

Spruce Street School

Fourth Grade

Curriculum Packet

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Welcome and Overview

September 2013

Dear Families,

This document outlines each content area as well as information about communication, homework and basic classroom routines and policies. This packet contains important information that we will refer back to during the course of the year. *Please keep it in a safe place.* We appreciate your involvement in your child's 4th grade journey. Our Spruce Street community would not be complete without your ongoing support and dedication.

We would like to express our gratitude for your generous donations to our school-wide supplies. These materials make all the learning that takes place possible.

Our opening weeks have set the foundation for a positive working relationship. We are looking forward to continuing our collaborative work in the 2013-2014 school year and beyond!

Best,
Meryl and Nancy

Reading and Writing

Reading and writing workshops are essential parts of our daily literacy block. This is when we explicitly teach reading and writing strategies through modeling and demonstration. Throughout the year, reading and writing workshop will include different units of study. Over the course of each unit, students will study specific genres, while being immersed in the language and features that pertain to the specific genre.

Below is an overview of our units of study:

| Unit | Reading Workshop | Writing Workshop |
|------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Launch – Responding to text | Writers as revisers |
| 2 | Learning through reading | Feature article |
| 3 | Editorials and persuasive texts | Persuasive essay |
| 4 | Historical Fiction book clubs | Literary essay |
| 5 | Testing as a genre | Testing as a genre |
| 6 | Global issues book clubs | Historical fiction |
| 7 | Fantasy | Journalism |

Reading Workshop and Writing Workshop

Reading and writing strategies are taught through workshops, as well as through many other literacy activities throughout the day. Below is a list of times where students practice and engage in reading and writing:

Independent reading: Reading “just right” books on their levels helps foster decoding, comprehension, and fluency. Independent reading provides sustained time for students to practice and apply the strategies they have learned. This is also a time for assessment by the teacher through one-on-one conferences and observations. Students are expected to read in a variety of genres across the course of the year.

Shared readings, read alouds and story of the week: Students and teachers read texts together through individual copies of texts or enlarged on a Smart Board. At times, students will listen and read along to stories that introduce them to texts they may not be able to read independently. This is a time when specific lessons and comprehension strategies are modeled and taught. Texts are chosen to develop listening and memory

skills, and deepen understanding of story elements such as character, plot, conflict and theme.

Guided reading: Students with similar needs and/or strengths work in small groups with the teacher to develop strong, independent reading strategies to maximize comprehension.

Text talk and Socratic Seminar: Students will engage in scholarly discussions of essential questions in which student opinions are shared, proven, refuted and refined through dialogue with other students.

Writer's workshop: Children are guided as we study and work through different steps of the writing process (generating ideas, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing). During the year we will focus on publishing pieces from a variety of genres.

Word study: Students explore letter combination sounds, vowel sounds, spelling rules, word origin and some phonics in order to become more proficient spellers. Word Study will also focus on parts of speech, vocabulary and fundamental grammar rules.

Math

Students will investigate mathematical concepts, learn skills and strategies, explore mathematical representation through concrete and abstract models, recognize math in their everyday lives, and become curious, capable mathematicians. Our units of study for the year will be:

| Unit | Topic |
|------|--|
| 1 | Place value and rounding |
| 2 | Place value and division |
| 3 | Geometry |
| 4 | Fraction equivalence |
| 5 | Addition and subtraction of fractions |
| 6 | Multiplication and division of fractions |
| 7 | Angle measures |
| 8 | Decimals |
| 9 | Measurement |

Research

Integrated research studies play a large role in our school's mission statement, fostering inquiry and community-based research. This year our studies will be:

| Unit | Topic |
|------|---|
| 1 | School Wide Research launch: History of the Spruce Street School through primary and secondary source documents, personal accounts and interviews. |
| 2 | Encounters: Three Worlds Meet. "Encounters" is an interdisciplinary unit that examines the ideological and cultural collision between explorers/colonists, the indigenous population of the Americas and the enslaved African community. This unit will examine the successes and failures of the first encounters, the rise of slavery and the legacy of colonization. |
| 3 | Colonial America and the Revolutionary War: In this unit students explore what it means to be free from the perspectives of colonists, Native Americans, enslaved Africans and women. |
| 4 | Immigration: In this unit we will examine in what ways the history of New York is a microcosm for the History of the United States. |

Assessment/Testing

Teachers assess students in reading, writing, math, and word study in an ongoing fashion throughout the year. As a school, we conduct baseline, midline, and end of year assessments that allow us to track both performance and progress. We use assessment data to help us better understand students' individual needs. Our school wide assessments are directly tied to the Common Core Curriculum Standards.

As you know there is standardized testing in ELA and Math from 3rd grade on. In addition 4th graders are required to take a standardized science test. Throughout the year we will be preparing students for the content and format of these tests in many different ways.

Communication

Take Home folders: Take home folders need to go home and come back to school each day. Some days there will be nothing in the folder but please check it daily. We also encourage you to send notes or inquiries through the folders. We will respond as quickly as possible to your notes.

Newsletters: A newsletter will be sent home regularly. This newsletter provides families with information about our class happenings, updates and important classroom specific dates.

Class parents: Each class has class parents in place. Class parents are an asset to our classroom community. Class parents can also be a vehicle to express class wide concerns or confusions to the classroom teacher.

