

# 1-DG Update

## September 8, 2023

### Reminders:

**September 14:** Back-to-School Night (adults only) 6:00p.m.

**September 25:** No School, Yom Kippur

**October 2-6:** Book Fair

**October 9:** No School - Indigenous Peoples Day

**October 19:** School Picture Day

**October 25, November 1 and 2 (half day Thursday):** Parent/Teacher Conferences

**November 10:** No School - Veteran's Day

**November 23-27:** Thanksgiving Break

I have created an online sign-up sheet for fall conferences. The link is on my website and here is the address:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C4EACAE2EA5F94-1dg5>

### **Highlights from the weeks before and after Labor Day:**

-We learned many routines, including how to start our day, where materials belong, how to order lunch, etc. We had Music, Library, P.E., Art and Spanish. The first graders enjoyed our regular routine of "Finish Work Friday" on Friday afternoon.

During this time, I work with students to finish up any unfinished assignments from the week. When all work is finished, the first graders have free choice time. The choices included free drawing, Dreambox, reading, or playing with LEGO. We try to have snack time outside every day. Please send in a water bottle labeled with your child's name to use throughout our day. Thank you!

-We talked about our "Hopes and Dreams" for first grade. Each child wrote and illustrated their hopes and dreams.

-We reviewed the letters, keywords and sounds of the alphabet during our *Foundations* lessons. We focused on the "Skyline" letters t, f, b; the "Plane line" nasal (need your nose to make the sound) letters m and n; the vowels i and u; the letters that start with a "magic c" a, o; and the letters that go all the way down to the worm line like g. *Foundations* lessons improve your child's reading, spelling and handwriting skills (the parent support pack for Unit 1 is on my website). I am being a stickler about starting letters at the top and moving down during our handwriting practice. This fall we will focus on mastering the lowercase letters in handwriting. We are working on using a correct pencil grip, writing neatly with our letters on the lines (not floating above or below the lines), and always using a top down motion when forming the letters (if you see your child starting a letter at the bottom - on the grass or worm lines - please remind them to always start at the top - the sky or plane lines - on our handwriting practice sheets). Please reinforce these good habits at home as well.

-We read the funny book Bob, not Bob!, by Liz Garton Scanlon and Audrey Vernick after reviewing the nasal sounds /m/ and /n/. In this story a little boy is sick with a stuffed up nose, so every time he calls for his mom (say it with a stuffy nose and it sounds like "Bob"), his dog, named Bob comes running!

-As a class we discussed school and classroom rules. We explored the importance of classroom rules when we read the book Miss Nelson is Missing, by Harry Allard. In this story a rambunctious class learns the importance of rules in maintaining a functioning classroom community.

-In addition to following rules, it is important for students in a class to know each other well and work together as a team. We focused on learning everyone's names. We read the book Chrysanthemum, by Kevin Henkes. We made mini self-portraits and wrote our names on strips of paper. We then created a class chart and put the names in alphabetical order.

-To become better readers, it helps for children to read books that are a just right fit. This week I introduced the concept of "I PICK" which stands for:

I choose a book

Purpose - Why do I want to read it?

Interest - Does it interest me?

Comprehend - Do I understand what I am reading?

Know - I know most of the words.

To help illustrate the importance of reading books that are a just right fit, I showed photos with a variety of my shoes. We talked about the purpose of each shoe (such as a dressy shoe for a special event, a winter boot, etc.). When we pick books to read, we also have a purpose. Sometimes we are reading to learn something new and sometimes we are simply reading for enjoyment. We discussed how successful I am when I pick the right shoe for the right purpose. Then I showed a pair of way too large shoes. Though I really like the shoes and they would be professional shoes to work in, they would so big on me that they couldn't possibly be a good fit. Sometimes when reading we need to master some skills before moving on to challenging "big" books. We talked about not being ready YET and that's okay.

To help explain the importance of understanding what you are reading, I read a selection from a scholarly adult science journal. I could decode all of the words and sound pretty good doing it, but I had no idea what I was reading about! If you can't understand a book and give details about it to someone else after reading it, then it is not a good fit for you.

-To highlight the importance of working hard to become a better reader, I read aloud the book Wolf!, by Becky Bloom. In this story a wolf learns how to become a strong reader to impress some educated farm animals that have found the joy of reading and are too busy enjoying books to be scared of the wolf. The first graders loved this story and understood that becoming a successful reader takes a

lot of practice. We will revisit this book again to discuss some of the strategies the wolf used to become a better reader.

The first graders did some "book shopping" to pick books for their book drawers and had the opportunity to do some partner reading.

-In reading workshop we learned that readers take a sneak peek and make predictions before reading. We practiced this skill with the book The Rooster Who Would Not Be Quiet!, by Carmen Agra Deedy.

-We learned the poem "Back to School" and illustrated a copy of this poem in our Poetry Journals.

-The first graders wrote and illustrated their first entry in their Writing Journals. The Writing Journal provides the first graders with an opportunity to write to me about something true from their lives. They write one entry each week.





