

GRADE FOUR  
2007-2008



The fourth grade year is one of growth, development, and accomplishment. In fourth grade we will build on each student's growing social capabilities and ethical awareness to create an optimal learning environment. This will involve fostered independence and respect for diversity in others. Fourth graders will work on broadening and strengthening their knowledge base in all areas. This year often sees children shift from an emphasis on process to an equal focus on the end result. With these factors in mind, we will be able to complete many exciting projects on our fourth grade journey.

**LANGUAGE ARTS:** The language arts curriculum includes a great deal of reading and writing on a daily basis. Many novels, short stories, and poems will be read, by the entire class throughout the year. Students will discuss shared reading and respond to it in a variety of ways. Reading instruction will involve analysis of literary elements such as plot, character development, and setting. Comprehension and vocabulary will also be stressed. Some of the class selections are *Island of the Blue Dolphins* (O'Dell), *The Sign of the Beaver* (Speare), *Fur Trappers and Traders* (Siegel), *The Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson* (Lord), *Dear Mr. Henshaw* (Cleary), *The Real Thief* (Steig), and *Secret of the Andes* (Clark). Daily read aloud gives students exposure to different kinds of literature and gives them a chance to build their listening skills. Students will be expected to complete a half hour of silent reading every day during the library period following lunch and to complete two grade level books independently each term.

In the winter we will do an in depth literature study of a Shakespeare play. Students will be told the story and then the class will rewrite the play in its own words. This will involve intensive work on conveying plot, setting, and character motivation through dialogue. The study will end with a production of the play for the community.

In fourth grade, students will continue to use writing to express their ideas creatively and as a tool for learning. Students will engage in creative writing daily which will often be shared, edited and published in class. Daily Oral Language (D.O.L.), by the Great Source Education Group, will be used to practice grammar, punctuation, and editing skills. Throughout the year, fourth graders will work on developing sentence, paragraph, and story structure. Writing portfolios will be kept and added to during the school year. The program *How To Spell* from Educators Publishing Service will provide the basis for spelling instruction. Students will continue to master cursive writing in fourth grade. They will use the program *Keywords* by Renaissance Learning Inc. to practice keyboarding skills.

**MATH:** Everyday Mathematics published by the University of Chicago will be the core of the fourth grade math curriculum. The program will be supplemented and enhanced by materials pulled from a variety of resources. This series develops mathematical thinking and

problem solving skills while allowing for spiraling skill and concept development. Throughout the year, students will improve their understanding of the multiplication and division algorithms and work on memorizing multiplication and division facts. Classroom time will be devoted to whole class and small group lessons, hands-on activities, games, and relating mathematics to other curriculum areas being studied. Students can expect to have a math homework assignment most nights.

**SOCIAL STUDIES:** In fourth grade students investigate other cultures with the overarching goals of both developing an appreciation of the daily life of people from the past and/or from another region of the world and better understanding of how climate, geography, and available natural resources affect key elements of any culture. Students will also gain an appreciation for how successful interdependence, in many forms, plays a key part in cultural sustainability. In the fall, our focus will be on beavers, settlers, and shelters. We will look at the important role these animals played in the history and settlement of the Connecticut River Valley and how this influences our lives today. A variety of maps, readings, and videos will be used throughout this unit of study. In late fall students will study United States geography and the fifty states. This short unit will promote the learning of state locations and capitals. During the winter term we will undertake a unit shared with the third grade focusing on modern Africa and the countries of Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya. Third and fourth graders will look specifically at the subtopics of food, shelter, clothing, fuel and waste- comparing and contrasting their lives with those of children and families in these modern African countries. In the spring we again have a shared focus on the civilization of Ancient Egypt.

Art, drama, and writing projects, along with field trips and visiting experts, are important tools for fourth graders to build and express their understanding of a culture. Historical fiction, biographical selections, folk tales, the study of artifacts, map activities, and critical thinking exercises will provide students with a range of experiences to increase their ability to understand a culture in greater depth.

**SCIENCE:** In the fall, beavers and the watershed will be our focus of study. Students will keep science journals that include observational drawing and writing as we take field trips and complete hands-on indoor and outdoor activities. We will do onsite water quality testing and chart our results. Three-dimensional models will be used in the classroom to demonstrate how water flows through different landscapes. Students will make water filters and design and test dams in this unit. The fourth grade will do an intensive science unit on electricity in the the late fall. Students will learn to create different types of circuits, switches, and wire minihouses. Investigation/inquiry science will be a thread that runs throughout the year. Students will look at the physics of their world and try to solve scientific challenges using simple materials. Some possible investigations are tissue paper hot air balloons, sleds that will move rapidly down a slope, and popsicle stick helicopters.

In the spring we will be integrating our science with our study of three modern African countries and ancient Egypt. Field trips to the Grafton Nature Museum, the Boston Museum of Science, and beaver habitats in our area will take place throughout the year.

**ART:** The fourth grade art curriculum will be linked with other curriculum areas this year including science, social studies, language arts, and math. A variety of media and materials will be used as students learn about and explore their world. They will study the work of some of history's artistic masters and experiment on their own with line, form, texture, shape and color. Self-expression and experimentation will be encouraged along with the ability to listen to directions carefully. Organizing time and materials to complete projects within the assigned time will be emphasized. We will do several computer and digital art projects using Photoshop Elements. Some of the artists that we will look at this year are Georgia O'Keeffe, Andy Warhol, and Keith Haring.

**SOCIAL CURRICULUM:** The social curriculum at TGS is designed to complement the academic curriculum and help maintain a healthy social and learning environment. This includes a series of "Community Life" classes at all grade levels that complements and reinforces the classroom based social curricular activities and goals. We define a healthy school community as a place where people have a sense of belonging, where adults and students extend and receive respect in their relationships with each other, and where people feel both a sense of support and personal challenge to help them learn and grow as human beings.

The Community Life classes help highlight and develop important community skills such as cooperation, team building, personal and social responsibility, deep listening, mindful speech, emotional literacy, respect for diversity, conflict resolution, stress reduction and relaxation, self-awareness and problem solving.

**PHYSICAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT:** The PSD program combines games and drills to help develop an enjoyment of sports and a variety of physical activities. We will work to improve each individual's muscular and cardiovascular strength and endurance by participating in soccer, cross-country skiing and softball. Fourth graders will meet regularly with third graders at PSD time. Cooperation, teamwork and good sportsmanship will be encouraged as well as good listening skills and positive efforts towards improvement.

**COMPUTER:** Fourth graders will use computers to learn and practice keyboarding skills, for writing and editing stories and reports, and will bring several pieces from draft to published form. Understanding and skill with basic file management will be taught and emphasized. Using the Internet for research will begin and Webquests will be introduced. They will be able to use a variety of programs including Photoshop, Word, the internet, and they may use the computer for music composition.

**FAMILY LIFE CURRICULUM:** The family life curriculum will be integrated into reading material, discussions and activities throughout the year. Many topics will be covered including friendships, communication skills, conflict resolution, emotions, social diversity and personal safety. Emphasis will be placed upon helping students to become self-confident individuals as well as sensitive and aware participants in a larger school community.

**HOMEWORK/STUDY SKILLS:** In fourth grade, students can expect to be assigned math homework and half an hour of reading every evening. The goal of this work is to give students time to reinforce and practice concepts and skills covered in school. Other projects and research assignments will be given on a regular basis. It is important that fourth graders learn to follow through on homework and develop a routine that will serve them in the coming years. Organization and time management will be taught and practiced at school and at home.