Parent-teacher conferences: Throughout the course of the year, parents and teachers formally meet twice (November and March) to discuss individual students progress. If you have a concern before or after these scheduled conference times, please send a letter to set up another meeting time.

Classroom Expectations and Behavior

Our goals for this year are to foster a warm and safe learning environment that ensures the best possible educational outcome for each child. We expect that every child treat every member of our class and school with respect and kindness. Here are some practices within our classrooms, which we use to reinforce positive behavior and high expectations.

1. **Classroom Rules:** Teachers and students collaborate to establish class rules and norms that facilitate the Spruce Street School three B's (Be safe, be kind and be fair).
2. **Work Ethic:** Students are expected to work hard and take pride in their work. This includes: using class time wisely, getting to work immediately, staying focus on a task, completing assignments thoroughly, and showing pride in both their work process and product.
3. **Positive Reinforcement of Classroom Agreements:** Students will be recognized by peers or teachers for following the classroom rules.
4. **Community Building and Social Skills Instruction:** In classroom community circles and Socratic seminars, students will engage in conversations and role-plays to learn strategies for solving social and emotional problems. This is time for teachers to focus on class-wide goals for behavior (i.e. walking in the hall safely, treating materials responsibly, etc.). Teachers allow students to have multiple opportunities to practice these skills and reflect on how their actions affect others around them.
5. **Logical Consequences:** There will be logical consequences when students make choices that interfere with the learning community in the classroom. A logical consequence means the consequence will directly respond to the action of the student.

Below are some examples:

| Category of Logical Consequence: | Example: |
|----------------------------------|---|
| You break it, you fix it | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An apology note for hurting someone's feelings• Spending open work time cleaning up a mess that you made |
| Loss of privilege | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If student misuses a computer, they lose the opportunity to use it for that period and have a meeting with a teacher about how to use it• If student talks instead of working, they will spend open work time making up the incomplete work. |
| Take a break | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If student is calling out too much during a lesson, they will take a break in the classroom, or in a different location. |

Depending on the severity and frequency of the behavior, your child's teacher will communicate with you using a form that your child and teacher filled out together. This form will tell you what happened and will ask for your signature and return to school for us to keep on file. If we do not receive the form back from you within the week, you will receive a call from your child's teacher.

5. Home to School Communication: Just as we try to communicate to you things that have happened involving your child at school, please know that we appreciate when you reach out to us to inform us about things your child discusses with you at home, things they are worried about, changes in their home routine, etc. This line of communication helps us better support the social and emotional well being of your child at school.

Homework

We believe homework should be meaningful and directly linked to our curriculum. This is another way to foster independence and the home school connection. Homework is a way for students to practice skills and reinforce familiar concepts at home. It may also be a way to explore a new concept at home in preparation for an upcoming classroom study. Homework is not meant to be burdensome for families, or cause stress for the children. If your child is having difficulty with something please write a note to let me know what they are having trouble with. Homework will be assigned each night in a notebook and due the next day unless otherwise specified.

Possible Homework Components:

- **Reading:** Students should read every evening for approximately 30-45 minutes. In addition weekly stories and readings prompts will be assigned.
- **Math:** Practice pages that review concepts worked on in school.
- **Word Study:** Practice spelling patterns, parts of speech, punctuation, and vocabulary.
- **Writing:** Generating ideas for upcoming projects, interviewing, research and responding to literature.
- **Research:** Inquiry based research projects will be assigned to deepen the understanding of content and concepts learned in class.

Helpful hints to support your child with homework

(Adapted from *Enriching Your Math Curriculum, Grade 5* by Lainie Schuster)

In order to help your child become a strong and flexible thinker and problem solver, we will assign a variety of problems for homework. Often your child will receive assignments that are teacher generated while others are adapted from relevant sources. We also assign open-ended problems or multistep problems. These types of problems often challenge your child to use prior knowledge in a new way. Sometimes your child may say, “the teacher did not teach me how to do this.” And in a way, they are correct. We cannot teach your child how to do every kind of problem. Instead, we

focus on problem solving strategies and making connections between similar types of problems and possible strategies used to solve them.

When your child asks you for help, please try not to jump in with an answer no matter how tempting that may be! Instead, try using some of these prompts to support their thinking and perseverance:

- What have you come up with so far?
- Where do you think you should start?
- What is the problem asking you to do?
- Does this remind you of other problems you have done in class?
- Why do you think that?
- What part of the problem do you already know how to solve?
- What have you figured out so far?
- How did you know to try that strategy?
- How did you know you have an answer?
- Will this work in a similar situation?
- Would drawing a diagram or picture help?
- Why do you think your answer is not correct?
- When will this strategy not work?

Other helpful tips for home!

- Make sure your child gets to school on time each day. Entering the room late is disruptive. (Think Ahead: Middle schools will check for excessive tardiness when reviewing the applications of potential students.)
- Create a routine for homework. This may include setting up a place and time for homework and making sure the materials he or she needs are ready.
- Check your child's homework notebook and folder each day for homework or notes.
- Ask your child questions about the stories we are sharing as a class. This will help deepen their understanding of the text.
- Please send a note when there is an alternative pickup person or dismissal time, as well as if you know in advance your child will not be in school.