



Parent & Family Engagement in Student Learning ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS IN FIRST GRADE

English Language Arts combines instruction in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and effective language use to build literacy. Early literacy skills are foundational in first grade.

BUILDING AND EXPANDING READING SKILLS

The New Jersey Student Learning Standards for English Language Arts in Grade 1 continue to build on foundational literacy skills to strengthen students' reading and writing independence. Language development activities such as reading with children, asking questions, and engaging in conversation help to develop language skills. Reading and writing activities encourage critical thinking, problem-solving, and imagination. Families can support and expand these reading and writing skills at home throughout the school year.

During the school year, first grade readers continue to master more complex phonics skills (i.e., understanding how letters or combinations of letters represent the sounds in spoken and written words) as well as reading comprehension skills in appropriate texts.

When asked by an adult, first graders can describe characters, settings, events, and details in a story and identify who is telling the story at various points in a text. Parents can also ask their child to describe the main topic and details of an informational text (e.g., who, what, where, when, why, how). By the end of first grade, students will also distinguish between information provided by pictures (or other illustrations) and information provided by the words in a text.



FUN ACTIVITIES AT HOME

Identify what is the same or different about two characters, settings, or events.

Ask open-ended questions about stories and informational text.

Retell what happened and determine important ideas in stories and informational text.

Reread books to practice fluency.

YOU MAY HEAR YOUR CHILD OR THEIR TEACHER TALK ABOUT...

A syllable: unit of sound in a word that typically consists of a vowel sound (which may be accompanied by consonant sounds) and is spoken as a single, uninterrupted segment.

Fluency: the ability to read a text with accuracy, speed, and expression, allowing readers to understand and make meaning of what they are reading.

Informative writing: type of writing that informs.

Narrative writing: type of writing that tells a story.

Phonics Instruction: teaching students to decode (sound out) and encode (spell) words by recognizing letter-sound match.



About Learning Standards

The State of New Jersey sets developmentally appropriate learning standards for what every student will know and be able to do when they complete each grade level or grade band. This resource is designed to help families understand those standards and partner with teachers to support their child's learning during first grade.

New Jersey Department of Education | Division of Teaching and Learning Services
Office of Standards | K-3Unit@doe.nj.gov

SUPPORTING LITERACY AT HOME



Creating a positive and supportive environment for reading and writing at home is essential. This can include setting aside time for reading together, learning new vocabulary words, writing ideas in short sentences, and making literacy activities interactive and enjoyable. Families can model the joy in reading and writing by acknowledging and encouraging good literacy habits in daily routines and activities. Supporting language and literacy in everyday interactions with children can have a significant impact on their vocabulary knowledge and communication skills.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Throughout all stages of a child's growth and development, it is essential for families to make time for reading and writing activities. Here are some ideas:

- Encourage independent reading. Help your child sound out unfamiliar words and understand the meaning of the text. Families can continue reading aloud together while also encouraging independent reading.
- Provide writing materials and encourage writing about experiences and opinions (e.g., why I like dogs). Writing stories, notes, letters, lists and/or journal entries can be fun and interesting for your child.
- Support your child's joy of reading by offering access to a variety of magazines or books (e.g., poetry, fairy tales, or nonfiction) at home and by visiting the library together.
- Incorporate literacy into everyday activities such as cooking, shopping, and playing games.
- Build vocabulary skills by engaging in games like crossword puzzles, word searches, or word bingo.
- Celebrate literacy achievements by creating a reading area at home, displaying artwork and stories, and praising efforts in learning new words and concepts.
- Encourage storytelling by prompting your child to tell their own stories using pictures, story starters, or their imagination. Ask about the beginning, middle, and end of their story.
- Encourage first graders to ask questions about the world around them. Answer their questions in detail, using age-appropriate language.

Consistency and enthusiasm are key when implementing these activities. By integrating language and literacy activities into everyday interactions, families can foster vocabulary and language development in young children.

BUILDING WRITING SKILLS

Write and spell common, regular, single-syllable words and attempt to sound out and spell unfamiliar words.

Write about a favorite animal and tell why, write the facts learned about an animal, and/or write a story about a pretend animal.

Write a story with several complete sentences based on real or imagined experiences or events.

Resources

[NJ Student Learning Standards](#) - Details the student learning for English Language Arts at each grade level.

[NJDOE K-3 Early Elementary Alignment](#) - Provides families and educators with valuable resources for early learning success.

[NJDOE Learning Equity and Academic Recovery](#) - Family and educator resources for literacy.

[NJDOE Special Education Parent Rights and Engagement](#) - Resources for families.

[NJDOE Title III Guidance for Families](#) - Information to help parents/ guardians fully participate in school events and activities.