

Welcome to First Grade



**Together we are a TEAM
and
a School Family!**

**School Information
Bemis Elementary School
3571 Northfield Parkway
Troy, Michigan 48084
<http://bemis.troy.k12.mi.us>
248-823-4100**

Office Number	(248) 823-4100
Attendance Line	(248) 823-4101
Fax Number	(248) 823-4113

Important Information

School Hours	8:35 a.m. – 3:32 p.m.
Half Days	Dismiss at 12:14 p.m.

Frequently Asked First Grade Questions . . .

How do I contact you?

- ◆ We can be contacted via email or direct phone line. The most convenient means of communication is email.

Chelsea Leone:	cleone@troy.k12.mi.us	(248) 823-4104
Ashley Yearego:	ayearego@troy.k12.mi.us	(248) 823-4106
Courtney Miarka:	cmiarka2@troy.k12.mi.us	(248) 823-4107
Morgan Pertler:	mpertler@troy.k12.mi.us	(248) 823-4108

What should I do if my child is sick?

- ◆ Call the school Attendance Line to officially report all absences. You are welcome to leave a message on my voicemail or email me, but it is not necessary. The office will inform the teacher of absences as well.

What if my child is going home with someone else after school?

- ◆ Little ones are easily confused about directions, for this reason, please communicate with me any changes to their normal daily routine. **If your child is going home with a friend or you are picking them up from school, they MUST have a note from you that is placed inside their red daily folder to ensure that I get it.** Please make sure valuable notes are not placed loosely in your child's backpack or somewhere else because they can get misplaced or never seen by me. If there is no note, I will assume that the child is to follow their normal dismissal routine.

Our Year At A Glance

Language Arts

In first grade students will be introduced to a variety of strategies that will help to sculpt the most critical skill in your child's learning experience...learning to read. In order to see the big picture of how reading and writing will be intertwined in your first graders learning experience, we have provided this extensive list of materials and instructional strategies. We can't wait to help make your child a confident First Grade Reader and Writer!

Reading

Read Aloud- Teacher reads a variety of quality literature out loud to students. Discussions about the story typically follow.

Reader's Workshop- Students have independent reading time to read books at their "just right" reading level. Mini-lessons are taught introducing strategies to strengthen reading skills.

Small Group Instruction- Students will be arranged in reading groups according to their level of reading development. In these small groups, students will receive individualized instruction to BEST assist their reading development with the use of our guided reading books.

Shared Reading- Students and teacher read in a whole group setting with big books to emphasize word recognition strategies and word work.

Word Study- Not just "spelling", students will be working with word families (ex. cat, bat, mat), sight words (ex. the, a, would), spelling patterns, and vocabulary.

Sharing/Questioning/Responding- Students will respond to a variety of literature in different ways. We will have reading discussions, partner turn-and-talk conversations, written responses, reading journals, and use many thinking routines to dig deeper into the stories we read.

CAFÉ – This is a reading strategy "menu" that teaches individualized reading strategies under the topics of Comprehension, Accuracy, Fluency, and Exploring Vocabulary. Students determine the area they need to improve in and set their own reading goals using our classroom menu that is displayed.

Independent Reading- Students will read to themselves in a quiet, comfortable reading format while the teacher confers with students one-on-one to provide best individualized instruction.

Partner Reading- Partners share books and take turns reading to each other.

Book Bins- Each student has a book bin filled with self-selected and teacher selected appropriate reading level books to be used to practice reading strategies learned during our Reader's Workshop.

Reading is the most important skill that your child will experience in first grade. Children learn to read by reading and rereading meaningful material. Your child will learn to read this year through the use of a variety of books, poems, songs, and charts. As memorization is the first step to reading, we will begin our literacy journey by reading things that contain patterns and are predictable.

Phonics is also an important part of becoming a successful reader and writer. Phonetic instruction occurs daily in our classroom to help children develop sound/symbol relationship awareness. In the beginning of the year, we will focus on some sight word and simple spelling patterns for review. As the year progresses, our focus will shift to vowels, complex spelling patterns, and finally to more difficult skill acquisition.

Each day, during small group instruction, children will be able to choose to complete several Daily Five options. These choices include: read to self, read with a partner, word work, work on writing, or listen to reading.

