

# Fourth Grade Program Highlights

## Literacy

Our Balanced Literacy program blends the areas of reading, writing, listening and speaking into a yearly calendar of literacy units. Using the Common Core English/Language Arts standards, teachers connect specific content and skills targets with engaging literacy activities, providing opportunities for whole-class, small-group and individualized reading and writing. Reader's Workshop allows students to develop skills and strategies, cultivate a love of books, empower themselves as authors, and develop literary analysis skills.

Writing instruction utilizes the process approach and is focused on developing skills for writing narrative, opinion, and informational text, as well as poetry. Teachers model effective writing, conference during independent writing time, and foster opportunities for shared writing experiences across the curriculum.

Fourth grade literacy units include:

- *Realistic Fiction & Personal Narrative*
- *Fantasy*
- *Reading and Writing Non-Fiction*
- *Journalism*
- *Literary Analysis Essays*

Phonics, grammar, mechanics and vocabulary are integrated into both literacy and content-area lessons. In addition, prefixes, suffixes, and root word meanings are directly taught through word work activities.

Cursive handwriting is reviewed and reinforced using the *D'Nealian* handwriting program.

## Mathematics

The *Everyday Mathematics* program is a research-based, field-tested curriculum that emphasizes life-long mathematical understanding. Its lessons incorporate real-life examples that ensure the relevance of targeted mathematical concepts and reinforcement of computational and problem-solving skills. *Everyday Mathematics'* fourth grade benchmarks are aligned to the Common Core standards.

Critical areas of focus for grade four include:

- *Multi-Digit Multiplication & Division*
- *Fractions*
- *Analyzing & Classifying Two-Dimensional Shapes*

## Social Studies

Fourth grade social studies looks at systems and processes from an ever-enlarging focal point. Beginning with the governmental system of ISD, students expand their understanding of civic and global responsibility by exploring an overnight trip to Thies and see a bustling Senegalese city in action. Finally, after exploring and comparing world governments, students design a fictional government for a space colony. Learning benchmarks are aligned with *AERO* (*American Education Reaches Out*) standards.

Fourth grade social studies units include:

- *Democracy in Action: ISD Government*
- *Eco-Tourism in Senegal*
- *Comparative World Governments*
- *Space Colony*

In addition, all ISD students participate in a celebration of global cultural diversity, Senegalese art, and traditional West African music during our school-wide World Culture Month.

## Science

*FOSS* (*Full Option Science System*) kits provide our fourth graders with thematic lessons that incorporate hands-on exploration with the scientific method into the areas of Life, Physical, and Earth Science. Fourth grade benchmarks are aligned to *NSES* (*National Science Education Standards*).

Fourth grade science units include:

- *The Human Body*
- *Magnetism & Electricity*
- *Sun, Moon, Stars & Planets*

## French Language

Students receive daily instruction in the French language for 45-minute instructional blocks. Based on *AERO* (*American Education Reaches Out*) and French National Standards, the curriculum offers opportunities for integrated reading, writing, speaking and listening, as well as for exploration of the French and French/Senegalese culture. French language teachers work as a team to provide multi-leveled instruction to students by determining individual skill levels at the beginning and end of each school year.

## Visual and Musical Arts

Fourth graders attend separate art and music classes twice per 6-day cycle. During these 45-minute sessions, children explore the visual and musical arts through hands-on experiences that encourage creativity, collaboration and interpretation. Students perform in school-wide concerts and art exhibitions throughout the year. When possible, music and art lessons are integrated into classroom units of study.

## Physical Education & Health

Physical education is offered two times per 6-day cycle in 45-minute sessions. During this time, students learn the skills and strategies for team and individual sports, fitness, and dance and movement. Participation, effort and sportsmanship are highly emphasized, and students learn to work together in cooperative teams. Swimming instructional units are offered twice a year in September and in May. Health topics are embedded in classroom units and facilitated by teachers and the school nurse.

## Technology, Research, and Library

ISD's technology curriculum is an integrated program that infuses critical computer literacy benchmarks into existing grade level units of study. Students create media-based projects that build 21st century digital skills. Learning targets are aligned with *NETS* (*National Educational Technology Standards*).

ISD uses the *Big6 Research* model for information literacy. Students identify research goals, seek, use and assemble relevant and credible information, and reflect on their process and product. These research projects are integrated into classroom units of study. Students visit the library once a week to check out books.

## Service Learning

ISD takes pride in an established community service program and maintains ongoing relationships with two local organizations:

- *Samusocial, a Dakar-based support agency for Taïbe street children,*
- *Le Pouppinière, an orphanage for Senegalese newborns and toddlers whose mothers have died at childbirth.*

Fourth graders participate in activities with Samusocial, both at ISD and at the local Samusocial facility as well as with our school-based initiative, *Jappale*, which supports ISD local staff.

## English Language Learners

ISD offers a sheltered immersion program for English Language Learners. Students are assessed at the beginning of the year to determine needs. Non-English proficient students receive daily support with the ELL specialist during the Language Arts instructional block (45 - 90 minutes daily). Limited-English proficient students are supported in after-school programs. The ELL specialist works with teachers to employ a wide variety of differentiation strategies to meet the needs of English Language Learners in their classrooms.

## Learning Support

Teachers use a variety of differentiation strategies in fourth grade classrooms to meet student needs. If additional academic support is warranted and a student is struggling to meet grade-level expectations, educational testing may be recommended to assist the school in identifying learning differences and making instructional recommendations. Once identified and evaluated, these students are eligible to receive a daily 45-minute instructional block instead of French instruction. Students in the Learning Support Program do not take daily French classes. The learning specialist uses *psycho-educational* testing results to create an *IEP* (*Individual Education Plan*) and works with classroom teachers to support identified students and their needs.

