



Preparing for Grade 1 What Students Need to Know and Do

Calgary Classical Academy

As students prepare for Grade One at Calgary Classical Academy, parents and teachers should work with them to master the following skills. We do not expect students to have mastered all of these skills and will continue to work on them in school during their Grade One year. The intention of this document is to provide an approximate developmental level to guide parents and teachers as they prepare for their children to begin in our classes.

Getting School Ready

1. Digital Detox

CCA is a smart phone free environment, and the use of technology is limited, and purposeful at every grade level. Substantial evidence exists that technology is causing significant harm to our children. A family digital detox over the summer months will help prepare your child/ren for school at CCA. Here are some readings and resources to help:

[How a Digital Detox Could Improve Your Child's Behavior Problems](#)

[Digital Detox: How to Limit Screen Time for Kids](#)

[Digital Detox: The Two-Week Tech Reset for Kids by Molly DeFrank](#)

2. Read Aloud Together and Reading Readiness

"Age five is a key year for supporting your child's reading skills. At this age, kids begin to identify letters, match letters to sounds and recognize the beginning and ending sounds of words. They'll start to have a basic grasp on the idea that words in a book are read left-to-right and top-to-bottom. Five-year-olds still enjoy being read to — and they may start telling their own stories, as well. This is a great age to play word games together! Your example and interest in them will leave a lasting impression." - PBS.org

Take time together reading books of all genres. As you read, ask basic comprehension questions about what is happening. Have your child make predictions about what they think will happen next. Practice reading each day, so they can sit and engage for at least 15-20 minutes. Model how to sound out and practice rhyming words together to get your child accustomed to listening for vowel and consonant sounds. Focus on basic CVC words and rhyming families (eg. the cat with the hat sat on the mat). Reading frequently helps children grow their imagination,



virtue, and vocabulary. If you are looking for resources to help with reading readiness, here are some web links that you might find helpful.

Here, you will find simple and fun ways to help your child build and strengthen their reading skills:

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/learn-grow/age-5/literacy/reading>

<https://www.readingrockets.org/reading-101-guide-parents>

1. This video is a quick review of how to pronounce sounds when teaching reading. When children are learning to read, they need to blend sounds as they decode. We need to ensure that the sounds they are modeling are sounds that can be blended. Some of the most commonly taught sounds for letters can actually make reading harder for beginners. Here is a video that will help you with this important skill.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8sjxXSDRyI>

2. "How to Raise a Reader"

"From the moment you're expecting your first child, you are bombarded with messages about the importance of reading. For good reason: The benefits of reading at every stage of a child's development are well documented. Happily, raising a reader is fun, rewarding and relatively easy." In this link, The New York Times reports on how to develop an early reader.

<https://www.nytimes.com/guides/books/how-to-raise-a-reader>

3. The National Institute for Literacy (in the USA) provides this information on helping Kindergarten students learn to read:

https://www.readingrockets.org/sites/default/files/Shining_Stars_Kindergarten.pdf

4. This is a super collection of online books for young readers:

<https://www.uniteforliteracy.com/>

5. Reading Bear gives access to free phonics and vocabulary games and activities

<https://www.readingbear.org/>

3. Don't Forget Math Literacy! Mathematical Readiness

Parents often focus almost exclusively on reading literacy and forget to develop mathematical literacy. Work on counting in sequence up to 100. Work on counting individual items. Introduce them to the base 10 system and "[number bonds](#)". Encourage them to seek out numbers all



around them. Classify objects by color, size, and other characteristics. Show them common number lines, such as a ruler and how it works. Playing dice games, such as Yahtzee to help

build subitizing skills. Play card games. Teach about money by grouping and counting coins and bills. Bake with them to introduce them to instructions and key concepts like weight, volume, and fractions.

At CCA, we follow the Dimensions program of Singapore Math. Provided below are links to the scope and sequence for the K-5 program, which is aligned with the Alberta curriculum, as well as the links to the Kindergarten KGA and KGB program. This will give you a clear idea of what was covered in the year previous to Grade One.

Scope and Sequence K-5:

https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0603/7487/6349/files/Scope_1.pdf?v=1635780325

<https://www.canadianhomeeducation.com/Singapore-Math-Dimensions--Kindergarten-Bundle>

Singapore Math Videos:

<https://vimeo.com/>

Login: Colleen.parks@classicalacademy.ca

Password: CCA2022!

Once in go to <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/purchases> to see what is in store for grade 1

4. Communication and Talk Time

We have noted a marked increase in the number of students exhibiting communication disorders and developmental delays in speech and language. Work on communication skills and vocabulary building by engaging your child in frequent reciprocal conversations across a variety of contexts to hone the necessary skills. Encourage eye contact and reciprocal listening. Research common [Communication Milestones](#) as to what to look for to gauge your child's language and speech development. If you see red flags, please take your child to their family doctor before school begins so a continuum of supports can be established.

5. Outdoor Play and Observation

Play outside in a variety of contexts. Take the time to cultivate their curiosity and sense of wonder of the natural world, and to sharpen their skills of observation. Frequent outdoor play and adventures will allow them to develop the necessary [gross motor skills](#) to prepare them for school. Learn to ride a bike without help, practice balancing and climbing in a playground or go for a contemplative family hike in the great outdoors.



