

Learning in Grade Four



Valley Stream District 13 Curriculum Overview

A Message from the Superintendent

Dear Parents,

Welcome to a new school year! This guide was developed by the professional staff of Valley Stream District Thirteen in order to provide you with important information about your child's educational program. It is offered to support parents and guardians in achieving the home-school collaboration necessary to afford our students the opportunity to reach their maximum potential. It is our hope that this document will serve to help you understand the learning goals for your child, as well as facilitate communication with your child's teachers.

District Thirteen supports a cohesive, developmentally appropriate, New York State Standards-based curriculum. A full listing and description of the New York State Learning Standards can be found at [http:// www.emsc.nysed.gov/top/learning.html](http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/top/learning.html). We offer a varied and challenging instructional program, in a nurturing environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. By working together we can provide our children with the richest educational experience possible. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact your child's teacher, your principal, or me.

I look forward to a successful school year.

Sincerely, 

Elizabeth Lison, Ed. D

Superintendent of Schools

Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen Goals

1. To foster positive dispositions and improve student performance in English Language Arts (reading, writing, speaking, listening).
2. To improve students' ability to think, reason, problem solve, and compute mathematically.
3. To differentiate instruction in order to meet the diverse learning needs of our students.
4. To teach students to respect and appreciate differences between and among people and cultures around the world.
5. To foster a sense of responsible citizenship in a caring and respectful community of learners.
6. To teach students positive strategies for conflict resolution.
7. To challenge students to construct a deeper understanding of the world around them through an inquiry based approach to science and social studies.
8. To infuse technology applications into all areas of the curriculum.
9. To develop abilities, talents, and creativity in music, art, and physical education.

INTEGRATED LANGUAGE ARTS

It is our goal to inspire students to read for knowledge, information and enjoyment in order to satisfy their curiosity about the world in which they live. The focus of instruction continues to address the four English/Language Arts Learning Standards: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Carefully planned instructional practices, which include teacher modeling, demonstration and discussions, help students develop critical thinking, vocabulary and comprehension strategies. Through exposure to a variety of literary genres (e.g. fiction, non-fiction and poetry), fourth grade students will have opportunities to:

Oral Communication

- Share information and observations with others
- Share opinions about events, books, experiences and/or issues; and support with some evidence
- Express thoughts clearly—using grammatically correct language structures and appropriate volume
- Respond to the ideas of others in conversations on familiar topics, recognizing the need to take turns
- Listen for a specific purpose— to gain information or aesthetic appreciation
- Listen respectfully—giving the speaker one’s undivided attention
- Follow verbal, sequential directions
- Ask appropriate questions for clarification

Reading

- Read a variety of literature from different genres: picture books, poems, magazine feature articles and stories, songs, plays, works of fiction (e.g. fables, myths, legends) and non-fiction
- Read aloud with appropriate accuracy, fluency and expression—using phonics and context cues to determine pronunciation and meaning
- Use a variety of strategies to figure out new words (e.g. structural analysis—root words, prefixes and suffixes)
- Understand and discuss literary elements and author’s craft—character development, setting, plot, theme, point of view, etc.
- Predict, draw conclusions/inferences, and form opinions about a variety of literary and informational texts based upon their prior knowledge and textual information
- Determine the most important ideas and themes in poetry, fiction and non-fiction texts (e.g. magazine and newspaper feature articles, textbooks and primary source documents)
- Elicit the meaning of new vocabulary words from contextual cues and utilize signal words to aid understanding
- Ask questions of themselves, the authors and the texts as they read
- Evaluate strategies for reading critically (e.g. recognizing bias, differentiating fact from opinion)
- Evaluate literary merit
- Use appropriate technology to foster the development of the above listed skills, strategies and dispositions

Writing

- Write for a variety of audiences and purposes—responses to literature, to tell a story, to inform others and functional writing (e.g. brochures, instructions)
- Participate in journal, personal, expressive and informational writing that develops narration, description, persuasion and classification skills (e.g. business letters, persuasive essays, literary comparisons and responses)
- Use figurative language and free prose, create stories, poems and riddles
- Use the process of pre-writing, drafting, revising and proofreading/editing to produce well-constructed writing pieces
- Use desktop publishing software to aid in the revision process
- Develop and extend brainstorming, paraphrasing and summarizing skills
- Relate ideas to personal experiences or prior knowledge
- Use rich and varied vocabulary related to specific topics, themes or settings
- Observe basic writing conventions—spelling, punctuation and capitalization rules, as well as appropriate sentence and paragraph structures
- Utilize dictionaries, thesauruses and resource technology
- Review cursive handwriting techniques

