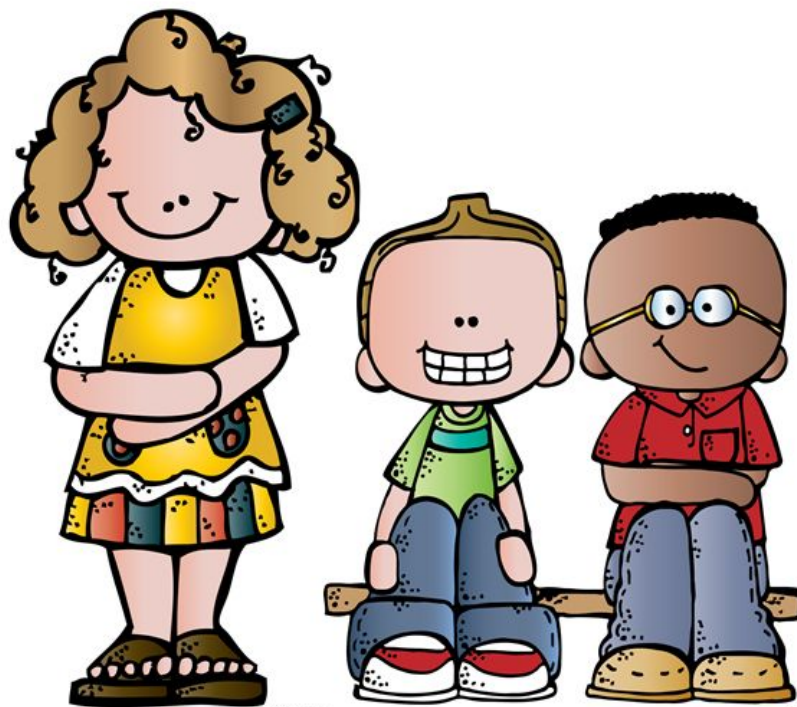


First Grade Parent Handbook

Westlake Charter School
2017-2018



Welcome!

Welcome to the fantastic world of First Grade! This is a year full of excitement and giant leaps in academic and social development! Our classroom is our community, which we work to establish from the very first day of school. We do this by developing student chosen rules, which we call “Community Agreements”, which keep our classroom a safe and pleasant place to learn and grow. We also instill a strong sense of personal responsibility by holding students accountable for their homework, the quality and effort put into their daily assignments, daily Responsibility Folder, supplies, and books. Students will follow these community agreements:

1. Be Safe
2. Listen Actively
3. Be Responsible

Westlake Charter’s philosophy mirrors our community agreements, and we strive to uphold them beyond the classroom environment. Along with maintaining structure in the classroom, we work on building important life skills throughout the year, through class meetings, discussion, text connections, and one-on-one conferences.

Learn more about your First Grader!

Here are some interesting facts from “Yardsticks: Children in the Classroom Ages 4-14” by Chip Wood (Northeast Foundation for Children, 2007)

Common Characteristics	School Implications
Social-Emotional	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Are enthusiastic, energetic, and competitive. · Are very social; may start having a best friend. · Thrive on encouragement and are often crushed by even small criticisms. · Can be bossy. · May begin to test the limits of authority. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Provide lots of noncompetitive, cooperative games and activities. · Require students to be quiet only when it's absolutely necessary, and then keep duration short. · Reinforce students' positive attributes or behaviors rather than focus on mistakes. · Be understanding of their testing behaviors and bossiness with friends while providing direct guidance and firm limits.

Physical

- Are very noisy and active; often fall out of chairs and may need to work standing.
- Tire easily and get sick frequently.
- Love playing outdoors and in the gym.
- Are better at tracking from left to right than younger children; this is an ideal age for learning to read.
- May like to chew on pencils and other objects because new teeth are coming in.

- Give frequent movement breaks; incorporate movement into the daily curriculum (this helps students stay focused).
- Give students space to spread out their work if possible. Let them work standing up or on the floor.
- Use interactive modeling to show students what to do if they fall out of a chair.
- Vary the pace of instruction (quick opening lesson in a circle, back to desks for a focused assignment, return to circle for a discussion) and keep assignments short (5-10 minutes at the beginning of the year).
- Consider having a frequent healthy snacks that satisfy students' hunger and chewing urge.

