

The day in the life of an elementary school student

By DAVE LEVESQUE, Laconia School District Feb 7, 2020

LACONIA — People often wonder what happens during the day in an elementary school. What does a “typical” day look like and what exactly is happening while students are at school for six hours? As a Portrait of a Graduate takes shape in the Laconia School District, we are working toward developing the skills all students will need to be successful in life. At Pleasant Street School, we continually look at how we can improve teaching and learning while engaging our students daily. We take a holistic approach to support students in their everyday lives so when they leave us for the middle school, they are ready for new and exciting challenges.

So, what does a day look like for a second-grade student at Pleasant Street School? Here we go:

8:10-8:30 a.m.: Students have an opportunity for breakfast and morning recess. Research tells us that physical activity and a good breakfast prepares students for a busy, academically filled day.

8:30-8:45 a.m.: Our students make their way to their classroom to prepare for the day with teachers greeting them at the door. This time is often used for STEM activities, building, puzzles, fine motor work, writing and drawing. It is a welcoming time of day where students connect socially before the routine of the day begins.

8:45-9:10 a.m.: Morning meeting: As a Responsive Classroom School, we begin each day with a morning meeting. This supports our efforts to build a positive school community through a morning message, a greeting and a share. The greeting often connects the students with the daily schedule, both academically and socially. It is a fun

and positive way to practice academics and encourage teamwork and a supportive culture. The morning meeting establishes social and emotional learning while building trust among the students.

9:10-9:50 a.m.: Literacy block: During the literacy block, students are introduced to reading and writing strategies. Second grade students, as an example, learn about the meanings in words, rhyming and additional skills connected to weekly spelling words. Part of being a 21st century learner is developing the craft of writing. Students begin to discover different styles of writing that include narrative, opinion and informational writing. Revising and editing are a key aspect of the writing process and the students often engage in peer feedback for suggestions and ideas. Within the literacy block, the teachers work to support and develop students' love of reading and writing. Students work independently or in small groups to work on the skills one needs to be a competent reader.

9:50-10:00 a.m.: Snack: All of our students are eligible for a healthy snack, usually some sort of fruit or vegetable, provided by the Laconia Food Service.

10:00-10:30 a.m.: Literacy What I Need (WIN): WIN Time is our first support for our students. Whether they need support academically or are excelling, WIN allows the teacher to specifically target areas of need or enrichment for their students. The students are divided into smaller groups and receive instruction from their teacher or support staff.

10:35-10:55 a.m.: AM recess: Studies show that frequent movement improves a child's ability to concentrate and focus on schoolwork. A short morning recess gives the students a chance to re-energize, engage in social and emotional growth, and continue with their day successfully.

11:00-11:40 a.m.: Special (physical education/art/music): Students have physical education and art/music two times each per week. Additionally, they have weekly

lessons with our school counselor and with our media center on technology. The “specialist” often connects classroom academics with their instruction. This year, our second grade music show was integrated with our social studies unit on the history of Laconia. Our music teacher, Mr. Fortier, researched and developed songs that taught students about the history and uniqueness of our City on the Lakes. Songs included: “The Laconia Libraries”, “Lakes! Lakes! We Love Lakes!”, and a crowd favorite, “Pinball Wizard”, a song that was adapted to reference both Pleasant Street School students and the games at Funspot. Students have performed these songs at school-wide concerts and community events.

11:45-12:15 p.m.: Lunch: Lunchtime provides students a chance to fuel their bodies with healthy choices provided by the school, and to come together to talk and connect with friends. Learning to be socially appropriate is a vital life-long skill. Many days will include trivia with the students to keep them connected and engaged while at lunch.

12:15-1:00 p.m.: Math: Each grade builds on the math skills of the grades before them, much like reading. For example, second-graders are more equipped to take foundational skills and use them to solve more complex problems such as word problems, adding with carrying, and subtracting. Time and measurement are a focus of second grade, and the student’s feel great pride as they begin to master these concepts that they will need throughout their lives.

1-1:30 p.m.: Math WIN Time: Students are supported based on need and current level of understanding math concepts. The teacher works with students in a small group setting, rotating to each group during the allotted time.

1:35-1:55 p.m.: Afternoon recess: A second recess in the afternoon allows the students to expend some energy and refresh their mind and bodies. The ability to move and re-energize their bodies supports a better focus on the upcoming academic block. More socialization, cooperation, and down time helps to ensure a well-rounded student.

2-2:50 p.m.: Literacy (science and social studies): Science and social studies concepts are woven into the curriculum throughout the year. Second grade concentrates on three major areas in science: life science, physical science and Earth science. These three areas are vertically aligned with the Laconia Middle and High Schools. Through hands-on, inquiry-based activities, the students learn the skills of observations and questioning. They are tasked with writing about their observations and work collaboratively with others to solve problems. Social studies concepts focus on school and local communities. With Laconia having so many topics full of rich and exciting history, this is often a class favorite. We embed community engagement by taking our students on many walking field trips to learn about our City on the Lake.

2:50-3 p.m.: Closing circle: Ending our schedule with a closing circle or afternoon meeting is a positive ending to our day. We can reflect on our day and discuss topics that may need to be addressed before heading home. It brings our day to a close the same way it began: together, supporting each other and with a sense of belonging.

That concludes a very busy day in the life of a second grader at Pleasant Street School. So, when you ask your elementary student what they did at school today and they say “nothing,” now you have something to fall back on. Our students are busy developing and working daily on their growth academically, socially, and emotionally as they work to improve the skills in our Portrait of a Graduate.

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