

Grade 4 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.)

Fourth graders are passing through the midst of the nine-year change. They still wish to revere, but, for them, that reverence must be justified. The children begin to form their own personality in response to their experience of the world, consciously choosing those qualities that will go into their characters.

The fourth grade curriculum addresses a child in possession of greater certainty and confidence. At this grade level, the child is more assured of his/her own place in the world and is able to assert more individual needs and wants. The curriculum correspondingly evolves away from the unified approach of early childhood into the teaching of more specific subjects. The Main Lesson blocks are more varied in the fourth grade than they have been in the earlier grades, reflecting both the children's individuation as well as the intellectual breadth of which they are beginning to be capable.

The focus of the fourth grade **language arts** curriculum is the myths and legends of the Norse people. These stories speak strongly to the children at this time. The gods of Asgard are portrayed as individuals with distinct, powerful personalities who encounter significant consequences for both their good and bad behavior. The vivid images evoked in these stories provide ample inspiration for the expanded creative and expository writing skills required of the child at this grade. The strong alliterations of their verses strengthen the fourth grade child's clarity and dexterity of speech, and reinforce his/her developing confidence.

In the realm of **mathematics**, the fourth grade child begins the year with a firm foundation in working with whole numbers using the four processes. This year marks the appropriate time to introduce fractions, as the practice of breaking apart the whole into its constituent parts mirrors the child's own internal experience of the fracturing of his/her world. Concepts are first introduced through the manipulation of everyday objects, providing the child with an initial concrete experience of fractions before proceeding to their more abstract representations. The children learn to add, subtract, multiply, reduce and expand fractions, and to change improper fractions into mixed numbers.

History and geography become formal main lesson subjects in the fourth grade. The child's growing ability to regard with objectivity her/his environment is developed through the study of local geography. The child learns how to find the four points of the compass by observing sun and stars. They study and make maps of the classroom, the school, the neighborhood, the city, and state (with the curriculum adapted to the local geography and history of the area around their school). The goal of the **geography** curriculum is to engender an understanding of the interrelatedness of human activity and the local physical conditions of the earth.

The fourth grade **history** curriculum examines the historical development and diversity of human society locally and throughout the state. The biographies of men and women who played a part in creating our local culture reiterate one of the predominant themes of fourth grade, which is the importance of human

deeds. (Taking California as an example, the child develops a sense for the world of the indigenous Californians, the Spanish explorers, the first missions, and the period of the Gold Rush.)

The transformation from imagination to objectivity and detailed observation is manifest again in the study of nature that forms the **Human and Animal** main lesson block (**Zoology**). Animal study is introduced, growing out of a descriptive study of the human being and our place in nature. The child develops an understanding and appreciation of the animal kingdom as it reflects the environment to which each species has adapted. Through detailed study of the forms and habitats of animals, the children begin to get a feeling for the fascinating assortment of skills and qualities that the animals possess. At the same time, the children begin to see the unique and responsible position they hold as human beings upon the earth. This detailed study offers opportunities for the child to develop his/her comparative, conceptual, and observational skills, and it provides additional material for artistic, dramatic, and language arts activities.

In **music**, the fourth grade signals the introduction of another instrument, often the violin, in addition to continuing the recorder. In both **music** and **drama**, students are now ready to take individual parts in ongoing group performances. **Foreign language** instruction continues, as the child begins to write down poems, stories, and dialogues acquired orally in the earlier grades. **Handwork** focuses on cross-stitch, embroidery, and braiding.

Grade 4 Curriculum Components

- Math: Review four processes; advanced multiplication; long division; place value to millions, simple graphs; averaging; perimeter, area and volume; factoring; estimating; rounding; word problems; mental math; introduction to fractions
- Language Arts: Elements of grammar; parts of speech; continuing cursive; punctuation; writing well structured paragraphs; book reports; expository writing, creative writing, narratives; class play; building fluency through regular reading practice; sight word recognition, high frequency words; prefixes & suffixes; spelling and vocabulary development; Norse mythology
- Science: Zoology; continuation of garden and nature studies
- History & Social Studies: State and local history
- Geography: State and local geography and map making
- Handwork: Cross-stitch, mirror image/symmetry
- Foreign Language: Continuing foreign language instruction with workbooks, writing/recording orally-learned material, basic grammatical principles, tongue twisters
- Visual & Performing Arts: Form drawing; painting; singing; drama; recorder; violin; introduction to reading and writing music
- Movement/Physical Education/Games: Field games, balance, games involving trickery and strategy; games exploring movement of animals