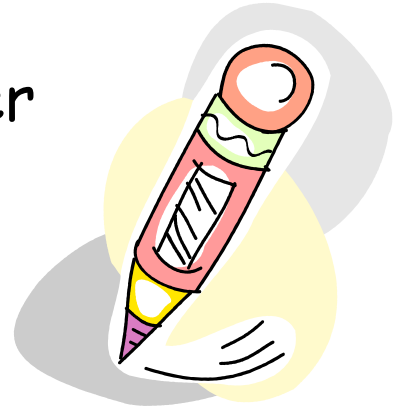


Fourth Grade Curriculum Letter



Dear Parents:

We are enjoying getting to know your child as we plan the activities and instruction for this year. Fourth grade is traditionally a benchmark year in terms of the challenges and responsibilities he or she will encounter.

We are all available most mornings from 8:15 to 8:30, and each day after school until 3:45 to provide additional support as needed. We're here to work together with you in helping your child reach the following goals: mastering concepts in math, language arts, writing, science, and social studies; and becoming more responsible for fulfilling independent expectations. This outline will provide some basic information describing the fourth grade curriculum and our expectations for your child.

Overview: Fourth grade is usually the first time students will experience departmentalization. We deploy for math, reading, science and social studies. As many are already learning, organization is the key to success in the intermediate grades.

Intermediate Grading: Beginning in fourth grade, students' academic progress in the core subject areas is reported in percentages. The percentages are transferred into letter grades for report cards using the following scale:

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|---|-------------|
| A | 100 - 90% |
| B | 89 - 80% |
| C | 79 - 70% |
| D | 69 - 60% |
| E | 59% & below |

We will also use symbols to assess some student work including handwriting, writer's workshop elements, and reading center activities. These symbols are a plus (+) for exceptional, a check (✓) for satisfactory, and a minus (-) for needs improvement

Student Expectations: Students are expected to come to their deployed classes with all materials needed. Taking responsibility for organization and being prepared are the foundations of a successful learner. These skills are critical beginning in fourth grade and continuing throughout their educational journey as they balance core subjects with different teachers. Fourth grade students are responsible for making-up work that they miss while they attend a pull-out program or instrumental music class. Each teacher posts daily homework assignments on the front board to aid children.

Absence: Parents are asked to call the school office as early as possible on the day of an absence. Upon request, we'll send materials home so that your child may return to school prepared for classes. We use an *Assignment Sheet* which lists lessons and homework that children need to complete when they are absent. We ask that you notify us in advance as soon as possible if you know that your child will miss school for an extended period of time for travel, etc. This allows us to discuss the assignments with your child **before** he or she leaves and answer any questions. Please return the assignment sheet to school with your child's completed work.

Communication: Email and voice mail are two methods of communication in which you may contact us regarding your child. Our Email addresses are: rmacosko@mtlsd.net and jmeute@mtlsd.net. If you have an urgent message, it is best to send a note or call the school office as we often may not have a chance to check messages during the school day. We will post information on the Foster website to keep you informed of current units of study. School events and important dates will be posted on the Dashboard calendar. *Parent/Teacher Conferences* are officially scheduled twice a year, but we are available to discuss questions and concerns with you as needed. In an effort to keep you informed on your child's progress, we will be using a *Traveling Folder* containing graded assignments and quizzes. They will be sent home every **other** Friday. We ask that you review and discuss the contents of this folder with your child when it is brought home. Please keep the contents, then sign and return the folder before sending it back to school.

Homework: We try to ensure a balance in the amount of work your child has to complete each night. With the exception of weekly spelling and reading assessments, we do our best not to schedule multiple tests on the same day. Fourth graders received a *Student Homework Book* for recording ALL assignments as well as test dates and other important information. We ask that you review these assignments with your children each night. There is a place on each page for parent/teacher communication. Please feel free to use this area for writing any comments or concerns that you may have. Our goal for each fourth grade student is to read 15-20 minutes each night.