Writing

- **Modeled Writing:** Teacher writes and thinks aloud while sharing strategies of good writers
- **Shared Writing:** Class writes together. Students come up with ideas and take turns coming up to “share the pen”
- **Interactive Writing:** Teacher writes but gathers ideas from students
- **Writing Structure/Writer's Workshop:** In order to best facilitate a successful writing block of time, we follow a “workshop” model. During Writer's Workshop, the following things are happening:

- **Mini-Lesson:** The teacher leads a lesson focused on a specific writing strategy or idea.
- **Writing Time:** Students independently write and practice the task/strategy for the day. The teacher conferences with individual students or small groups.
- **Sharing:** Writers is celebrated. Students read what they have written and seek feedback from their audience. Other writing thoughts, lessons, or concepts are introduced.
- **Writing Units of Study:** The first graders will be immersed and coached in a variety of writing units this school year. Exciting lessons, small focus groups, and one on one teachable moments will be crafted and centered around the following units of study:
 - **Launching the Writer's Workshop**
 - **Revision**
 - **Writing a Sequence of Instructions: How-To Books**
 - **Apprenticeship Writing: Studying Craft**
 - **Opinion Writing: Writing Letters for Social Action**
 - **Informational Books: Personal Expertise**
 - **Writing Like a Scientist: Investigation Notebooks**
- **Writing Folders:** Each student will have their own writing folder. This special place will house important writing papers. Students will fill folders with a wide array of stories, a word dictionary, a word wall, and various teaching tools that will enhance writing skills.

Handwriting: Focused on continuously throughout the school year. We use the Handwriting Without Tears Program to fine tune correct formation of upper and lowercase letters.

Learning to write and spell is a simultaneous part of the reading process. The children will write in both structured and unstructured settings. They will write for a variety of purposes. As the year progresses, students will learn various genres of writing. They will also learn and become very familiar with the writing process.

Students will feel like real authors because we will be publishing stories at the end of each unit. We will also publish many class books throughout the year. This is where each child produces a page to be incorporated into a class book.

Word Study (Spelling)

“Spelling” is now referred to as Word Study in 1st grade. Each student will be given a developmental spelling assessment at the beginning of the school year which will help guide our individualized instruction.

Through a variety of daily word study activities, your child will learn about letters and their corresponding sounds and patterns of how words are spelled, such as word families. We will also focus on 4 new sight words each week. These words are frequented in first grade reading and writing which is why they are crucial for the students to master.

Word Study Homework (found in the homework packet):

- **Weekly Pattern:** These are just sample words that fit the pattern of the week. There are no specific words to be practiced at home.
- **Sight Words:** 4 words that should be practiced **AT HOME** using any of the choices given.
- **Bump-Up Words:** For students who need an additional challenge, these 3 words that fit our weekly pattern can be practiced.

Math

Math Expressions this school year as our math curriculum. We are proud to say the program offers lessons and support that are:
-Focused – Fewer standards in each grade level with higher expectations in terms of depth of knowledge. Students have time to master mathematical concepts.

-Coherent – Learning follows a carefully planned sequence that allows students to build their understanding while making connections between mathematical concepts.

-Rigorous – Math Expressions puts all children on the pathway to college and career readiness. Students develop procedural fluency (“how to do it”), conceptual understanding (“why it works”) and strategic competence (“when to do it”).

Your First Grader will be introduced to many mathematical concepts such as:

- Partners and Number Patterns Through 10
- Addition and Subtraction Strategies
- Unknown Numbers in Addition and Subtraction
- Place Value Concepts
- Place Value Situations
- Comparisons and Data
- Geometry, Measurement, and Equal Shares
- Two-Digit Addition

Some of the strengths of our program are:

- Provides support for students through hands-on activities, manipulatives, visual activities, and online opportunities for at home reinforcement
- Research based instructional strategies
- Fact fluency is a priority
- Real life context problem solving and reasoning opportunities
- Focus on inquiry and fluency, which ensure student achievement of the Common Core State Standards

Math Workshop

In our classroom math time may look a little different. Just as we do for reading and writing, math is also taught as a “workshop” model. This means that the students will take a pretest at the beginning of each unit to assess their previous skills. They will then be placed in a leveled math group to receive individualized instruction to BEST assist each child using the **Math Expressions** program.

