

# First Grade: Recommended Pathway of Instruction, Differentiation, and Flexible Grouping

## Extra Support

Some children who are designated as having Adequate preparation for first grade are able to be on pace with the first grade Skills instructional sequence, but they may need to be supported instructionally in order to stay on pace. For children who can maintain the curricular pace but are vulnerable, Pausing Points (1–2 at the end of each unit) are critical for review. GRAIR and centers should also continue to support key skills with *Assessment & Remediation (A&R) Guide* materials or with added time for Pausing Point activities.

Children who have Questionable preparation for first grade will not be able to begin on pace with the first grade Skills instructional sequence. The placement assessment will help you determine where to begin instruction. It may be best to begin in the *A&R Guide*, which is designed to support comprehensive re-teaching of Skills content in an individualized way. It is critical that the goal of any child beginning off pace is that they catch up to their peers. This likely requires *extra time and extra support* (as you would expect in a formal Tier 2 model).

## Instructional Pathway

### UNIT 1 PLACEMENT ASSESSMENT

This placement test provides a comprehensive look at what has been taught instructionally, to date. It allows you to determine children's preparation for the first grade curricular pathway. The data and guidance provided allows you to determine if children have: Outstanding preparation, Strong preparation, Adequate preparation (but may need targeted reinforcement or re-teaching), or Questionable preparation (likely needing comprehensive remediation/re-teaching) for the first grade Skills sequence.

### END OF UNIT 1: GRADE-LEVEL PLANNING

Grade-level grouping is a tool to ensure a highly responsive and supportive environment, as it minimizes the variance any one teacher has in a class, allowing him or her to fine tune to specific, individual needs. Grade-level grouping allows you to consider various options for supporting children who begin at different places instructionally, for supporting children who are on pace but may need a slightly slowed instructional path (though still reaching adequate preparation for second grade), and problem solving approaches to catching up those children who are behind and require comprehensive re-teaching/extra time to meet grade-level expectations by the end of the year.

## Enrichment

Children with Outstanding and Strong preparation typically still have holes in their knowledge of specific sound-spelling patterns and thus will benefit from the first grade instructional sequence. However, these students often need little repetition or added instruction around individual spelling-sound patterns. Rather, they will benefit from added time in text and, often, need time to build fluency (or automaticity) in applying their strong level of code knowledge.

Pausing points are a time to support these children by having them reading additional unit-level texts (provided in the student readers), re-read stories and focus on fluency, or extend their skills in other ways (e.g., consider the close read technique). GRAIR also provides time to support children in text. Centers and small group time (built into most instructional lessons) provide opportunities to help these children apply their code knowledge in sophisticated and highly independent ways.

For any highly exceptional students, teachers may examine the second grade placement test to support case-by-case decision making. The second grade placement test systematically assesses the entire first grade curricula and can be used as a reference for teachers to consider how to distinguish children who are truly exceptional (i.e., could skip to second grade) versus those whose enrichment is best provided (as described above) within the first grade sequence.

## Extra Support

For children who can maintain the curricular pace but are vulnerable, Pausing Points are critical for review. GRAIR and centers should also continue to support key skills with A&R materials.

For some children who began the year as having Adequate preparation for first grade, the pace of instruction may prove to be too ambitious. Typically, these children need the pace of instruction to slow. The end of Unit 4 may be a time for reevaluating grouping approaches/assignments.

Approaching this as a grade level provides a way to support students at their pace of instruction while not demanding that teachers plan and deliver multiple units of instruction in a single class.

This is also a good time to consider if some of the children who began with a slowed pacing have been caught up and may shift back to an on-pace group (albeit one that is still providing many opportunities for repetition and reinforcement).

As long as pacing moves children through Unit 6 by the end of first grade, these children are 'on grade level' and are adequately prepared for second grade (even those who get to Unit 6 may be okay with some added support, as content from Units 6–7 repeats in second grade). If children cannot move at a pace that will allow them to get through Unit 6 (or if children who began off pace are clearly not going to catch up), it is important to continue to layer added support—in the form of intensive, formal Tier 2 model—to support these children meeting end-of-grade expectations.

## Instructional Pathway

### UNITS 2-4

Monitoring progress is an important part of the first grade instructional path (as it is for all grades). End-of-unit assessments provide a specific look at what a child is and isn't able to do relative to the instruction that was provided. The trend of this data is important in considering if students are responding to the first grade instruction.

### END OF UNIT 4: FLEXIBLE REGROUPING

It is important to note that grouping in CKLA is considered flexible and should be responsive to the observations of the teacher on an ongoing basis; however, the instructional path suggests specific times for making more formal shifts in grouping. We chose these points because each one has provided children enough time and exposure to chunks of the curricula, and teachers enough data to make informed decisions based on trends.

### END OF UNIT 6: FLEXIBLE REGROUPING

It is critical that children master that content which will get little repetition (or no repetition) in second grade. This may require some children to continue to reinforce concepts from Unit 6 or prior (with A&R materials), whereas other children may be ready to move into Unit 7.

## Enrichment

For the majority of children, the first grade instructional path represents a fairly accelerated path. The lesson-a-day pace within first grade is often very difficult for anyone but the strongest students to manage.

The focus for these students should be on systematically covering the first grade sequence, but with accelerated demands around student work, independence of work, and aggressive pacing. GRAIR and centers should continue to provide opportunities for enrichment and time in text to build automaticity and sophisticated application of the core curricular units/instruction.

It is likely that the children who are strongest will be the only ones to fully finish the first grade sequence and may be the only ones to move into Unit 7.