

## OVERVIEW

By creating a suitable atmosphere and selecting appropriate materials and topics, the fourth-grade teachers help each student develop self-confidence, a love of learning, a sense of responsibility, and pride in accomplishment. Students develop a sense of community and an appreciation of and respect for each other's opinions, individuality, and property.

Fourth graders have 1:1 access to Chromebooks at school. Each student receives a DCD Google Drive account where they can create, store, and organize their work. This account can be accessed at home as well. Students are expected to manage materials and complete nightly homework assignments. The teachers encourage students to become more articulate about their needs as learners. Students learn to ask questions and seek out assistance when needed. The fourth-grade program encourages community building, cooperative learning, and problem solving. Through class meetings, written reflections, and read alouds, students build skills of cooperation, responsibility, empathy, and self-control.

Learning continues outside of the classroom with athletics every day except for Friday, various field trips, and a year-long service learning partnership with the Dedham branch of the Animal Rescue League of Boston, which culminates in an annual school-wide "Fun Run" to raise money for the ARL.

## LANGUAGE ARTS

### Reading

The fourth-grade reading program is designed to help students develop active reading skills and an appreciation for literature. Students read from a variety of genres. Students practice reading with fluency and oral expression. Teachers conduct reading class in a small-group format. They place a strong emphasis on helping students develop comprehension and vocabulary skills. Students practice finding the main idea, making predictions, recalling details, sequencing story events, recognizing themes, making inferences, and summarizing.

Students communicate their understanding of the reading material in class discussions and in written responses to comprehension questions. They also complete final projects that include written and artistic work for each of the novels they read. Teachers emphasize proofreading and editing skills. In addition to assigned reading, students are encouraged to spend at least 20 minutes per day at home independently reading books of their own choosing. Students may visit the classroom library or school library regularly to select reading material.

### Writing

As fourth graders develop their writing skills, they focus on poetry, narrative writing, persuasive writing, nonfiction and creative writing. Fourth-grade writers follow the steps of the writing

process: brainstorming, organizing, drafting, and revising their written work. They develop their understanding of sentence and paragraph structure and practice topic sentences and concluding sentences. Students begin learning to type in fourth-grade, and they use their Chromebooks to complete most fourth-grade writing assignments.

### Mechanics, Spelling & Vocabulary

Students learn writing mechanics through explicit instruction and practice proofreading and editing their own writing. Topics covered include punctuation, capitalization, spelling rules, and parts of speech. The fourth-grade spelling program, *Building Spelling Skills*, focuses on identifying spelling rules, generalizations, and patterns. In addition, students learn new vocabulary words through the rich texts they experience in reading class.

Language arts classes meet most days for 90 minutes, partly in small groups.

## **MATH**

In fourth grade, we want our students to feel both competent and confident in their math skills. We encourage this by providing opportunities for hands-on learning, identifying useful patterns, having our students make observations and engage in substantive conversations, and analyzing multiple pathways to solutions. We use the *Investigations* program for the sequence of topics, and supplement it with engaging lessons and challenges. The topics we study, but are not limited to, are: whole number operations, measurement and data, geometry, fractions and decimals, patterns, and algebraic thinking.

Math classes meet daily for 45-55 minutes in small groups.

## **SOCIAL STUDIES**

Fourth graders participate in an interdisciplinary study of human rights. Students explore human rights through the topics of disability history, identity, LGBTQ+ history, and the Black Freedom Struggle. Through inquiry, exploration, discussion, and completion of projects, students learn about themselves and others. The fourth-grade social studies curriculum serves as a means to help students better understand the diverse world around them.

Social studies classes meet twice a week for 45 minutes.

## SCIENCE

The fourth-grade science curriculum focuses on the human body. The units of study may include skin, the nervous system, nutrition, bones and muscles, and the digestive system. Hands-on activities, experiments, or engineering projects occur during most classes. Students maintain a notebook in which they document their predictions, observations, and inferences when experimenting and their thought processes when devising a solution to a problem using the engineering design process. Students sometimes use Chromebooks for research, to document their work, and to demonstrate what they have learned.

Science classes meet twice each week.

## SPANISH

The fourth-grade Spanish program is based on a thematic curriculum utilizing multi-sensory activities and materials. The primary goal of this class is to develop positive attitudes and excitement toward learning to comprehend and speak the Spanish language. At the same time, the curriculum is designed to address specific readiness skills to begin studying a language, foundational skills to continue language development, and essential skills to master necessary competencies. All students are actively engaged and learning as they practice comprehension and speaking skills through games, music, art, role-playing, and spontaneous conversation. The use of English is kept to a minimum; grammar is learned indirectly, rather than through direct instruction.

Spanish classes meet for 45 minutes once a week.

## LIBRARY

The fourth-grade library curriculum continues to focus on information literacy skills. We begin each year with digital citizenship discussions. The goal of these discussions is to raise student awareness of their digital life and provide opportunities to discuss what to do when something goes wrong. Students work on projects where they examine nonfiction works, and various online encyclopedias to inform their research. They learn how Google search works and practice keyword searching as part of their study. Throughout the year students will participate in “Book Tastings” where students will be encouraged to explore curated collections of books based on themes. The goal with “Book Tastings” is to have students explore sections of the library and genres they might not normally borrow from. In addition, fourth graders have the option to participate in the Massachusetts Children’s Book Award program. This optional reading program is for an annual award selected by students throughout the state.

Library classes meet for 45 minutes once a week.

