

GRADE 4 STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

Fourth Graders have moved into the upper grades of elementary school - a world rich with new ideas and facts

Nine-year-olds are at an intermediate age. They are no longer mere children, but not yet youths. They no longer can abide being babied, but they cannot yet handle being treated as maturely as 11- or 12-year-olds. Consequently, mom and dad must tailor their help to nine-year-olds' needs, and school provides a helpful resource for parents.

Self-motivation most clearly distinguishes fourth grader's personality. They have fallen in love with facts and figures. They like to classify and identify things. It is a great age for collections and catalogues.

In a similar vein it is a great time for practicing proficiency in skills, the operations of arithmetic or the memorization of states and their capitals, for example. They will be better at persevering at a task, but they will occasionally need encouragement to finish what they start and to try new activities.

They may be great talkers. In fact, conversation is becoming a large part of "play" with their friends. Friends, clubs, and teams all grow in importance. Nine-year-olds need opportunities for play and work in groups.

More than at any earlier age, a wide range of individual differences become evident because of the variations in physical maturity between the sexes.

At nine they have a more highly developed sense of reason and ethics than previously. Their love of facts and details makes them ripe for a curriculum that introduces volumes of new information and leads them into much more sophisticated and complex processes of thinking.

Curriculum

By the end of grade four, students will be able to apply their knowledge of word origins, synonyms, antonyms, root words, and affixes to determine the meanings of words.

Students will read and understand grade level appropriate material. Reading for different purposes, making predictions, comparing and contrasting, distinguishing between fact and opinion, cause and effect will be demonstrated.

Fourth graders will understand the structural differences of fantasies, fables, myths, legends and fairy tales. Students will be able to discern the elements of a plot and understand figurative language.

Fourth graders will be able to write a multiple paragraph composition to convey information in chronological order. They will write narratives, responses to literature, information reports and summaries. They will edit and revise their works, using proper punctuation, grammar, capitalization and spelling. They will practice using a dictionary, thesaurus, encyclopedia and library catalog.

Fourth graders will write fluidly and legibly in cursive. By the conclusion of fourth grade, they will demonstrate basic keyboarding skills and be familiar with the vocabulary of technology.

In listening and speaking, fourth graders will make informational and narrative presentations, deliver oral summaries, and recite poems. They will ask thoughtful questions and respond with relevancy, using a speaking voice with proper volume, pitch, phrasing, pace, modulation and gestures.

In mathematics, fourth graders face a notable increase in complexity and abstractness. Of course they will be expected to use basic facts without hesitation, but they will also move to comparing like numbers and

fractions and to performing arithmetic operations with fractions and decimals as well as whole numbers. They key is becoming a good decision-maker and problem-solver who uses data in a meaningful way.

In measurement they will solve problems of area and perimeter using formulas. They will begin to expand basic geometric concepts (parallel, perpendicular, diagonal and symmetrical lines). They will expand their understanding of pattern sequencing and make inferences from statistical data. Classifying and sorting objects using two or more attributes and developing an understanding of variables, expressions and equations will lead them into the strands of logic and language as well as algebra.

Science and history will offer similar challenges to fourth graders. Both disciplines will provide a wealth of new ideas and information to minds hungry for them.

The curriculum draws on student interest by having them classify plants and animals in life science and study the ocean in earth science. They learn the interdependence of animals by studying ecosystems and how things survive. In physical science they are introduced to energy in the form of light and sound and the properties of these energy forms.

Fourth grade students develop a time line as they move through California's history. Students study California's role in the westward expansion of America. Fourth grade history looks at historical events, [example: Gold Rush] and their importance as they affect the future of California's population, culture, and politics. Students also look at modern day California, the diversity of the state and its population, its economic development and growth. California's geographical location and environmental factors that effect its future growth are also studied. Time is spent looking at some of California's main cities, especially port cities, and their importance in California's economic development. Through the use of current events, students examine problems facing California today.

The health and physical education program addresses a broad range of personal and community topics. The need for a lifelong commitment to fitness is emphasized. Game skills, cooperation, teamwork and good sportsmanship are taught. Avoidance of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs are touched upon in the classroom. Community pride and responsibility are taught through conservation and recycling.

In visual and performing arts, fourth graders learn criteria for making and justifying judgments about the meaning of the arts. They expand their capacity for enjoying and participating in all of the arts in part by developing skills and craftsmanship for effective expression.

Perspective

Fourth graders have moved into the upper grades of elementary school, a world rich with new ideas and facts. This wealth of knowledge is not easily assimilated. To do so effectively requires an active learner.

In real learning, students are workers. What is significant is what students know and can do and how well they can speak, write, calculate and solve problems. The fourth grade curriculum demands active learning from students.

An effective curriculum also addresses the developing characters of children. It must stress good work habits, perseverance, honesty, self-reliance and consideration for others. These qualities are appreciated at home and are important for the student's future.