Cognitive	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Are more engaged in process than products. · Are very interested in learning and doing "work," but sometimes take on projects that are too big for them. · Experience an explosion in artistic interest and expression; love to color and paint. · Are beginning to be able to conceptualize past and present and cause and effect. · Engage in more elaborate, dramatic play. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Break activities, assignments, and projects into small, doable chunks. · Weave art into as many aspects of the curriculum as possible; provide a wide variety of art materials for exploration. · Provide lots of opportunities for imaginative and dramatic play both in the classroom and at recess.
Language	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Love poems, riddles, and songs. · Enjoy explaining their thoughts, how something happened, how things work. · Ask many questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Weave poems, riddles, and songs into many parts of the day. · Provide many opportunities for students to talk and explain their thinking.

Behavior Management

Our Classroom Community is a place where all students can feel safe and belong, so that we can learn in a worry-free zone. In establishing community agreements as a class, we

place the responsibility in the students' hands to follow them correctly. With a foundation of mutual respect, students develop camaraderie for their peers.

Our classroom follows the Responsive Classroom approach to classroom management. Responsive Classroom is a non-punitive approach, in which student behavior problems are stopped before they are started to maintain the integrity of the individual. Teacher language is key in maintaining a structured classroom.

We also achieve this by implementing a "Take a Break" area where students can be removed for a brief time-out in order to regain self-control. Students are taught relaxation techniques and the "Take a Break" areas are clearly specified as non-punitive.

There are also Logical Consequences for misbehaviors, for example, if a child has purposefully colored in marker on his/her desk, they will lose the privilege of having markers for the day. Students will only lose recess time should the misbehavior be recess related. If "Take a Break" within our classroom is not effective in the child regaining self-control, the student will be moved to "Take a Break" in our neighboring classroom. Behaviors that are not tolerated in our classroom:

- Bullying
- Disrespectful/hurtful language or behavior
- Any form of violent physical contact

These behaviors will result in an email home and a conference with the principal.

I use both a clip chart and "Peace Rug" as tools to help guide students as they learn to manage their behavior in my class.

Homework

Homework and reading at home both play integral roles in academic development. Not only is homework excellent practice for concepts in class, but it also teaches your child responsibility.

- **Optional** homework choice boards go home each Friday in the blue, Responsibility Folders and can be turned in the following Friday. If you choose for your child to not complete the homework, please orally review the concepts with them to stay up to date with what we are learning in class.
- **Optional** math homework pages will be sent home at the end of each lesson. Although these are optional, I encourage you to review concepts with your students, especially the word problems. If your student is struggling with a math lesson then I would recommend he/she complete the homework attached to the lesson.
- **Optional** Math Test Review pages will come home periodically in addition to the homework, with a notification of our upcoming chapter test. Usually they will be sent home

the day before the test is given, or the Friday before a Monday test. Please take this opportunity to help your child achieve success on our math assessments.

At-Home Reading

In First Grade, students begin to bloom as readers; so at-home reading and response (reading log) will be **required** 4 times per week. Students should read for at least 15 minutes every night, not just the nights the reading log is completed.

If you need extra assistance in helping your child pick a “Just Right” book, please don’t hesitate to ask! Books will be checked out from our school library. Children can use www.kidsa-z.com and www.epicbooks.com to access just right books online. Students may want to practice reading on www.student.freckle.com A love of reading will be one of the biggest and most helpful tools a child can have for their academic futures!

Spelling Instruction

Weekly spelling instruction will be differentiated. All students will be given an opportunity to take either a “Bright Bears” or “Busy Bee” spelling test. I recommend you give your child a pre-test for the “Bright Bears” spelling list at home to determine if your child needs to study the at grade level “Bright Bear” spelling list or the challenge “Busy Bee” spelling list for the current week. If they do not spell all their “Bright Bear” words correctly, they should practice this list and take their formal spelling test on Friday morning in class. However, if your child does get most of the “Bright Bear” words on the pretest correct, he/she should study the “Busy Bee” challenge spelling word list and be formally tested on Friday in class on this list. Weekly spelling lists can be found at the bottom of the Homework Choice Boards. As we dive into spelling instruction, please let me know if you have any questions about the procedures.