6. Engage Fine Motor Skills

It is important your child develops strong fine motor skills to successfully perform common classroom tasks. Please ensure they know how to properly hold a pencil and can form their letters and numbers. Home art projects will teach them to grip and use everything from pencils to paintbrushes. Teach them how to cut safely and properly carry scissors, use play-doh, string small beads, or practice sorting small objects with tweezers, etc.

7. Practice Pre-Writing Skills

Letter formation of upper- and lower-case letters and proper pencil grip will be emphasized in grade 1. Before coming to school, teach your child to recognize his/her first and last name in print and to write their name properly using an uppercase letter for the first initial, followed by lowercase, rather than in all uppercase letters (eg., Daniel vs DANIEL). Have your child practice drawing and coloring on flat (table) and vertical (easel) surfaces. Have them practice tracing a variety of lines with a variety of writing tools - practice straight, zig-zagged, and curved lines and shapes and complete activities like numbered dot to dots, and mazes.

8. Foster Independence

Practice a morning routine that will mirror what to expect on school mornings. Your child should be able to dress, toilet themselves independently, and use the restroom. They should know how and when to use facial tissues, and be able to properly wash their hands without assistance. Work on tying shoe laces. Get them accustomed to scratchy uniform pieces to build resilience, meaning resist the urge to cut out clothing labels. Working through sensory issues using a gentle, but firm approach will pay off later down the road. Host picnics to practice using a lunch box and independently using containers with lids, etc. Teach them how to pack and unpack a backpack and to hang up their clothing, and neatly place their shoes together in a designated place. Most importantly, make sure your child knows important family information, like their full name, birthday, home address, and phone numbers.

9. Following Simple Directions

Children entering Kindergarten should be able to follow a complete set of three to four simple directives with minimal support. Practice this by instructing your child on how to get dressed, put on shoes and a jacket, put away toys and books, or how to sit down at a table for a meal. Reinforce that your child should complete a task *the first time* an adult, like a parent or teacher asks something reasonable of them.

10. Socio-Emotional Learning & the Classroom Environment

Social and Emotional Readiness

- Able to separate from a parent or caregiver without getting overly upset
- Interact kindly and fairly with other kids
- Students should be able to share supplies and respect the space of peers
- [Pay attention](#) for at least five minutes with the ultimate goal of 15 minutes, to a task an adult is leading, such as listening to directions for an activity or discussing the day's weather during circle time
- Completing short tasks (5 minute task) with independence

https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/kindergarten_readiness_social_and_emotional_development

Highlights from the above link:

- Getting along with others (parents, teachers and peers)
- Following directions and basic instructions from a teacher
- Identifying and regulating one's emotions and behavior
- Thinking of appropriate solutions to conflict
- Persisting on task
- Engaging in social conversation and cooperative play
- Correctly interpreting the behaviors and emotions of others
- Feeling good about oneself and others.
- Basic self regulation skills

11. Expect Deference and Respect

At CCA we believe that children thrive in a structured, calm, and well ordered, teacher led environment, marked by deference and respect for all. Establishing this expectation in your home and across contexts before school starts will help ensure a welcoming and safe classroom for all and that all children have their right to learn protected. The level of parental support required is outlined in our parent commitment forms.

12. Science

If your child is interested in science-related topics, the USA National Parks Service offers these great downloadable books and activities to engage and help them learn about the natural world.

Find them here:

https://www.nps.gov/kids/junior-rangers.htm?fbclid=IwAR2wna0h8Wnb5jspAw84wzkhgSjML5WtyrEh6A-OuCKaJ_iVLYO1t7tz570

If you are looking for a fun science-based book on TINY creatures, this looks a super read: Super Small by Tiffany Stone, illustrated by Ashley Spires

13. Virtue and Character Development

To prepare for the academic rigor, and enriching curriculum, and intentional moral formation according to virtue ethics at CCA, it is recommended strongly (based upon common experience, short term studies, and longitudinal studies) that:

- Students entering grade 1 be prepared by having varied direct experiences with the natural world (outdoor time, hikes, camping, stargazing, athletics, etc).
- Students entering grade 1 have minimal exposure to or zero exposure to screens and social media.
- Students entering grade 1 be heavily exposed to - and have enriching encounters with great literature filled with virtuous characters, traditional forms of music, such as classical music, nursery rhymes, and folk music.
- Students entering grade 1 be prepared by having regular, interactive family time.
- Students entering grade 1 be prepared by having regular, healthy routines, whereby most tasks become like second nature and automatic.
- Students entering grade 1 be prepared by having regular conversations with adults, especially with parents and at meal time, asking questions probing the how and why behind different experiences and things observed.

Alberta Education - K-6 Curriculum, Program of Studies, and Competency Progressions

New Learn Alberta K-6 curriculum:

<https://curriculum.learnalberta.ca/curriculum/en>

New Learn Alberta - Literacy Curriculum and Progression:

<https://curriculum.learnalberta.ca/curriculum/en/f/litk>

<https://education.alberta.ca/media/3402194/lit-progressions.pdf>

New Learn Alberta - Numeracy Curriculum and Progression:

<https://curriculum.learnalberta.ca/cdn/progression-pdfs/Numeracy%20Progressions%20-%20EN.pdf>

New Learn Alberta - Competency Progressions:

<https://curriculum.learnalberta.ca/curriculum/en/f/com1>



Entering grade 1 is an exciting, formative time in the life of a child. We hope that these tips will help you as you prepare your child for the school year ahead!

Welcome to the CCA family! Thank you for trusting us with your child's education.

Best Regards,

The CCA Grade 1 Teachers
Colleen Parks, Principal Educator