Math Home Learning

Math homework will be sent home in a Homework Booklet. These will be kept at home. Each week your child will be assigned math pages from the booklet that reinforce concepts taught that week (listed on the homework packet). Please rip out the pages and staple them to the weekly homework packet. Homework goes home on Monday and should be returned to school by the following Monday.

There will also be Math Thinking Challenges that are sent home as an optional activity. This involves children explaining their thinking through writing, drawings, and equations. These will be included in the Weekly Homework packets.

Social Studies

Students will learn about Rules at Home and in School, Getting around at School, Our Families, School and Families of the Past, Families Near and Far, and Earning and Spending. Also, students will have the opportunity to link their learning through field trips and programs such as the Troy Historical Museum and Junior Achievement.

Here are a few units of study in Social Studies:

- getting along
- helping each other
- school rules
- school helpers
- helping at school
- maps
- schools long ago
- families and groups we belong to
- needs and wants
- families care for each other
- traditions
- neighbors

Scholastic News

This is an informational magazine that our class will be reading. These magazines are created so they are appropriate for first grade and we apply many thinking routines to enhance our discussions and understandings about these topics. Scholastic News will come home and is your child's to keep.

Science

The Troy School District has a kit-based program. The science curriculum in first grade focuses on developing concepts in the Physical and Earth Sciences. Like math, this is also a "hands-on" learning approach. Students manipulate material, do experiments, and take an active roll in learning. The units of study for first grade are:

- ☑ **Pebbles, Sand, and Silt-** students learn about rocks, including sizes and names
- ☑ **Solids and Liquids-** students learn about the different states of matter
- ☑ **New Plants-** students learn about the life cycle of living plants

Computers and Technology

We will visit the Bemis computer lab once a week. Your first grader will learn how to use a username and password, how to access our classroom websites, and how to be a digital citizen. Students will not only learn to navigate a website to find a desired webpage or program, but they will also learn how to blog and have conversations virtually using our classroom blog format. First Graders will become familiar with many computer programs such as KidPix, Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and much, much more. All of the programs are grade appropriate. We will also be exploring and practicing our skills on computers. The students will also be using the SmartBoard daily for lessons, activities, and exploration.

Not only do we have a school set of iPads, but we are expecting a 10-pack of iPads in each classroom to arrive very soon! These will enhance our learning in the classroom across the curricular areas. These will be used to produce various projects and understandings.

Some of our favorite apps to teach the first graders are iMovie, Educreations, Keynote and Popplet.

First Grade Stars Web Page and Blog

We have created a First Grade website which will showcase the learning we are doing in all four first grade classrooms. For things specific to your child's class, you can access each individual classroom page via the First Grade site:

www.bemis1thinkers.weebly.com.

Specials – Due to the new block scheduling, refer to the monthly calendar in your child's red folder to know when your child will have each special.

Gym Shoes

Your child needs to wear tennis shoes on gym days. Please help your child learn to check their next day's schedule so that they are ready for class and are able to participate in all activities safely.

Alternatively, your child can keep a pair of tennis shoes in the classroom so that they are always prepared.

Art Shirts

Please ensure that you have sent in a LABELED art shirt. This will be kept in the classroom throughout the school year.

Other Important Classroom Information

Mystery Reader

If you would like to be a Mystery Reader, please fill out the paper that is enclosed.

Field Trips

In first grade we take trips to places such as the Troy Historic Museum, the Theatre, etc. in order to supplement our curriculum. I will be sending a note home before the date of the trip regarding more details and parent volunteer information. You will be making a payment on PaySchools for field trips along with sending in a permission slip. If you would like to be a chaperone, you will need to fill out the volunteer slip about 3 weeks prior to the trip. Please keep in mind that parent chaperone responsibilities include riding the bus with their assigned group, to and from the designated site, assisting children and helping to set up and/or clean up while at our destination.

*In the event that too many parents volunteer to attend the field trips, the parents that volunteer will be placed into a lottery in order to fairly choose volunteers for each trip.

**In order to maximize safety and a focused learning experience for our first graders, please find other arrangements for younger siblings on the day of our trip.