MATHEMATICS, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY (MSTe)

“Education begins with the curiosity of the learner.” *-John Dewey*

The most effective way for elementary students to construct a foundation in Mathematics, Science, and Technology is through hands-on experiences. The Valley Stream District Thirteen Mathematics, Science, and Technology Curricula are based upon both the National and Statewide Standards. Students are guided in active and extended inquiry, using mathematical analysis, inquiry based approaches, and engineering design, as appropriate, to pose questions, and seek answers. The focus is thus on student understanding of content information and inquiry process skills. Students are motivated to make and discuss with their peers their own discoveries, while drawing conclusions, which reflect a multitude of ways to reach a solution. This empowers the students to become independent thinkers who are enthusiastic about mathematics, science, and technology education.

MATHEMATICS

In the fourth grade the children will engage in activities that will reinforce and further develop usage of mathematical concepts, operations and critical thinking skills. The Mathematics Curriculum focuses on mathematical reasoning, arithmetic, modeling and multiple representation, The math curriculum is currently being revised.

The following key ideas are intertwined throughout the curriculum: Reasoning Modeling and Multiple Representations Patterns and Functions Problem Solving Strategies Mathematical Communication

SCIENCE

The fourth grade science program will develop the necessary attitudes, content and skills, focusing on problem solving as a goal. Since an effective problem solver must be knowledgeable, students will increase their understanding of science principles. These goals are primarily realized through the use of hands on activities that enrich the understanding of life science, physical science and earth science. The students will:

I. LIFE SCIENCE

- Recognize that living things are both similar to and different from each other and nonliving living things
- Develop an awareness that plants and animals reproduce to continue the species
- Conclude that the different kinds of plants and animals in an area may depend upon each other for food and other needs; the group of plants and animals that are dependent on each other is called a community
- Learn that individual organisms and species change over time
- Recognize that human decisions and activities have had a profound impact on the physical and living environment
- Science process skill emphasis on identifying variables, measuring, and recording data

II. PHYSICAL SCIENCE

- Understand that matter and energy have forms and properties that determine observable characteristics
- Recognize that energy exists in many forms, and when these forms change energy is conserved (i.e., heat energy, chemical energy)
- Conclude that matter and energy interact through forces that result in changes of motion (i.e., push/pull, gravity, magnetism)
- Science process skill emphasis on formulating hypotheses and generalizing

III. EARTH SCIENCE

- Describe the effect of erosion on the earth's crust and how it can be controlled
- Collect and graph data
- Explain the differences between a rock and a mineral and identify common uses for them
- Describe how igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic rocks are formed
- Compare the composition and appearance of various rocks
- Science process skill emphasis on identifying variables and inferring

HEALTH

In the fourth grade students will

- Develop an awareness of community safety
 - Understand basic safety rules
 - Recognize potentially dangerous situations and know how to avoid or reduce their risk
 - Know some personal and social skills which contribute to safety
 - Recognize characteristics of the environment that contribute to health
 - Know how basic body systems work
- Possess basic knowledge and skills supporting positive health choices
 - Understand how behaviors such as food selection, exercise and rest affect growth and development
 - Recognize peer pressure and other influences which affect their health
 - Know about some diseases/disorders and their prevention and treatment
 - Demonstrate ways to support others in making healthy choices
 - Identify characteristics of health information and health products and services and know where to locate them
 - Understand that one's culture contributes to individual and family beliefs and practices affecting health
 - Know how to get help in illness, injury or emergency situations
 - Recognize how the media affect health choices
 - Develop strategies to avoid abduction

SOCIAL STUDIES

The social studies curriculum offers students the opportunity to become actively involved in the world around them by providing them with a variety of experiences that will ultimately prepare students to be informed, responsible citizens. Essential skills and strategies are taught through an inquiry-based approach to learning, utilizing a variety of informational resources including: textbooks, trade books, technology/internet resources and relevant primary source documents.

In fourth grade, students study local, New York State and United States' history and government. Students learn about the significant people, places, events and issues that influenced life in their local communities and connect them to the historical development of our nation. Geographic, economic, social/cultural, political and historical perspectives are stressed as students:

Geographic

- Understand that a local community has a geographic history
- Locate places within the community, state and nation
- Examine different kinds of maps to identify and define their components, including key, title, legend, cardinal and intermediate directions, scale and grid

Economic

- Understand that a local community has an economic history
- Study about how the availability and distribution of resources is important to a nation's economic growth
- Investigate how production, distribution, exchange and consumption of goods and services are economic decisions with which all societies and nations must deal