## MUSIC

The fourth-grade music curriculum encourages students to develop a familiarity with modern and historical instruments of the orchestra and to create original music. In conjunction with the fourth-grade medieval times social studies unit, the class delves into the music, instruments, and social context of the medieval period. Fourth graders create original compositions utilizing music software. They also help create the songs for their class play, employing compositional and song-writing strategies that emphasize creating music and lyrics to fit the context of the story. Students learn through instruments, voices, manipulatives, movement, improvisation, and integration with their music curriculum. In addition to the class play, each student participates in the Lower School Chorus and the Lower School Band. Fourth graders also attend an annual performance of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

### Lower School Band

All Fourth graders participate in band build and their musicianship through instrumental ensemble work. Participation in band fosters teamwork and ensemble listening skills, allowing students to develop their skills as part of a large ensemble. Students learn a variety of traditional beginning band repertoire as well as experiment with simple jazz tunes and improvisation. The Lower School Band performs each year at the Holiday Assembly and the Lower School Visual and Performing Arts Assembly

### Lower School Chorus

All Fourth graders participate in chorus and build their musicianship through choral work. Students practice two- and three-part choral pieces that center around seasonal themes or concepts. Singing in an ensemble fosters teamwork and allows students to practice their musical skills while being part of an ensemble. The Lower School Chorus performs at the Thanksgiving Assembly, the Holiday Assembly, and the Lower School Visual and Performing Arts Assembly.

Music class (with integrated band and chorus) meets for 40 minutes every other day.

## VISUAL ART

In fourth grade, students continue to develop their foundation of skills and vocabulary to create and discuss works of art. The lessons garnered during the creative process are more important than the final product. Young artists have the opportunity to think critically, take risks, and be self-reliant problem solvers. Students are nurtured and supported through periodic group discussions, through prominent display of their work, and through community-wide assemblies.

The main focus of the fourth-grade year is color theory. The color wheel is used as the vehicle for understanding primary, secondary, and tertiary colors and their relationship to each other. Colors for the wheel are hand-mixed with acrylic paint. Students also create a complementary color cut and torn paper collage. They also draw from life to develop their observational and drawing skills. Fourth graders develop a deeper understanding of the structure and routines of a working studio. The studio itself is a tool, and students learn how best to utilize and care for the space and materials.

Visual art class includes art history as students study the life and work of a particular artist and create a piece in that artist's style. David Hockney's *Nichols Canyon Road* is the focus of this project in fourth grade. Leading up to the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Service Day, students view and discuss William Henry Johnson's *Fighters for Freedom* series. Portraits include Booker T. Washington, Harriet Tubman, Marian Anderson, Abraham Lincoln, John Brown, Frederick Douglass and George Washington Carver. They also watch Marian Anderson perform *My Country 'Tis of Thee* and Dr. King's *I Have a Dream* speech. The subject matter in the *Fighters for Freedom* series is complex, and as students mature, they are able to build on the previous year's discussion and garner new insights and understanding.

### WOODWORKING

The fourth-grade year in woodworking marks the beginning of more sophisticated and challenging work. This is a year that offers tremendous potential for growth and discovery which is discussed at length at the start of the year. Projects for the year involve multiple steps, and students often work in small teams. This "team approach" gives the fourth graders the opportunity to work closely with another classmate, pooling talents and experiences as they assist and teach each other. In addition to guided group projects, students will have an opportunity to design and craft their own individual project. During the fourth-grade year, students cultivate a solid understanding of concepts, terms, techniques, and a working vocabulary. Additionally, students continue to work toward an understanding of "process" as they advance their project work. Woodworking classes meet every other day for half the year.

### DRAMA

Once a year, DCD's drama teacher writes a theatrical play expressly for the fourth-grade students. In fourth grade, all students have a minimum of eleven lines, but some roles will have many more. By fourth grade, students will read the play about a month before the performance and will select about six to eight parts (depending on the size of the class) that they would like to play. Students are then given one of their choices. In addition to giving them a sense of ownership of the play, it also allows them to select a role with more or fewer lines, depending on their comfort level. Students are encouraged to sign up for a larger role if they have not had one before. Students in fourth grade learn how to develop their timing on stage. Their lines are

more complex, and there are usually exits and entrances in the middle of a scene. This requires the students to be active listeners while waiting for their cues off stage. Their acting skills develop as they learn how to enter as a character in the middle of a scene and create a back story by using body language and facial expressions.

The goals of the fourth-grade play are for all students to develop sophisticated comic or dramatic timing on stage. They are also expected to improvise during exits and entrances. Students at this age are learning how to take on leadership roles backstage. Drama classes meet for approximately 15 rehearsals prior to performing the class play.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Fourth grade Physical Education class introduces students to more advanced strategies and a greater amount of gameplay in a wide range of team sports. PE units include field hockey, soccer, basketball, floor hockey, ice skating, badminton, volleyball, gymnastics, yoga, cooperative games, softball, and lacrosse. Exposure to a wide variety of sports provides students the opportunity to build coordination and strength through the practice of an extensive range of movement. Teachers actively promote sportsmanship, teamwork, and fair play. PE also provides students an opportunity to try sports which they may choose to continue playing in middle school. Physical Education classes four times per week.

## MINDFULNESS

Grade 4 students participate in a weekly class that is designed to support Social Emotional development in the classroom. Building on the foundation of essential mindfulness skills that they learn in earlier grades, students do a deeper dive into topics such as social awareness, stress management, and overall health and well-being. Classes are designed to incorporate and reinforce these essential skills:

- *Body awareness* – brain breaks and movement for strength, flexibility, and balance
- *Concentration, focus, and attention* - breath exercises and age-appropriate mindfulness techniques
- *Developing social awareness* – exploring kindness, empathy, gratitude for self and others
- *Relaxation and a feeling of well-being* – mindful stories provide students with opportunities to rest and reset
- *Increased confidence and self-esteem* - successfully trying new things in a nurturing and safe environment.