



***BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHT***  
*September 6th, 2012*

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**What Is Fourth Grade All About?**

- **Basic Skills:** Language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, curriculum and technology integration.
- **Responsibility:** Completing work on time, behaving appropriately, bringing homework to school, following school and class rules, cooperate with others
- **Organization:** Be prepared for class, record homework, keep clean organized work areas, maintain project work
- **Problem Solving:** Academic challenges and social issues
- **Independence:** Remembering homework, bringing instruments, taking coats and lunch bags home, turning library books in on time, working out problems on their own.
- **LifeSkills:** Effort, Initiative, Teamwork, Friendship, Courage, Integrity, Flexibility, Wellness, Organization, Sense of Humor. We practice these skills every day.





## A. Language Arts

1. Students use a reading anthology that includes a variety of fiction and nonfiction short stories, essays, plays, and poems.
2. Students read books of their choice for about twenty minutes each evening as part of homework.
3. Students complete about five book reports during the year (realistic or historical fiction, biography, informational, fantasy/science fiction, and genre-of-choice.)
4. Students read literature books at their level. Within a team, they complete different job sheets and use these as part of discussion groups.
5. Students study new vocabulary words. They practice their words in a variety of ways, including speaking and writing specific sentence structures. There is a vocabulary quiz every other week.
6. Students learn four different writing genres: Narratives, summaries, responses to literature, and informational reports. In March, all California fourth graders take the STAR Writing Standards Test. (See "The 4th Grade Writing Program," included.)
7. Students use a thesaurus and dictionary to find words and definitions. They have a mini-spelling dictionary at their desks to use everyday.
8. Students learn a variety of language patterns and conventions and use them in written work.
9. Students make individual and team oral presentations.
10. Students are assigned to study a list of twenty (or in some cases fewer) spelling words, every other week. Students are assigned either a basic or a challenge list, and tests are on Friday. Students may try out for the Dixie Spelling Bee.
11. Neatness is emphasized in all daily work. Students learn and practice cursive writing.



## **B. Mathematics**

1. Dixie's Math series is California Everyday Mathematics (EDM.)

Teachers supplement the program with a variety of other materials. The 4th grade program emphasizes hands-on and critical thinking activities. Please see the "Dixie School District Standards and Curriculum Overview" for specific skills taught.

## **C. Social Studies**

1. The fourth grade program is Reflections: California, A Changing State.

2. Students learn to read and understand content-specific informational text. They study maps, California Regions, Early Californians, Explorers, California Missions, Ranchos, Pioneers, the Gold Rush, and American California through the First Transcontinental Railroad.

3. Students become immersed with Social Studies through projects. They work on teams using G.L.A.D. (Guided Language Acquisition Design) activities and other projects. There also are many online and software-based resources that students use throughout the school year. Children engage with history, often taking on the role of an historical character, so that they begin to learn what life was really like long ago.

4. In addition to November's overnight Coloma trip, fourth graders will take other field trips related to Social Studies and Science.

## **D. Science**

1. Our Science program is Scott Foresman. Students study electricity, magnetism, the flow of energy and matter, ecosystems, minerals, rocks, and the changing earth.

2. This program combines informational text, G.L.A.D. activities, diagrams, online resources, and graphics with hands-on investigations and experiments.

3. The fourth grade team does a science rotation, thus giving students the opportunity to work with each teacher.

4. Students have the option of participating in the district Science Fair.

## **E. Monitoring Student Progress and Assessment**

At the beginning and end of the year, students are assessed in reading with DIBELS (for fluency) and the Lexile survey (for comprehension.) There are regular quizzes and tests to cover curriculum areas. Graded assessments are sent home in the Friday folder. If a student has not met a benchmark, parents are asked to sign and return their child's assessment to school.



## **F. Miscellaneous**

Dixie School has specialists for Music, P.E., Art, Drama, and Library. Technology is used everyday to enhance teaching and learning. Students will use the computer lab and mini-lab in the classroom.

Students have access to the Web portal, ed1stop, both at school and at home. This service provides resources that engage students with dynamic material and help teachers meet state standards.

Username: mreht\_stu Password: fourth

## **G. Classroom Instructional Strategies and Approaches**

People learn in different ways and your child will experience a variety of approaches in class. These include:

- whole group instruction with students as active listeners and participants
- small group instruction directed by the teacher
- paired and small group cooperative and discussion teams
- learning center activities
- one-on-one tutoring
- independent work

## **H. Homework**

Homework is assigned nightly, Monday through Thursday. The "Dixie School Homework Guidelines" are posted on the school and class web pages. In addition, if needed, classwork may be sent home for a student to finish or redo. It is often helpful for students to practice math facts at home.

