GEMS American Academy Qatar

A Parent's Guide to Grade 1

GEMS prides itself on offering an outstanding educational program where highly effective classroom teachers use an engaging and challenging curriculum to help students meet or exceed grade-level standards. Academic progress is measured in two ways: by monitoring student learning to provide for ongoing dialog (formative assessment) and by evaluating student progress against standards and benchmarks using tests, assignments, and projects (summative assessment). The GAAQ report card is designed to show how well a student is doing in relation to grade-level standards, and also illustrates that by the completion of the academic year, the student will be equipped with the knowledge and skills to succeed at the next grade level.

This guide will help parents understand the concepts and skills that are the focus of instruction in the Grade 1 classroom, as well as the broader academic and thinking skills that will lead to college readiness and beyond. And because parental involvement is a key factor in a student's academic success, this guide also offers suggestions about how parents can support their child's learning at home. A concise overview cannot fully represent the comprehensive curriculum and all units of study in Grade 1, so parents are encouraged to contact the school if they have questions.

Language Arts

Reading – Writing – Speaking – Listening – Language

What your child will learn:
Students extend their knowledge of language arts in significant and exciting ways, learning skills that enable them to read and write more independently. By the end of Grade 1, students should read proficiently at grade level and have the ability to decode and recognize increasingly complex words accurately and automatically. Students increase their academic and content-specific vocabulary by reading a variety of literature and informational text. Students further develop their communication skills as they engage with peers and adults in collaborative conversations that provide additional opportunities to express their ideas and experiences. As Grade 1 students learn to write for different purposes, they apply their growing knowledge of language structures and conventions. In order to master the Grade 1 language arts content, students need to practice decoding skills. To develop comprehension skills, students need exposure to a variety of high-quality literature and informational texts. Students in Grade 1 are introduced to the basic elements of English grammar and usage for spoken and written language. The focus is on speaking and writing in complete sentences.

What you can do at home:
Reading at home is critical to the development of early literacy skills, so visit the school library often and read, read, read every day. Encouraging reading is one of the most important things a parent can do to help their child develop language acquisition skills and a love of learning. When you are reading with your child, discuss the book, the characters, and the important details. Make predictions as you read and create different endings to stories. Ask your child questions about the book and have them retell the story to you. Talk about the book and the words in it. Identify words that your child may already know, and pick out new and unfamiliar words to expand language acquisition and a love of learning.

Mathematics

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Overview</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Grade 1 students will extend their knowledge of mathematics as they learn to add and subtract within 20, develop an understanding of whole numbers and place value within 100, measure and order objects by length, interpret data (with up to three categories), and work with shapes to compose new shapes and partition shapes to create “equal shares” (decompose shapes).</td></tr>
<tr><th>Operations and Algebraic Thinking</th><th>Number and Operations in Base Ten</th></tr>
<tr><td>What your child will learn:
Students develop arithmetic skills as they use addition and subtraction (within 20) to solve word problems and become fluent with these operations (within 10). Students use objects, drawings, and equations with symbols for unknowns to write and solve addition problems within 20 (with three whole numbers). Students work with addition and subtraction equations and demonstrate the meaning of an equal sign as they determine whether an equation is true or false. Students employ a variety of strategies (e.g., counting on, building or decomposing to 10, applying knowledge of the inverse relationship between addition and subtraction) and apply the properties of operations (e.g., commutative and associative properties) to addition and subtraction tasks.</td><td>What your child will learn:
Students use concrete models to deepen their understanding about place value and know that the digits of a two-digit number represent amounts of tens and ones. They add two-digit and one-digit numbers (or a two-digit number and a multiple of ten) within 100 and know that to add two-digit numbers, tens are added to tens, ones are added to ones, and that during the process sometimes a new ten is composed. They compare and order two-digit whole numbers by using the symbols for less than, equal to, or greater than. Grade 1 students expand their understanding of addition and subtraction by using mental math to find 10 more or 10 less than a two-digit number. They also subtract multiples of 10 from multiples of 10 (for positive or zero differences and numbers in the range 10-90).</td></tr>
<tr><th>Measurement and Data</th><th>Geometry</th></tr>
<tr><td>What your child will learn:
Students develop their measurement skills as they compare the lengths of three objects by using direct comparison or a nonstandard unit. By the end of first grade, students understand that the number of length units that span an object with no gaps or overlaps can represent its measured length. They read and record time to the nearest half hour on both analog and digital clocks. Students organize, represent, and interpret data with up to three categories and evaluate and discuss collected data points. Students describe, extend, and explain ways to get to a next element in simple repeating patterns (e.g., rhythmic, numeric, color, and shape).</td><td>What your child will learn:
Students study the attributes of geometric shapes. The standards emphasize differences between defining (e.g., triangles are closed and three-sided) and non-defining (e.g., color, orientation, size) attributes as students actively build and draw shapes to match defining attributes. Students build composite shapes from two- and three-dimensional shapes and are able to compose new shapes from the composite shape. First-graders also partition circles and rectangles into fractional pieces and learn the associated vocabulary (halves, fourths, and quarters).</td></tr>
</table>

What you can do at home:
Make math fun and meaningful for your child by looking for real world math problems in your daily life. Use everyday objects for counting, sorting, estimating, and creating story problems. Ask questions that require mathematical thinking (e.g., counting, greater/less than, basic addition and subtraction problems). Encourage your child to keep trying even when a problem may be challenging, talk to them about how they find an answer to a problem, and praise them for effort, resiliency, and perseverance even if they aren't getting the "right" answer.