Volunteers

We welcome moms, dads, and grandparents to be a part of our classroom. Please let me know if you are interested (see Parents As Partners paper) and I will let you know as the need arises! I understand that for some of you, it is impossible for you to help out during the school day, however, if you would like to do some things for us at home, like cutting, stapling, sorting, placing book orders, etc. please let me know. Thank you to everyone in advance for your help!

Visitor Badges

You **MUST** sign in at the office and receive a visitor badge in order to freely walk about Bemis Elementary School. This is to maintain the security of the school and the safety of our students.

Medication

If your child needs to take any medication during school, your doctor **MUST** sign a form. Please stop by the office for a form if your child needs to take medication.

Book Orders

Each month, we will send home a First Grade Scholastic Book Club order. You may place your orders online now at

www.scholastic.com/bookclubs .

For every order placed online, our class receives a free book! This is an economical way to purchase quality books for your child and help gain new materials for our classroom. Last year, we expanded our classroom library by 30+ books through points earned by Book Club Orders!

Report Cards and Conferences

Conferences are held twice each year. Everyone will be invited to attend a fall conference. Spring conferences are held on an as needed basis – this is different from Kindergarten. However, I would be happy to meet with you at any point throughout the year to discuss your child’s progress in first grade. Report cards are sent home quarterly. More to come on this!

Conferences are held twice each year. Everyone will be invited to attend a fall conference. Spring conferences are held on an as needed basis – this is different from Kindergarten. However, we are happy to meet with you at any point throughout the year to discuss your child’s progress in first grade. Report cards are sent home quarterly.

Classroom Routines

Being Prepared

A full day may be very long for first graders. It is important that your child gets enough sleep and a nutritious breakfast before coming to school. Your child will do his/her best if she/he is prepared. **Please also remember to return their red daily folder to school every day even if it is empty.** Papers, notes, newsletters, or homework may be coming home. In addition, please label student's lunch money and use an envelope. It is the student's responsibility to hand it in, so make it as easy as possible for them to keep track of it!

Homework & Expectations

Homework Packet- Each Monday your child will be bringing home a homework packet. This packet includes a list of our spelling words, spelling activity choices (choose 2), a weekly reading log, the math pages that should be completed, and an optional Math Thinking Challenge. Due to families' busy schedules, 1st Grade teachers decided to switch to weekly homework to allow for the most quality work time with families. Homework packets will be due back the following Monday. Because you will have a full week (including weekends) to complete this homework, we are hoping this will allow children to do their **best quality work.**

Weekly Reading Log- Each week your child will come home with a reading calendar/log in his/her homework packet. Children should be reading at **LEAST** an average of 10 minutes per day at home. Please record the time spent reading and the book selection. If circumstances arrive in which you cannot complete your 10 minutes for the day, you can make up those minutes on other days.

Math Homework Booklet- These will be kept at home. Each week your child will be assigned math pages from the booklet that reinforce concepts taught that week (listed on the homework packet). Please rip out the pages and staple them to the weekly homework packet. Homework goes home on Monday and should be returned to school by the following Monday.

Your child may do all homework in pencil and in their best handwriting. Your child will be given a developmentally appropriate amount of homework. Please also take these early years to practice large motor coordination (including sports)/regular exercise habits and play dates in order to develop skills such as: problem solving, appropriate communication with others and socialization.

Unfinished Work

Sometimes work will come home that needs to be completed. If necessary, I will include a note on what needs to be done. If there is no note your child should be able to do it on his/her own. Please have your child complete the work and send it back the next day. Please also discuss with your child the importance of finishing their work and then moving on to other activities.

Red Daily Folder

This folder is required to return to our room daily. One of my goals is to create a group of students who are independent and responsible learners. Please help your child come up with a routine for making sure that they show you what is inside of their backpack daily. It is very important that you allow for your child to have responsibility in making sure that they have their Red Daily Folder EVERY DAY. I ask that you please return ALL letters, permission slips, and so forth in the RETURN TO SCHOOL pocket. If you have an important letter that you want me to see first thing in the morning, I ask that you have your child hand it to me directly or you can pin the note to his/her shirt so that I see it and it is not lost. 😊

Birthdays

Birthdays are special days in first grade and we love to celebrate them! Due to the new Troy School District Birthday Policy, there are NO birthday treats permitted at school. Please do not send in anything to be sent home with students in the class. We will be celebrating your child's birthday as a classroom family to ensure that this day is still special for them! Thank you for your support and understanding with this new policy.

