasks. This is what we do in the

classroom daily and it is so important for a child's development and mental health! Believe it or not, this is when children begin learning ways to cope with stress and we want to provide them with the tools and time to release it in healthy ways.

- Mr. Alderfer, our student support counselor, is always available to offer support, both academically and behaviorally, as well. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us or him (malderfe@cbsd.org) to request additional ideas for mindfulness activities, brain breaks, mental health resources, or anything else you may need.
- We are all in this together! Thank you, in advance, for being such a valued partner in your child's education!

Sincerely,

The First Grade Team

Mrs. Rantz, Mrs. Palmieri, Mrs. Rooney, Mrs. Keyes, Miss Wolfe, Mrs. Hertlein

WE ARE ALL IN THIS
Together