Integrated Content

Science	Social Studies
What your child will learn: GAAQ uses the FOSS or Full Option Science System. The program design is based on learning progressions that provide students with opportunities to investigate core ideas in science in increasingly complex ways over time. The target goals are to help students know and use scientific explanations of the natural world and the development of scientific knowledge and technological capabilities, and to participate productively in scientific and engineering practices. There are three FOSS units of study in Grade 1: **Physical Science** – Balance and Motion **Earth Science** – Properties of Earth Materials **Life Science** – Life Cycles of Plants	**What your child will learn:** In first grade, students develop their understanding of basic concepts and ideas from civics, economics, geography, and history. The context for social studies learning is the family and the ways family members choose to live and work together. To develop understanding of the basic social studies concepts, students are asked to think about families nearby and those far away.

What you can do at home: Make a routine of checking, discussing, and perhaps even graphing the weather (temperature, precipitation, etc.). As students study plants and animals in school, caring for indoor plants, outdoor gardens, and even family pets can be great ways to reinforce these units of study.	**What you can do at home:** Talk to your child about the importance of rules at home and in the community. Identify symbols of different countries such as flags and expose your child to maps of various kinds. Look for opportunities to share, discuss, and experience different cultures that are both similar and different from your own.

Art

What your child will learn:
Elementary art education encompasses several key components; Grade 1 students observe and comprehend various types of art. In art classes, students invent, create, and critique works of art, and they relate, connect, and transfer the skills that they learn into other content areas. In first grade, students learn that works of art can express feelings and represent the stories of people, places, and things. First-grade students create and respond to their own art and the art of others. They create art to communicate ideas, feelings, or emotions, and utilize the visual arts to relate various experiences.

What you can do at home:
Art activities are important for fine motor development. Encourage drawing and ask questions about your child's artwork. Pay attention to and support your child's artistic interests. Design a space for creativity and encourage art activities and imaginative play. Visit local art museums and galleries during family outings.

Music

What your child will learn:
The elementary school general music curriculum is built on 12 themes. Each curriculum theme is tailored to match the cognitive development of the students in each of the grade levels. Each lesson addresses specific goals outlined in national standards. The thematic threads in elementary music include:

Singing/Movement
Playing Instruments
Composing/Improvising
Listening/Analyzing/Describing
Evaluating Music
Theory-Notation
Instrument/Ensembles
Musical Styles
Music History/Famous Composers
World Music/Culture
Cross-Curriculum Connections
Life Connections

What you can do at home:
Expand and support the musical experiences and background knowledge of your child by exposing them to a wide variety of musical genres. Attend the opera, symphony, or other musical events. Listen to a variety of types of music in your home or car. Urge your child to explain and discuss what they like and dislike about various types of music. Encourage and foster your child's interest in both vocal and instrumental music.

Health and Physical Education (P.E.)

What your child will learn:

While P.E. includes movement patterns, motor skills, and physical activities, both disciplines teach safe physical, emotional, and social behaviors, and emphasize prevention and risk management for students, both within and outside of the school community.

Students are taught to understand how daily activities and healthy behaviors promote overall personal health and safety. They demonstrate basic loco motor and non-loco motor skills, manipulative skills, and rhythmic/cross-lateral movements (e.g., jumping rope, simple dances, dribbling/throwing a ball, etc.). They work independently and with others in various physical and social activities. Students begin to establish movement vocabulary (e.g., jog vs. run).

What you can do at home:
Strong and healthy children become strong and healthy learners. Many studies have shown a compelling correlation between physical activity and student achievement. At home, provide opportunities for physical activities (e.g., after-school sports and classes). Expose your child to a wide variety of physical activities, and keep in mind that increasing physical activity may also include limiting television and computer screen time. Offer healthy snacks and plan nutritious meals. Be a role model for your child and engage in healthy activities together. Whether you are preparing nutritious meals or enjoying a walk together, make an effort to integrate wellness into your family's daily practices.

Talking to your child's teacher:

Parental involvement in a child's education is crucial, so it's important to build a healthy, collaborative relationship between home and school and establish good communication with your child's teacher. We encourage you to reach out to the teacher early in the year. Learn about the academic standards your child will be aiming for and discover ways you can support them in their studies. The first step in being able to follow the academic road map is to begin with a solid understanding of what your child will be expected to know by the end of the school year and keep the goal in sight.

Teachers monitor and evaluate student academic progress and achievement on an ongoing basis in many different ways, so parents are encouraged to stay in regular contact with their child's teacher beyond parent-teacher conferences. As the school year progresses, ask to see samples of your child's work to determine, in concert with the teacher, your child's advancement toward grade-level standards. Discuss areas of strength your child exhibits in the classroom as well as areas that may be targeted for growth. Inquire about how you can best help your child at home, and ask the teacher for recommendations and resources. Find out details about specific classroom activities and discuss ways that you may be able to volunteer your time and talents to support classroom activities or units of study.

Growth and learning during the school year doesn't end in the classroom—parents and teachers must work together all year long for the success of each student. We ask that you partner with us in creating an optimal learning experience for your child.