-I assessed each child's spelling skills by administering the *Primary Spelling Inventory* and *Jack and Jill* poem assessment.

-We learned about Whole Body Listening and expected and unexpected behaviors. Whole Body Listening reminds students which parts of their bodies need to be turned on and off to do their best listening. Please review the poster with your child. For example, coming into the classroom quietly and calmly taking care of your jobs are expected behaviors. Running into the classroom, shouting and fooling around are unexpected behaviors. I will be using this language with your child this year. After learning about Whole Body Listening, we read the book Wordy Birdy, by Tammi Sauer and discussed whether or not Wordy Birdy is a good listener and why being a good listener is important.



-We learned about the Zones of Regulation and how we can feel a variety of emotions throughout the day, but our goal is to get back to "green" where we can learn and have fun. We read the book Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse, by Kevin Henkes and discussed how the character Lilly went through the different zones over the course of the book.

# The ZONES of Regulation

			
Blue Zone Sad Bored Tired Sick	Green Zone Happy Focused Calm Proud	Yellow Zone Worried Frustrated Silly Excited	Red Zone overjoyed/Elated Panicked Angry Terrified

-During another social emotional learning (SEL) lesson we talked about self-control. To help illustrate what your body and mind need to do to stay in control, we did an activity where I blew bubbles around the first graders but instructed them to not pop or touch any of them. This was very challenging for the children, but it helped them explore what they need to do to demonstrate self-control. Several children shared that they "had a conversation in their head telling their body not to touch the bubbles" and others showed how they sat still and held their hands in their laps. I explained that first graders (and even adults!) cannot demonstrate self-control all the time, but a goal is to work on self-control especially in environments like a classroom where it is important to raise your hand and not call out during lessons so others have a chance to speak and to be respectful during work times so everyone can do their best learning.

-We worked on a special self-portrait project. These will be on display at Back to School Night for parents on Thursday, September 14.

-During our read aloud time, we read books about being a scientist. We read the book Ada Twist, Scientist, by Andrea Beaty and discovered that just like the character Ada, each first grader is a scientist because they are careful observers, ask good questions, conduct experiments, research, and record information. We also read the book Whoosh!: Lonnie Johnson's Super-Soaking Stream of Inventions, by Chris Barton. This is a true story about the inventor of the super-soaker toy water guns. After many toy companies said no, one finally said yes and Lonnie Johnson's invention became super successful. This year we are going to be creative and keep trying even when things are tough, just like Lonnie Johnson. We learned that scientists ask lots of questions and are careful observers. Then we played a game focusing on being careful observers. The students stood back-to-back and changed three things about themselves (such as putting their shirt on backwards, rolling up sleeves, taking off a bracelet, etc.) and then turned around and tried to identify the differences in their partners.

-In math we practiced counting strategies, including how to count carefully and double-check our work after counting items in Mystery Boxes. We practiced writing numbers and checking for reversals. We explored math materials such as pattern blocks, Geoblocks and power polygons. We watched the first four of some

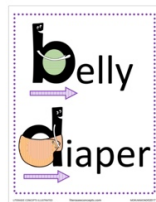
wonderful short videos about a character named Mojo who learned about his how his brain grows stronger with new challenges. I have linked these videos to my website so your child can watch them again if you would like to watch them together. Mrs. Carr, math specialist, came in to read the book Hello Numbers! What Can YOU Do?, by Edmund Harriss and Houston Hughes and then the first graders created posters representing themselves in numbers such as how many people are in their families, their age, etc. I met with several students one-on-one to administer the Numeracy Screening. I will meet with the rest of the students next week.

-Our new social worker, Ms. Kickham, came in to introduce herself and read a story to the class. She read Lola's Rules for Friendship, by Jenna McCarthy.

-We reviewed the Wellesley Public Schools' guidelines about using iPads and technology at school. Then we practiced our Seesaw skills. For those new to Sprague this year, Seesaw is a digital portfolio. Each child can access their Seesaw account on their school issued iPad. Their first Seesaw assignment involved creating a digital "All About Me" book with a LEGO theme. In this first assignment, the students practiced using the camera, microphone, typing and drawing tools. Next week we will share the "All About Me" books to help the students learn more about each other.

### **Additional Information**

-At this stage of their development, children often make letter and number reversals in their work. One "trick" that I use to help children write the letters "b" and "d" correctly is called the "Bed Check." When the students are trying to figure out which direction to make these letters, I encourage them to make a "thumbs-up" with both hands and then put their hand together (knuckles touching) so their hands look like a bed. I remind them that this looks like the word "bed," where the letter "b" comes first and the letter "d" comes last. This visual cue shows them the correct directions of these two visually similar letters. Please have your child show you the "Bed Check" at home. They also love the image of the b with a belly and the d with a diaper! I am writing this so that you will be familiar with some of the terminology I am using here in the classroom and it may be helpful for you as you write with your child at home.



Have a great weekend!

I look forward to seeing everyone at Back to School night on Thursday!

-Dara Gaul