Social/Cultural

- Recognize that families in the local community change over time
- Understand that places in your community change
- Appreciate that a community has a unique social/cultural makeup and heritage
- Learn that a community's past and present history is filled with contributors of varied socioeconomic backgrounds
 - Realize that people of a local community tend to be influenced by and benefit from other cultures by their gifts and example

Political

- Recognize that the local community and the U.S. have a political history
- Understand that citizenship includes an awareness of the holidays, celebrations and symbols of our nation
- Identify the political system of the U.S. as a democracy
- Explain the probable consequences of the absence of government and rules
- Describe the basic purposes of government and the importance of civic life
- Explore the contributions of citizens as they participate in political action on the local, state and national level
- Use reference software to research geographical and political information

Historical

- Gather information about the accomplishment of individuals and groups, including Native Americans, living
 - in their neighborhoods and communities
- Recognize that Long Island and New York played a part in American history
- Become aware that significant events and people have contributed to Long Island's history

LIBRARY

The mission of the Library Media Program is to create lifelong readers and seekers of information.

Our aim is to have our students feel comfortable and at home in any library within the United States and to be able to locate and retrieve any information sought. Our students must be able to access, evaluate and use information from various sources and formats. Using this newfound knowledge, our students will be able to think critically, construct meaning, and solve problems.

Our program is designed to provide our students with a spiral approach to developing literacy and research skills. This approach is defined by the New York State Standards and the American Association of School Libraries' Information Standards for Student Learning. The Library Program is an integral part of the school community. The fourth grade Library Program includes:

Information Literacy

- Introduction to a variety of authors, illustrators, fiction genres, fables, legends, tall tales, biography, nonfiction, and award winning materials: Caldecott and Newbery
- Identifying the distinguishing features of nonfiction books: captions, diagrams, table of contents, index, glossary, bibliography, timelines, and suggested web sites
- Introduction to encyclopedias: locating topics, using guide words, selecting key words, navigating the index and cross references
- Guided use of the Internet to find information

Independent Learning

- Introduction to the Dewey Decimal System's Ten classes: categorizing nonfiction subject areas given a Dewey number
- Using the OPAC to search for information in three ways – title, author, subject, understanding how the call number identifies the type of book and the book "address"
- Relating personal experiences to those of literary characters from different historical, cultural and social settings
- Identify and use appropriate sources of information: dictionary, thesaurus, encyclopedia, atlas, and/or other reference material to answer a question

Social Responsibility

- Participation in book discussions
- Revisit the concept of copyright or ownership of ideas

ENRICHMENT

The purpose of the enrichment program is to provide all students the strategies for higher order thinking skills across all curriculum areas. The Talents Unlimited Program is designed to help teachers recognize and nurture the cognitive abilities and talents in all children. This multiple talent approach develops critical and creative thinking skills and enhances self-image.

This program will:

- Develop five talent areas – productive thinking, communication, forecasting, planning and decision making
- Recognize that all children have abilities and talents in a variety of areas
- Provide the opportunities for problem solving and critical and creative thinking throughout the curriculum

ART

Our visual arts curriculum is derived from the New York State Standards for the Arts at the Elementary Level. In a program of sequential learning and discovery, students explore a wide range of media and techniques in their art work. Encouraging creativity, using problem-solving techniques, developing visual literacy and analysis, and learning about cultures and their artistic contributions are important aspects of our program.

Art teachers in each building maintain a portfolio of examples of students' work from kindergarten through grade six.

In FOURTH GRADE children...

- explore how types and styles of art are influenced by time and culture.
- use art terminology to describe, analyze and interpret works of art.
- develop computer-generated art work.
- combine media to create unique and personal expressions (collage, assemblage, montage).
- collect and self-assess work in a portfolio.

MUSIC

The general music curriculum begins in kindergarten and is broadened, developed and practiced from grades one through six. The material which is covered can be organized into fundamental areas of music knowledge and expression. The four main areas which compromise the music curriculum throughout the elementary school years are: the singing voice; rhythm; melody and other musical elements. Various units of musical study are developed from the following curriculum criteria for grade four, as students;

- Increase their awareness of proper breath control in singing
- Learn to sing with diaphragm support and projection
- Sing in two and three parts via canons and projection
- Work on exercises to aurally identify major and minor tonality
- Identify and experience melody versus accompaniment
- Create and drill rhythmic patterns, in exact repetition
- Transfer rhythms – to movement – to recorder
- Work on exercises to use time, space and energy while performing
- Experience various musical forms by studying famous classics
- Are given the opportunity to participate in choral and instrumental programs:



Artwork by Christine Rivera

The performing group program, both choral and instrumental, is offered to students in grades 4 through 6. The ensemble groups rehearse before and after school and occasionally at noon hour. Formalized choral training may begin as early as third grade, however the major emphasis of the choral experience is concentrated in grades 4 through 6. Some of our youngsters are also involved in stage acting as an outgrowth of the choral program. In fourth grade, beginning instrumental students receive thirty minute, biweekly lessons for one full year. The beginning instrumental curriculum is geared towards the mastery of note reading and performance skills. The fifth and sixth grade intermediate level students participate in the band and orchestra program. The intermediate instrumental curriculum is dictated by the more advanced material programmed for performance. In addition to attending rehearsals, these students receive a half hour lesson, one time per week. Some of the performing groups showcased are the Concert Band, String Orchestra, Advanced Chorus, Primary Choir, Jazz Ensemble, Combined Chorus and Marching Band. The groups perform for various school and community related events.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The overall aim of elementary physical education is to provide for the optimal physical, social, emotional and intellectual growth of children in light of their needs and interests.

Students will have the necessary knowledge and skills to establish and maintain physical fitness. Participate in physical activity and maintain personal health. Students will acquire the knowledge and ability necessary to create and maintain a safe and healthy environment. Students will understand and be able to manage their personal and community resources.

In Fourth Grade children...

- Understand the basic components of health related fitness (cardiovascular, muscle strength, endurance and flexibility).
- Work constructively with others to accomplish a variety of goals and tasks.
- Participate in most major team and individual sports.
- Are introduced to proper sports terminology and strategies.
- Understand the relationship between physical activity and individual well-being.
- Contribute to a safe and healthy environment by observing safe conditions for games, recreation, and outdoor activities.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

District Thirteen offers students with disabilities an appropriate educational program designed with specific goals and objectives that meet individual needs. The district is committed to the attainment of goals that emphasize excellence in all students regardless of disabilities.

The Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) is responsible for recommending appropriate services for the preschool population, based on evaluation results. Similarly, the committee on special Education (CSE) recommends appropriate services for our school-aged youngsters.

Programs and services are based on students' current evaluations, assessments of abilities and needs and development of goals and objectives that are included in a child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

A wide spectrum of special education related services and programs such as resource room, speech, counseling, occupational and physical therapies, participation in a collaborative inclusive classroom, and placement in self-contained classes are available with District Thirteen to support the needs of students with disabilities within the general educational setting.

Valley Stream District Thirteen prides itself on building close working relationships between the CPSE, CSE, school staff, school district administrators, parents and community to ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed.

ADDITIONAL SERVICES

PROGRAM FOR GIFTED STUDENTS Grades 3-6

The pull-out portion of the Enrichment Program is designed to meet the needs of identified highly gifted students who have been screened and evaluated. Each student will be encouraged to achieve their maximum potential. The program will be structured around creativity; problem solving and research; scholarship and interpersonal relationships.

The program will enhance the student's ability to:

- Demonstrate higher level thinking skills – critically examine and judge information and ideas; generate unique, creative concepts; define, investigate and solve real problem situations
- Acquire and produce original knowledge – process information to yield “new” knowledge; express ideas or knowledge in a project form; share that product with an appropriate audience
- Relate what is learned to personal growth – understand the implication of ideas and issues; develop confidence in self to accomplish intended goals

SUPPLEMENTAL READING, WRITING AND MATHEMATICS

District Thirteen provides small group instruction for children in grades one through six who require remedial assistance in reading, writing and mathematics. This instruction is provided by specialists who work closely with the classroom teacher. The district provides supplemental instruction designed to support students by developing and enhancing skills and concept development necessary for success.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Approximately twenty foreign languages are spoken by youngsters in District Thirteen. The ESL program, currently a small group pull-out program, contains four basic components: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

The overall goals of the ESL Program are to:

- Enable the learner to achieve communicative and linguistic competence in English, including learning in the content areas.
- Facilitate the socialization and acculturation process by integrating limited English proficient students and their English-speaking peers into extracurricular activities.
- Develop the learning strategies and classroom behaviors that are necessary for academic success

UNITY

I dreamed I stood in a studio
And watched two sculptors there,
The clay they used was a young child's mind,
And they fashioned it with care.

One was a teacher; the tools he used
Were books and music and art;
One, a parent with a guiding hand
And a gentle, loving heart.

Day after day the teacher toiled,
With a touch that was deft and sure,
While the parent labored by his side
And polished and smoother it o'er.

And when at last their task was done
They were proud of that they had wrought,
For the things they had molded into the child
Could neither be sold nor bought.

And each agreed he would have failed
If he had worked alone.
For behind the parent stood the school,
And behind the teacher the home.

Anonymous

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