

**Robert C. Parker School  
Core Curriculum Summary**

**Kindergarten-First Grade**

**Math**

The basis for all of our instruction is in hands-on, developmentally appropriate experiences. The children use a variety of manipulative materials to build their mathematical thinking skills and explore the concepts of classification, addition, subtraction, geometry, time, money, measurement, and place value. The manipulatives allow children to make the transition from concrete to abstract work. We follow the national math program *Investigations in Number, Data, and Space*, emphasizing a thorough understanding of mathematical concepts and number sense. Kindergarten and first grade are taught separately for one hour each day.

**Reading**

Our program utilizes a variety of leveled texts and authentic literature to emphasize reading, listening, and speaking. We provide a developmental reading curriculum for practicing and applying phonics, comprehension, literacy, and critical reading skills. Phonics activities are also taught through small group, center-based activities. We maintain a classroom library and have collections of books that the children read individually and are also utilized for small group instruction. The teacher also reads aloud to children from a selection of classic picture and chapter books.

**Writing**

We introduce a process writing approach, whereby the children develop fluency of expression by writing stories and spelling words as they sound. At the beginning of the year, the focus is on developing confidence and creative ideas as writers. Gradually, a formalized process is introduced and children begin to draft, edit, and publish their work. Beginning research skills are taught as each child works with the librarian to compile note cards that are the basis for simple factual reports. Our class also follows the *Handwriting Without Tears* curriculum to learn to correctly form lower and uppercase letters.

**Spelling**

In K-1 children are gradually making a transition from recognizing letter sounds and phonetic spelling to conventional spelling. In conventional spelling children begin to learn patterns and rules for the written language. With reading and writing practice, children begin to integrate more of these rules and patterns. Children are introduced to simple, common “word wall” words, establishing a sight vocabulary to build fluency and phonetic understanding.

## Social Studies

Our yearlong focus question centers around a broad theme that integrates and connects to all areas of the curriculum. Each year students begin with a unit of study that relates to students' lives here and now. In the spring they branch out to a theme that is from far away. Our units entail reading, writing, and research by the children, field trips, presentations or skits, class projects, and a variety of other activities that relate to the topic. Themes are organized around overarching questions.

**Year 1:** Big Questions: How are we different? How are we the same?

Units of Study: *Ourselves, Our Family, Our Community*  
*An African Country and Its Culture*

**Year 2:** Big Question: How does where we live affect how we live?

Units of Study: *Homes and Habitats*  
*A Spanish Speaking Country*

## Science

Science in K-1 is a hands-on process of observation, experimentation, discovery, and work that builds children's understanding of the world around them and of scientific methods. Science study is coordinated by the Middle School science teacher and includes units that connect with the K-1 social studies curriculum. We use the outdoors as much as possible, often working in cooperative groups, and keep science journals to support learning.

**Year 1:** Observation of garden, forest, stream; animal life cycle; animal habitats, homes, and adaptations; principles of life (what life needs); plant life cycle; water cycle – transpiration; atoms – phase change; seasons; weather; motion

**Year 2:** The five senses; animal life cycle; cooking; buoyancy; sound (drums); light energy – color prisms; chemi-luminescence; foods (seed to table); weather/seasons

**Science in Health Class:** body systems: circulation, skeletal, and muscular

Specialists teach **Art, Music, Physical Education, Spanish, and Health** classes. K-1 students have each of these classes two times a week, with health once a week. The curriculum for each of these areas is generally tied to classroom themes.