Special Subjects: Fourth graders still have art and library once, and gym and Spanish twice each week. Changes from third grade are that vocal music is now a forty-five minute class once a week, and Mrs. Pattak comes to our classrooms once a week to teach health. Curriculum letters for these subjects were attached to this week's Foster Forecast. Please take the time to locate and read this valuable information.

Mathematics: Fourth grade at Foster is fortunate to be involved in Wave 1 of a two-year implementation plan for the new math curriculum. Wave 1 involves approximately 25 teachers from all grade levels and all buildings. All elementary teachers will be involved in Wave 2 next year. The new program utilizes a Joint-Usage Plan that combines a traditional *Scott Foresman - Addison Wesley text* with student-centered, activity-based units known as *Investigations*. SFAW focuses on procedural understanding with problem-solving, technology, and manipulatives integrated into lessons. *Investigations* focuses on conceptual understanding. Students are encouraged to think creatively, and to develop and articulate their own problem-solving strategies. They will participate in engaging games that reinforce their understanding of important mathematical concepts and skills. All students will have a username and password granting them access to an on-line text book and a wealth of resources on the Pearson Success Net website.

Social Studies: This is the second year of our new social studies curriculum called *Social Studies Alive!* This program enables students to experience the concepts through an active, student-centered approach to teaching social studies. Student

materials include a textbook, interactive notebook and supplemental desk maps. The units of study for fourth grade are *Regions of the United States*, *Maps and Globes*, and *Pennsylvania History*. Students will take tests and quizzes and earn letter grades in social studies.

Language Arts: *Harcourt Trophies* is a research based, developmental reading program. The students are exposed to a wide variety of genres including realistic fiction, biographies, historical fiction, plays and poetry. Differentiation is built into the program to accommodate different learning styles and levels of our students. Flexible grouping, center activities, direct instruction and read-alouds are among the core elements of our reading instruction. A *focus strategy* and *focus skill* will be taught with each story and theme. These strategies are ways to promote comprehension, independence, and fluency. Assessment includes three tests—an end of selection test, a holistic test and a language and reading skills test. Scores for the holistic and skills tests will be reported on a *Reading Record Card* and sent home. The Harcourt Trophies website can be accessed through the Foster homepage in the *Links* section or by typing www.harcourtschool.com/menus/trophies/menu.html. Vocabulary and spelling words, along with various reading and grammar activities, can be found on the Harcourt website. A *Theme Overview* will also be sent home at the beginning of each theme. You can use this as a guide to your child's mastery of skills and concepts.

Writer's Workshop: In writer's workshop, the students will practice and develop their skills of the writing process: prewriting, drafting, revising, proofreading and publishing. Each day, the students will learn or review a writing strategy, engage in uninterrupted writing time, and have a chance to listen or share during author's chair. We will focus on one genre at a time. They are: narrative account, response to prompt, report, persuasive piece, and narrative procedure. The students will also work on responding to literature, writing letters, and poetry. Writing pieces are graded using a 4-point rubric in the areas of focus, content, organization, and style. Writing pieces and grades will be sent home in the students' Traveling Folders.

Science: The fourth grade science program encompasses three themes or areas of study. They are *Ecosystems*, *Land & Water*, and *Electric Circuits*. Our science curriculum incorporates an investigative, inquiry-based instructional approach. Students develop curiosity, respect for evidence, critical reflection, flexibility, sensitivity to living things and a love for learning about science. Students will take tests and quizzes and earn letter grades in science. Study guides for all ASSET science units will be provided prior to all tests.

Technology Integration: Each classroom has six Dell computers for student use. Fourth graders will have the opportunity to work with various programs including Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel, and Kidspiration. Foster school also has a mobile lab of twenty-four laptops, two mobile Alphasmart labs, a lab of thirty-six Dell Axims, four SMART Boards, two Air Liners, and a Classroom Performance System. All of these components enhance instruction and student work production.

We hope that this information has been beneficial to you and ask for your support and

encouragement in helping your child meet the challenges of fourth grade. Your cooperation and communication is greatly appreciated, so please do not hesitate to contact us with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Macosko and Mr. Meute