



GRADE FOUR, 2009 - 2010

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. We will read many novels, short stories, and poems as a 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 Search for Delicious* (Babbitt), *From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* (Koningsburg), *The Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson* (Lord), *Dear Mr. Henshaw* (Cleary), *The Real Thief* (Steig), and *Tuck Everlasting* (Babbitt). Daily reading 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 interpret the play in a summary. This will involve intensive work on understanding plot, setting, and character motivation. The study will end with a production of an adaptation of the play for the community. Students will also complete a brief research project on an aspect of Elizabethan culture.

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 (EPS) will provide the basis for spelling instruction and will be enhanced by lessons from *Mega Words* (EPS). We will also begin to explore Latin and Greek roots with *Vocabulary From the Classical Roots*, also from EPS. 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.

SCIENCE: In the fall, mushrooms and their role in the health of the forest will be our focus of an in-depth study. Fourth graders explore where and how mushrooms grow, how they propagate, and how they are an integral part of a healthy forest environment. Students will keep science journals that include observational drawing and writing as we take to the woods and complete hands-on indoor and outdoor activities. They will collect and categorize the mushrooms and explore their symbiotic relationship to plants and trees.

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. From investigating the properties of bubbles, to testing the absorbency and strength of paper towels, to exploring the characteristics of Oobleck, students will learn to design and conduct scientific experiments; gather, analyze, and interpret data; and the importance of legitimate skepticism in scientific inquiry. In the spring we will be integrating our science with our study of Egypt.

SOCIAL STUDIES: Beginning in the fall, fourth grade students will undertake a yearlong study of sustainability, focusing on our school and local community. Students will begin by mapping our school and our town to gain a better understanding of their place within the community. We will expand our study to explore the ways in which the choices we make in our daily lives affect our environment. Students will gain an understanding of how to make choices that help sustain our planet and enhance our community. We will explore sustainable practices in land use, in the products we choose to use at our school, in the foods we choose to eat, and the local community. In addition to social studies, this unit will work across several curriculum areas including science, geography, language arts, and math.

Fourth graders will also 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. During the latter half of the winter term we will undertake a unit shared with the third grade focusing 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 another culture. Biographical selections, 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.

ART: The fourth grade art curriculum builds on earlier years and is a time when learning techniques and skills to create fine detail and more complex color relationships is possible. Students deal with showing space in their work and begin using the foreground, middle ground, and background as well as 2-D and 3-D as terms to describe art. Students also work with the concepts of value and complex symmetry. A few artists that have been studied in this year are Georgia O'Keefe, Keith Haring, and Andrew Goldsworthy. Detailed drawings of hands and feet and papier-mâché beavers are recurrent projects in fourth grade.

FRENCH: *Alex et Zoé* will be the text for the fourth grade. This well-designed children's book employs comics, a CD, and a writing workbook as tools to engage students. The series, designed specifically for young learners of French, is structured in units that incorporate a song, games, and reading and writing built around a body of vocabulary. Topics covered include greetings, activities, clothing, foods, the body, and places. Additionally, the new language series *Qtalk*, which employs pictures as a mechanism to promote oral proficiency, will be used to get students speaking more in class. Class meets two times a week, once for 30 minutes and once for 45 minutes, in the fourth grade room.

MUSIC AND TECHNOLOGY: The music program is an integral part of the TGS curriculum with all students in K-8 having three music classes per week. The primary goals are: developing an appreciation for music; singing on-pitch; reading music and playing an instrument; dancing cooperatively; taking direction and performing on stage. Basic computer skills and an introduction to music technology are also important components of the program. Students work in groups, individually, and with several faculty members throughout the year in different learning situations.

TECHNOLOGY: Fourth graders will use computers to learn and practice keyboarding skills, and for writing and editing stories and reports. They 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. Students will be able to use a variety of programs including Word.

STUDY SKILLS: In fourth grade, students can expect to be assigned homework and a half-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.

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.

LIBRARY: The fourth grade will meet in the library two periods a week to choose books and do various activities designed to give them practice in using the library. As part of the Red Clover Award program, they will learn to evaluate literary material by text, illustration, and information. They will look at different types of print media, become familiar with the online library and the reference section, and practice finding books shelved by literature type, alphabetically, and by the Dewey Decimal System. Activities include listening to literature read aloud, games, discussion, map making, treasure hunt, and report research using print and Internet sources. Fourth grade library will include Internet activities designed to help them evaluate and use bookmarked websites.

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.