

Dear Parents of Soon-to-Be First Graders,

We, the Netzaberg Elementary School First Grade Team, look forward to meeting your child in the fall. Moving from kindergarten to first grade is a pretty big step. We have “big kids” rooms and we do “big kids” kinds of things, and this can be pretty scary at first. We want your child to feel comfortable and self-confident, so are sharing with you the skills that we expect for beginning first graders. We sincerely hope that the following will be helpful to you as you work with your child this summer to prepare for the big transition.

No Backpacks Please: We don't want you to go to the expense of buying one this summer!

The first grade team uses cloth recycle bags or cinch sacs instead of big backpacks, because they work better for us. Since they are smaller, there is enough room for everyone's bag and jacket on the very small, tightly packed hooks in our rooms, and so please purchase any cloth shopping bag (such as the green AAFES bags but not the insulated ones) or cinch sac instead. Write your child's name on it and decorate it any way you'd like! Check out Hearts and Home, the arts and crafts store for more ideas!

Know the Letters: ABC books are great for this! Try the base library for a big selection.

Your child should be able to recognize and name each letter (in sequence and in random order), as well as know the sound that they make. As you read with your child, point out that letters make words and words make sentences. Run your finger under the words and sentences as you read aloud.

Your child should be able to print the letters of the alphabet using correct shaping and spacing. We have included a handwriting guide on the back of this paper to help you with this. The PX should have a tablet with headline, midline and baseline. We use the lines to guide our writing and to recognize the top and the bottom of the paper. As you write this summer, make sure that your child distinguishes between upper- and lower-case letters (we don't use the terms “big” and “little” letters in first grade). In particular, all letters go from top to bottom and we make a space between words. Have your child practice writing his or her name using the proper case (capitalize the first letter but not the others).

Know the Numbers: Counting books are good for this, and again, try the base library!

Your child should be able to recognize and write the numbers 1 – 20. The numbers are included on the handwriting guide. Don't be too concerned if the letters and numbers are turned around backwards. Just gently correct them by saying something such as, “Oops! Let's turn that one around.”

Your child should be able to count objects up to twenty. Count out socks from the laundry; beans or pasta before it goes in the pot; or red cars you see while driving. Sort things by color, size and shape.

Small-muscle Practice: These are personal but necessary things that make your child feel like a “big kid.”

By the time your child gets to first grade, s/he should be able to tie their own shoes. Don't just avoid this by buying Velcro. Your child should also be able to redress after using the toilet (pull up, zip and/or button) without help. S/He should hold pencils, crayons and scissors correctly as well as use an Elmer's glue bottle correctly (“A little dot'll do you.”). Practice with a few arts and crafts activities this summer. Use coloring books and clay frequently as it exercises the small muscles in the hands.

Comfortable Dress in the First Grade Classroom:

Although we are big kids now, we continue to be very active in the classroom. We are up and down on the floors many times each day. Look for school clothes that are comfortable and not too tight for sitting on the floor. We also sit “criss-cross apple sauce” so, if your daughter likes to wear dresses, please help her to choose wide skirts and with shorts underneath. Our school is very large and we have to go up and down stairs, as well as play outside at recess, so please choose shoes that are sturdy and closed – no backless shoes, please, for safety reasons.

We sincerely hope that this helps you to understand our expectations of your first grader in the fall. As we prepare to teach your child to read in the coming year, we would like to remind you that the number one indicator of a successful reader is one who is read aloud to regularly. Please read to your child every day this summer. Check out our really cool base librarian – she has some super summer reading incentives planned!

We can hardly wait to meet your child in the fall!
The Netzaberg Elementary School First Grade Teachers

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