

Best Practices for First Grade

Our team has varying levels of experience. This enhances our collaboration and use of technology resources. We have worked together to incorporate technology into all aspects of the first grade curriculum. Susan Crabtree, our veteran teacher, remembers the transition from chalkboard, to dry erase board, to overhead, to SmartBoard. Susan believes that, “Technology makes teaching so much easier and when the students participate interactively they are so much more engaged in the lesson.” She also states, “I can’t imagine going back to teaching without the technology we have at Forest Lake.” We all feel blessed to have so many technology resources to utilize everyday in our classrooms. We see first hand the difference it makes in student engagement and student achievement. We’ve compiled a list of technology resources we feel are essential to our students’ success.

- Education City—We use this daily. We have differentiated math and reading cities that students in all classes access. Students are assigned to leveled cities based on their readiness. Students complete standard-based games and record their scores, passing with 80% or higher. This program allows us to work together to make purposeful and appropriate assignments for all first grade students. We monitor their progress through the program assessment information. Students progress through the leveled cities as they pass assigned games.
- Kidspiration—This software allows us to create and share templates or graphic organizers that can be incorporated across all curriculum areas. Graphic organizers allow students to categorize information and show content knowledge. For example: During our study of the night sky, students completed a Venn Diagram by adding appropriate pictures from the gallery in Kidspiration and labeling these pictures. Various templates are created for appropriate differentiation.
- Workshop—Our Reading Workshop would not be as effective without the use of our many technology resources! During workshop, students are assigned “Must Dos” and “May Dos” using technology such as: the SmartBoard, the Airliner, the computers in the Tech Zone, and CPS clickers. We regularly plan activities together for all levels of students. Using Smart Ideas, the students choose Smart Board or online activities to complete.
- Interactive Websites—Brain Pop Jr., Book Flix, TumbleBooks, and Spelling City are a few websites we use regularly! These websites are used on the SmartBoard and Tech Zone computers to enhance the curriculum. Students also access some of these sites for practice at home.
- DLNs—Digital Learning Networks with NASA allow us to extend our science units and help our students make real-world connections. Learning about science from an astronaut or a scientist is an enriching and enlightening experience for our students. We typically plan these as culminating activities so our students can share with the NASA



facilitator what they have learned and ask any questions.

- Math Differentiation—We use Think Central, a database correlated with our new math curriculum, to differentiate math instruction. Mega Math and Destination Math are resources that are assigned to students for extra practice. We can work with groups of students at the SmartBoard while other students practice skills on our Tech Zone computers.
- Smart Software—Smart Notebook software, specifically the tool kit, allows us to quickly create interactive lessons tailored to our curriculum and student needs. Lessons can be used with the entire class or small groups of students. To work smarter, we share development of the lessons. Smart Ideas is another Smart Software program that allows us to organize all of the technology resources we use as instructional tools throughout the day. Our students use the organization template to access activities independently during the appropriate times.

Collaboration is the key to student achievement. Here are some ways we have established effective collaboration:

- Delegation of responsibilities—During our weekly collaboration meetings, we plan all subjects together and divvy up teacher responsibilities. When planning together, we reflect on units taught the previous year and consider our current students' needs. We are constantly monitoring and adjusting our curriculum to maximize student achievement.
- Technology—We use electronic shared folders to organize instructional materials. Once a template is created, it can be placed in shared folders and accessed by any member of our grade level team.
- Lesson Plans—Weekly lesson plans are developed in team meetings each week. The lesson plans are designed to meet student needs as well as state standards. These lesson plans follow our Long Range Plans that we create at the beginning of each school year.
- Whenever we learn something new we share it with members on our team and school faculty members. We also reflect yearly on our use of technology resources and discuss how we can improve from year to year. We also have a grade level representative that attends district technology meetings monthly.

Technology Goals:

- To continue using technology effectively in Workshop and explore options of technology focused “Must Dos” and “May Dos.”
- Continue to monitor and adjust our new math technology resources.
- Integrate digital cameras and flip cameras to increase student awareness of literacy.