What if my child's birthday is during the summer?

- ◆ Most parents choose to celebrate summer birthdays on their child's half-birthday. However, you are welcome to pick anytime during the year. Please just give me a heads up so we can set a day that is not already taken and so we are prepared for a special day.

Please do not send in birthday invitations to school.

Snack Time

We will have snack time twice daily IN ADDITION to lunch – one in the morning and one in the afternoon. On half days we have one snack.

It is important that during the morning, and sometimes afternoon, when the first graders are busy that they have the opportunity to “refuel” their bodies with a healthy snack. Snacks should be kept separate from lunch so that your child is not confused between snack and lunch. This snack should be quick and as nutritious as possible.

It must also be NUT FREE! Raisins, nuts, cheese, crackers, fruit, vegetables and granola bars make great snacks. Due to cost, I cannot supply extra snacks for our class; however, any donations for a “class snack” for those children who may forget would be greatly appreciated!

Recess

Students will go out for recess daily unless it is raining or it is too cold. Please send your child to school with the proper clothes to go out for recess. If your child has been ill and is not to attend outdoor recess you must provide a note in order for your child to remain indoors during outdoor recess.

Lunch

Students that use lunch boxes or brown paper bags should have their name printed on the outside so that it can be easily identified.

Students that bring their lunch may buy milk or juice for \$0.35 and water for \$0.50. Students can purchase a hot school lunch, which includes milk or juice, for \$2.25. Please place your child's hot lunch

money in an envelope or plastic bag labeled with your child's name and put it in the red daily folder. This will help reduce lost lunch money. If your child buys lunch frequently, you may decide to prepay. A check can be made payable to Troy Food Services and sent into school. A notice will be sent home when your child's account is getting low. If your child wants to buy a hot lunch, he or she informs me during our morning routine. If your child is late for school, please notify the office of your child's lunch choice when signing him or her in. No child will go without a lunch. The Troy School District publishes a monthly menu that will be distributed a few days prior to the start of a new month or please visit their website listed below for more information:

<http://www.troy.k12.mi.us/foodservice>

Star of the Week

Please see the special Star of the Week Schedule!

Keeping Our Classroom Safe

**“My job is to keep you safe;
your job is to help me keep it that way.”**

In our classroom, I combine the use of the Conscious Discipline program, by Dr. Becky Bailey, and reinforce whole class good behavior with a marble jar. For following our class-created promise, the class as a whole is awarded with marbles. When the jar is full, we decide as a class the best reward for our behavior. When the class as a whole is not following directions correctly, marbles that have been previously earned will be removed from the jar. The students can also work together at their tables to earn “table points”.

The Conscious Discipline approach is based on brain research and focuses on creating a loving, assertive, open, safe and caring community of friends to foster independence, problem solving, self esteem, character development and learning opportunities that will carry on for the rest of their lives. The students have a “SAFE PLACE” area in our classroom where they can go if they get frustrated, stressed or upset; here they can work through their emotions with techniques to relax and calm down in order for optimal, focused learning to take place. We also create a “Friends and Family Tree” to help the students feel at home and comfortable in our learning environment.

We have a very important basic rule that is stressed in our classroom:

Think with both your head and your heart.

I believe that in order to have a nurturing classroom environment, children need positive reinforcement for positive behaviors and consistent consequences for inappropriate behaviors. Together, as a home and school partnership, we will help your child to mature, grow and make responsible decisions that affect both themselves and the people around them.

Some Tools That Are Used To Support Behavior In Our Class:

- Behavior Chart (read about this below)
- Classroom Marble Jar
- Table Points

Along with positive reinforcement, children need structure as well. We have created a classroom pledge/promise to one another that we will recite each morning as a whole class. This will remind us each day of our promises to each other to keep our classroom a safe, healthy, and smart place to be. There is also a Behavior Chart in our classroom to help students have a visual understanding of their daily choices.

**Thank you for all you
do at home,
your support,
and cooperation!**

**Warm Regards,
First Grade Teachers**