Responsibility Folders

Responsibility “Blue” Folders help to instill a personal sense of responsibility, as each child is expected to bring his/her folder to school each day. Important notes come home frequently in our Responsibility Folders from Westlake and from our classroom. Should you need to send a note to me, feel free to do so via the Responsibility Folder, otherwise I frequently check and respond to email. If your child’s folder get lost please replace it with any other folder with your child’s name written on it.

Attendance

Absences: Please keep your student at home if he/she is sick. School policy states that a child must be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school. Should your child need to miss school, please call or email the school office in the morning. If it is a long-term absence, please notify ahead of time (if possible).

Tardies: It is crucial for students to arrive to school on time, 8:30 am, to avoid being tardy. Students miss out on important information and instructional time when late. Students that are tardy will need to check in at the office and obtain a “tardy slip” before heading to class. If you need to pick your child up early from school, please go to the office to sign your child out. The office will call the classroom to release your student.

Independent Study Plan: If your child will be absent for more than three days in a row, please notify the office a week ahead of time. Any student that has a “long-term” absence is required to complete an independent study plan. Independent study plans are not issued after the month of April.

Parent Conferences and Report Cards

Conferences are held in the fall and spring. More information will be sent home closer to the dates of the conferencing time.

Report cards come home in the fall, spring, and at the end of the year. You will also receive mid-trimester progress reports to let you know how your student is progressing towards each trimester goal.

Students are assessed through informal observation, completed work, one-on-one conferencing, written and oral work, computerized testing, and end of unit assessments.

Parent Communication

I recognize the significant role that parental support plays in the academic success of each child. I strongly encourage and keep up-to-date parent-teacher communication. Every other week, a newsletter will be posted on our class website to keep you informed on our classroom happenings and important upcoming events:

<http://mrsosterhoudt.weebly.com>

Email is the most convenient way to contact me. You should have a response within 24 hours.

hosterhoudt@westlakecharter.com

Or, feel free to call the school and leave a voicemail for me:

(916) 567-5760

I am also happy to schedule a time to meet with you before or after school regarding any questions or concerns.

Birthdays

In our classroom, we will celebrate by singing to the birthday boy/girl. Students will wear a special birthday hat. Each child will receive a small gift from the teacher. If you would like to share a special treat, please make sure to have the same thing for all 22 students. Ideas for a special treat: pencils, stickers, erasers, books, small puzzles, etc.. As a precaution, please no food!

Allergies

Please be aware that we have students in our class and on our campus that have food allergies (especially peanuts). If you could encourage your child to be mindful of this, by washing their hands or using hand sanitizer after eating snack and lunch, you can help make our classroom extra safe! Thank you!

Field Trips

We need *EVERYONE'S* help in making field trips possible. The link to donate for the First Grade field trips is on the Westlake Charter website, as well as our own class website. Throughout the course of the year, we will need **fingerprinted** chaperones to join us on our special excursions! Dates and times for field trips will be provided as soon as possible for ample time to plan ahead, but I recommend getting fingerprinted as soon as possible if you are interested in chaperoning. Chaperones will be selected at random, with first choice given to parents that have not had a chance to chaperone. Each first grade class is allowed to bring **four** parent chaperones per field trip.

Parent Volunteers

Parent Volunteers are encouraged and welcomed in our classroom! We will need: room parents, at-home project preppers, copy room helpers, field trip chaperones, reading and math time volunteers, Friday Folder stuffers, and more! If you are coming on campus to help out, please be sure to sign in at the office for safety precautions. Volunteer opportunities and sign ups can be viewed on:

<https://mrsosterhoudtsscholars.shutterfly.com/signup>

Class Student of the Week

Each week we will have a randomly selected “Student of the Week,” in which your child will be sent home with a special assignment. This will include a poster that tells us more about your child in detail. Your student will then have the opportunity to share his/her poster with the class. Please help your student to complete this assignment with their best effort as it will be hanging in our classroom for the week, and we want them to feel proud of their work. The poster and instructions will come home a week before your child is the “Student of the Week.”

Thank you for taking the time to learn all about our classroom! This is going to be a “fin”-tastic school year!