The children are responsible for writing down their assignments each day. If they forget their homework on a given evening, students complete an acknowledgment note when they enter class the next morning. This note is sent home for a signature, so that parents are informed. Unfinished homework can be returned when it is complete.

Parents may excuse their child from homework by writing a note to the teacher. But, please be aware that homework is an important part of fourth grade. Homework always reviews and/or expands skills taught in class.

Parents, please sign your child's "Homework Assignment Sheet" each evening. This routine promotes mutual understanding and communication between home and school. Thank you very much.



## **I. Grades and Assessments**

Fourth grade is the first year that your child receives letter grades for quizzes, tests, more important daily assignments, and on the report card. (Please see attached "How Student Work Is Graded.") There will be three report cards and one scheduled parent/teacher conference, in October. Mid-trimester, progress reports are sent home, if improvement is needed.

## **J. Communication Between Home and School**

Students benefit greatly when parents and teachers engage in open, responsible, positive, and timely communication with one other.

Your child's teacher is available throughout the year for parent/teacher conferences, at your request. You know your child best, and your input makes a big difference. Also, please be assured that you will be notified if something of concern comes up at school, related to your child.

Although email correspondence is useful for short communications, face-to-face or telephone conferences work best to promote understanding about many student-related matters. Conferences can be scheduled before or after school. (Parent/teacher conferences will not work between 8:05 and 2:35. During the school day, teachers need to focus on students' immediate needs.)

Please try to visit the classroom web page often because this information is updated regularly.

## **K. Positive Incentives, Leadership, and Discipline**

Students have clearly communicated school and playground rules. They are expected to be safe, respectful, kind, and responsible. In class, there is a system of verbal reminders and color-coded cards that assist each child with class rules. There is a "Behavior Journal" that students complete, if necessary, which is then sent home for parent information and signature. When needed, we will formulate a new plan so that your child has a more successful experience at school.

There is a classroom incentive program. About three times per year, after students have earned 100 points, there is an hour of so of structured free time, in class.



There is a school citation program for minor and major infractions. If a student receives a citation, parents are contacted and a plan for student improvement is discussed and agreed upon.

In fourth grade, students who are interested in leadership may seek to become Student Council classroom representatives. In addition, students have classroom jobs, such as class messenger and line leader.

### **L. Absences**

If your child will be absent from school, please call or email the school office. A packet of the most important missed assignments will be sent home for your student to complete, with a page for you to sign. Since this work may include new concepts, it is best for your student to complete the packet within a few days. District policy states that students will be given Independent Study assignments when they will miss five or more school days. Please notify the school office to arrange for Independent Study.

### **M. Buddies**

Fourth graders are buddies with first graders. We meet regularly to complete technology and other activities. Fourth graders serve as tutors and friends.

### **N. Class Birthdays**

Students are welcome to bring healthy treats on their birthdays. Treats are usually served just before 10:05 recess. Students with summer birthdays are welcome to celebrate an unbirthday, or half-birthday. Please, no party invitations at school.

### **O. How You Can Support the Classroom Program**

- Help your child be well-rested
- Be sure your child comes to school on time
- Provide nutritious meals and snacks at school
- Set aside a place for homework. Be supportive, but allow your child to do his/her own work.
- Make nightly reading an enjoyable experience.
- Help children become responsible for themselves
- Be a Parent Volunteer in class or at home
- Stay in communication with your child's teacher



## *The Fourth Grade Child*

The move into fourth grade is one of the most critical periods for children. The tasks of fourth grade require an integration of basic skills learned in the primary grades - reading, math, spelling, writing and other language arts.

Fourth graders tend to have a new level of maturity, self-confidence, and independence. Their behavior is more refined. They often have more self-control and friendships are more solid. They like to please and be chosen. They tend to like organized games and activities, but may spend more time alone.

### *Many fourth graders:*

- Need to be part of a group
- Possess a high activity level
- Are able to empathize
- Can think independently and critically, but are tied to peer standards
- Can express a wide range of emotions and verbalize easily
- Want to put some distance between themselves and adults
- Seek independence
- Gain a greater sense of responsibility
- Set personal standards
- Begin making decisions
- Develop personal interests and abilities
- Develop social skills
- Learn to engage in group decision-making

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***AS ALWAYS, THANK YOU FOR ALL OF YOUR SUPPORT!***