

Grade 5 Curriculum Summary

(The text that follows is adapted from the websites of member schools of the Alliance for Public Waldorf education and the San Francisco Waldorf School.)

The fifth grader has grown more accustomed to being an individual; yet, like the third grader, s/he is about to leave another phase of childhood behind and cross the threshold into adolescence. The fifth graders often achieve a temporary balance in their development, exhibiting their potential for all that they are to become in their later lives. The curriculum not only continues to build on and integrate established foundations, but introduces new elements to prepare the child for the next step forward.

In the **language arts** curriculum, the fifth grade child journeys back to the dawn of western civilization in ancient India, Persia, Egypt and Greece. The teacher gives the children a sense of each cultural epoch so that they may begin to understand how human consciousness has evolved through time. Through the study of mythology, music, art and primary textual sources, the student experiences how these cultures viewed the world. In his/her written work, the student retells the epics of the Ramayana the Mahabharata, Gilgamesh, the Iliad and the Odyssey. S/he recites quotations from ancient texts, and in his/her dramatic work takes on the characters from the epics they have studied.

Ancient history in the fifth grade starts with the "childhood" of civilized humanity in ancient India, Persia, the great cultures of Mesopotamia (the Chaldeans, the Assyrians, and the Babylonians) and Egypt. The class then moves on to ancient Greece and the birth of modern civilization: the foundations of philosophy, science, history, drama and art were laid while Athens and Sparta fought for independence against the mighty Persian empire. The fifth grade year ends with the story of Alexander the Great, who conquered the ancient peoples previously studied, unifying, for a short time, this variety of cultures—a forecast of the study of the Roman Empire in Grade 6.

The study of **geography** serves to complement the study of ancient cultures. While history leads the children deeper into themselves, geography takes them to the farthest reaches of the earth. The historical study of the ancient cultures includes an overview of the lands where these civilizations emerged. The teacher strives to give the children a sense for the great contrasts between different geographical regions, and geography awakens in the child a feeling of relatedness with fellow human beings living in all other parts of the world.

In addition, the geography of the North American continent is studied. The student develops an understanding for the major mountain ranges and river systems, and how these landforms influence the rest of the continent. The teacher strives to give the child a sense for the contrasts between the different regions of North America in terms of topography, vegetation, animal life and human use of the land from ancient times to the present.

In **mathematics**, fractions and decimals continue to be the chief concern in the fifth grade. The student learns to move freely between these two numbering systems, and the use of percentage is introduced. The deep mathematical wisdom of ancient Egypt, as embodied in the Great Pyramid of Giza, offers a concrete

introduction to geometry. The relationship between radius, diameter, circumference and area of a circle is explored, and pi is introduced.

The **science** curriculum for the fifth grade focuses on the plant kingdom. Beside the discovery of the physical characteristics of the earth, studied in geography at this grade, the fifth grader studies the plant life that grows upon its surface. They learn that the world of plants is made up of many different families, from the simple mushroom to the rose to the mighty oak tree; the scope of the lessons then expands to an investigation of how climate and geography affect plant growth. The children learn that there is order and structure in all that surround them in the natural world.

Grade 5 Curriculum Components

- **Math:** Decimals; fractions; percentages; metric system; negative numbers; introduction to geometry
- **Language Arts:** Elements of grammar; spelling; punctuation; compositions; Greek myths
- **Science:** Botany; introduction to inductive method; continuation of gardening and nature studies
- **History & Social Studies:** Ancient civilizations through Greek times
- **Geography:** American geography as related to vegetation, agriculture, culture and economics
- **Handwork:** Knitting socks using four needles
- **Woodworking:** Convex Surfaces: carved egg, buttons and beads, chopsticks, animal cut-outs
- **Foreign Language:** Continuing instruction in a foreign language with further bookwork and grammar, cultural appreciation, poetry, beginning reading
- **Visual & Performing Arts:** Calligraphy; painting; clay modeling; woodworking; drama, singing; recorder; choir; instrumental ensemble
- **Movement/Physical Education/Games:** Games exploring strength and strategy; games with multiple props; games with team goals