

Fourth Grade Overview

Fourth grade is a year of increasing independence and responsibility as students begin to attend departmentalized classrooms with three teachers for their core curriculum. Students learn to organize and manage their time, materials, and assignments as they change classrooms for the first time. The curriculum includes many opportunities for students to collaborate, discuss, and grow as learners.

Reading

The fourth grade reading program components include comprehension, oral reading, and the study of figurative language. The curriculum focuses on a variety of texts and genres and often integrates with social studies and science topics. The program utilizes classroom novels for teaching reading strategies necessary to become proficient readers. These strategies are then applied in small group literature circles and culminating activities that apply higher order thinking and presentation skills. The curriculum includes an independent reading journal that provides enrichment and motivation for outside reading.

Spelling and Vocabulary

Spelling instruction includes learning letter combinations, word parts such as prefixes and suffixes, and frequently misspelled words. The *Words Their Way* curriculum incorporates print and digital resources to allow students to focus on the areas in which they need support based on individual spelling inventories. The *Vocabulary Through Morphemes* curriculum breaks words down into their fundamental parts to increase understanding by allowing students to apply their knowledge of morphemes to decipher meanings of unknown words. The curriculum builds on students' phonics knowledge and integrates vocabulary learning by focusing on word parts such as prefixes, suffixes, and roots.

Grammar and Writing

The St. George language arts program has deep roots in the study of grammar and parts of speech through the use of the *Shurley English* curriculum. During the first semester, there is a review of basic conventions through spiral activities including rules of punctuation, capitalization, word usage, and sentence structure. Students are introduced to the six traits of writing with special emphasis on authentic writing opportunities. All students work toward fluency through timed writings and journal activities. Writing is taught across the curriculum in all subject areas throughout the school year. Fourth graders publish a variety of authentic compositions in the form of expository and persuasive essays, narratives, creative pieces, and reflective writing. Cursive handwriting is used in all subjects at this level.

Math

The fourth grade math curriculum is a high-intensity program that stresses problems solving, computation, and higher order thinking skills to develop competence and confidence in all areas of mathematics. Using the *Dimension Math* program, students move from concrete and pictorial representations to abstract algorithms, viewing the same concepts over time with increasing levels of abstraction. In addition to traditional math strategies, mental math skills and alternative problem solving methods are incorporated. Major objectives taught include: place value, fractions, computation, statistics, geometry, and measurement. The use of manipulatives, math games, daily math journals, and cooperative group activities meet a variety of learning styles.

Science

The main focus of the fourth grade science curriculum is to pique students' curiosity about science in an investigative and challenging manner while maintaining the utmost standard of respect and awareness of life on the Earth. The science curriculum, *Macmillan/McGraw-Hill Science: A Closer Look*, is divided into life, earth, and physical sciences. The objectives that accompany these lessons are taught in the classroom and then investigated in the school's science lab. In the lab, students are challenged to think, hypothesize, and use reasoning skills to draw conclusions and answer every scientist's favorite question, "WHY?" Students also participate in many virtual labs as they strengthen their understanding of current concepts or explore new ones at a self-directed pace.

Social Studies

Using the *Core Knowledge* curriculum, students begin the year with a review of geography and geographical terms. Other curricular units of study include world mountains, medieval Europe, dynasties of China, the American revolution, and the U.S. Constitution. During the second semester, fourth graders study Texas history as they focus on major historical events, important figures, and economic trends in the development of modern day Texas. In the culminating event of their economics and entrepreneurship unit, students join together to form and run businesses at the school-wide trade fair, Le Marché.

Social and Emotional Development

The St. George social and emotional curriculum is based on the *Responsive Classroom* model, which takes a proactive approach that focuses on creating a loving and respectful classroom community where each child feels valued and known by his or her teachers and peers. Every day begins with a morning meeting where students are greeted by name and invited to share about their lives. During this time, teachers introduce a variety of social skills throughout the year including: identifying feelings of self and others, resolving conflict, showing kindness, listening and responding, regulating emotions, practicing empathy, being a good citizen, and standing up for what is right. These skills are then discussed and modeled frequently by children and teachers alike. This approach provides each student with the tools to grow his or her own emotional intelligence, while also creating an environment of connectivity and care.

Co-Curricular Classes

Students attend a developmentally appropriate chapel daily. They also regularly attend the following co-curricular classes: art, library, music, Spanish, STEAM, technology, and physical education.