Welcome to Fourth Grade!

Fourth graders are extremely busy! They are busy with new experiences, learning, friendships and relationships. But do not be fooled by how old they look and act: fourth graders will still organize a pretend game with a group of friends, take on the roles in a made-up performance and write silly poems. Fourth graders are coming into their own, and what looks like play might hint at the talents and interests the child may embrace later in life.

Reading and writing work is grounded in the Teachers College reading and writing units of study and include realistic fiction, informational text, historical fiction, and plays. Students respond to reading in journals which become an important tool for teachers to chart progress. They learn to cite evidence from the text to support their ideas and read for both inferential and literal meaning. As part of the unit on plays, students read and perform a students’ version of a Shakespeare play. Reading is assessed frequently throughout the year. Students have access to an online reading account called Kids A to Z to practice reading skills at home.

Writing workshop includes units in narrative, information and opinion writing. Students learn and are expected to write more complex sentences, organize their ideas into paragraphs, and revise their work independently. Spelling follows the Words Their Way sequence. They learn to use google.docs to share, edit and revise their pieces with a peer or teacher editor. A publishing celebration welcomes families into the classroom to read, hear and see students’ work, and students are invited to contribute a favorite published piece to the Lower School literary magazine, DEScribe.

As in all grades, a problem-based math approach supported by the Singapore Math program helps develop strong conceptual understandings and skills, flexible thinking and a willingness to engage with open-ended problems. Teachers work with whole groups, small groups and one-on-one, as needed and determined by frequent assessment. Students are given an ALEKS (Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces) account. ALEKS is a web-based, artificially intelligent assessment and learning system that allows students to practice, develop and master skills at home. Math units of study in fourth grade include whole number operations within numbers up to 100,000; factors and multiples; multiplication and division; graphing, data and measurement; and fractions and decimals.

In social studies students study the time period of the Pilgrims and learn about how and why groups leave their home country. Students participate in the World Peace Game. The game is a simulation that provides the opportunity for students to participate in "nation teams" and institutions. The students strive to extricate their world community from various economic, social, military and environmental crises. The goal of the game is to achieve world prosperity and peace with the least amount of conflict.

Fourth-grade musicians work with pitched percussion instruments such as xylophone, metallophone, and glockenspiel and are able to play alone, as well as in a group. They have music class twice a week. Students present a concert on the main Dwight-Englewood stage in the spring. Students attend a concert at NJPAC presented by the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra. They research and report on the life of a composer of their own choosing from the Baroque, Classical, Romantic, 20th Century and Contemporary Periods.

Health and Wellness meets twice a week. They are exposed to a wide variety of activities to help develop an overall understanding of fitness and basic skills. They learn to use a fitnessgram and participate in Jump Rope for Heart. Sports introduced and practiced include soccer, flag football, handball, basketball, floor hockey, base games and lacrosse. They learn to become more strategic teammates. They engage in basic movement and motor skills to improve overall fitness, hand-eye and foot-eye coordination, and body/spatial awareness. When possible, and frequently in the spring, students have physical education on the school’s Leggett Field.
Science begins with a plant study and includes plant classification and reproduction. The students record data from the garden and take measurements for our records. They become immersed in environmental issues forming their own opinions and discuss them articulately. They are able to use microscopes, reason based on evidence and make inferences. They conduct experiments independently. They are shown the basics of working in a chemistry lab and extend their science vocabulary. The fourth-grade science class meets twice a week.

As part of technology fourth graders use Lego WeDo kits and are challenged to build several design models, and then use software to make the objects move. Students come up with their own designs as well. While studying the Pilgrims, students use iPads to research and take notes about the time period.

Fourth-graders have Spanish three times a week. They use memorized phrases and full sentences to express messages verbally and in writing. There is an increased emphasis on conversation (asking and answering questions). A thematic unit on lifestyle covers the following topics with a cultural perspective from Spanish speaking countries: food and nutrition; leisure activities; environment.

During the twice weekly art classes, students build on the importance of knowing elements of color, line and shape, pattern, design and composition, while exploring broader concepts of drawing, painting, collage, sculpture, printmaking, digital art and photography. Each student will create and manage a collection of their work within each medium that demonstrates their understanding of the mediums and concepts taught. Students will add to and shape their digital portfolios which will highlight their art projects. They are exposed to art and art history based in the mediums that they will be learning, while developing a wealth of knowledge of styles and artistic syntax that support artists in their work.

Fourth graders can participate in band, chorus, and the math team after school at no charge to families. Registration will be included in a subsequent mailing.