

## **3rd and 4th Grade**

### **Overview of Curriculum and Expectations**

#### ***Personal Growth and Work Habits:***

In 3rd and 4th grade, behaviors relating to personal growth and work habits are crucial to students' academic and social success. Students are expected to behave respectfully towards children and adults at all times, and to handle conflicts in a peaceful and tolerant manner. During independent work, students must focus on the task at hand and strive to increase their stamina and ability to try new tasks. They are often asked to work with other children in partnerships and small groups, and must learn to take turns, listen attentively to others' opinions, and be responsible for their share of group work. During whole class times, students must listen to each other and to their teachers, and participate appropriately. Students are given many opportunities to make choices in their work at school, and are expected to make choices and reflect on their own behavior in a way that demonstrates respect for their own and other children's work. In addition to their schoolwork, students are expected to complete their homework in a timely and thorough manner.

#### ***Reading:***

In reading workshop in the fall, we focus on stamina and independence as readers. We also work extensively on developing ideas about our reading, and supporting these ideas with evidence and examples. To facilitate this, we jot down notes about reading, and discuss our reading. Students learn many reading strategies, and are encouraged to continue using previously learned strategies to enhance their understanding. Students read independently for extended periods, and keep track of their progress in their reading logs. They also share their thoughts in discussion with partners. In addition to independent reading, students also work as reading buddies to younger students, teaching them to understand stories and appreciate books. During daily read alouds, students enjoy higher-level books than they may be ready to read, and practice their skills of developing and discussion ideas.

In the spring, students continue to consolidate the skills learned in the fall. They practice these strategies during lengthier independent reading times, in which individual students' needs are addressed in teacher conferences as well as small-group lessons. In the spring, we also focus on reading in genres, such as folktales, informational non-fiction, and poetry. Students learn to notice the characteristics of these genres, including setting, characters, use of language, and common plot developments. Students use what they learn in reading in order to write their own versions of each genre.

#### ***Speaking and Listening:***

Students are encouraged and expected to express themselves and consider others' ideas through speaking and listening. There are many opportunities each day, in each subject, for students to share their ideas with the whole class, as well as with partners and small groups. In these contexts, students are expected to be able to follow a discussion and stay on topic, to think about other people's questions and comments,

and to contribute their own questions and comments in a thoughtful and clear manner.

***Word Study and Writing Mechanics:***

In addition to studying these skills in Writing Workshop, students are given explicit instruction and practice in writing mechanics. We use a spelling program called Words Their Way, in which students notice and practice using spelling patterns. In addition, both in writing workshop and during other times, we work on capitalization, punctuation, and paragraphing. Specific skills include the correct use of quotation marks, commas, and apostrophes, as well as other skills chosen by the teacher to address issues noticed in student writing.

***Math – 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade:***

In 3rd grade math in the fall, we do in-depth studies of place value, addition, subtraction, and the creation and interpretation of graphs, through the Investigations curriculum. Within each topic, the analysis of word problems and the ability to explain one's own thinking are heavily emphasized, to ensure that students can apply their mathematical knowledge to real-world problems. Students are also expected to attend closely to other people's ideas, in order to enhance their own understanding. Many strategies are explored for each topic, so that students can find the strategies that work best for them. In addition to a strong conceptual understanding of mathematical ideas, students are expected to memorize basic addition and subtraction facts (such as 7+8 and 16-9). Timely and thorough completion of homework is an important factor in students' success in math.

In the spring, we continue to use the Investigations curriculum to study multiplication, division, fractions, measurement, perimeter, and area, as well as more advanced addition and subtraction. Students are still required to analyze problems and situations to figure out how to solve them, and to always show their thinking and write answers to word problems in full sentences. Students listen to each other's strategies, and often try out strategies that their classmates have developed and shared. Students are expected to learn the times tables (1 to 10) and are quizzed on these on a weekly basis. It is crucial that students continue to practice these facts over the summer, since they are fundamental to 4th grade math.

***Math – 4<sup>th</sup> Grade:***

In 4th grade math in the fall, we cover multiplication, measurement, division, and data through the Investigations Curriculum. This is followed by a more advanced study of multiplication and division. Within each topic the ability to explain one's own thinking both orally and in writing is heavily emphasized. Students are also expected to attend closely to other people's ideas, in order to enhance their own understanding. Different strategies are explored for each topic, so that students can find the strategies that work best for them. In addition to a strong conceptual understanding of mathematical ideas, students are expected to memorize basic math facts, such as their multiplication tables through 12x12. Timely and thorough completion of homework is an important factor in students' success in math. This work is designed to reinforce and expand on what they are learning in the classroom.

In the spring, we continue to use the Investigations Curriculum to study several new topics, including more advanced multiplication and division; geometry; strategies for

solving 3-and 4-digit addition and subtraction problems; and identifying, representing, and comparing fractions and decimals. As in the fall, within each area, students learn many different strategies and are taught to choose the most effective strategy that makes sense to them. Students are expected to attend closely to accuracy, and to correct mistakes promptly.

### ***Social Studies – Native American Focus:***

In the fall, we work on community-building for the first few weeks of social studies. Through activities such as creating self-portraits, interviewing each other, and creating rules as a class, we develop a learning community that will support each of us in our work through the year. We then move on to a study of mapping, learning about map-reading and map-making with a focus on physical maps that can help us learn about the land we live in, and how it has changed since it was inhabited only by the Lenape Native Americans before 1609. We take trips to sites like Inwood Hill Park to help us better understand what Manhattan was like then.

In the spring, we begin with a study of Native Americans nowadays. We study different tribes and how their members' lives have changed over the years. We also discuss and analyze stereotypes in order to learn how to identify and resist them, with regard both to Native Americans and to other groups. We then move on to a study of the Lenapes before European contact. Through integrated work in reading, writing, and social studies, students read, analyze, and write folktales, learning how a culture's literature can teach us about its history and belief systems. We also do numerous hands-on projects that help the students understand the Lenapes' material culture and what it is like to make everything that you use on a day-to-day basis. Students weave wampum-like belts, make clay pots according to the traditional coil method, make cornhusk dolls, and sew moccasins. Following our study of the Lenapes, students do research on the traditional cultures of tribes from other environments, such as the Navajos of the Southwest. Our social studies work in the spring is enhanced by trips to sites like the American Museum of Natural History and the Mohonk Preserve in the Catskills.

### ***Writing – Native American Focus:***

Note: In writing workshop, some of our projects, though not all, relate to our social studies work.

After establishing good writing habits, our first major project is a personal narrative. Students write many true stories about their own lives, choosing one or two to further develop into more polished pieces. We study strategies such as adding sensory details, using dialogue, paragraphing, and more, to help students increase their repertoire of writing skills. Each skill is then reinforced in subsequent units. After the personal narrative, we work on literary essays. Students learn to summarize stories, articulate ideas about them, and provide examples to back up their ideas.

In the spring, we work on three major projects. First, students write folktales based on the work they do in reading and social studies to understand this genre. Students go through an organized process to develop characters, settings, and plotlines according to the traditions of folktales, particularly Native American ones. Our second major writing unit in the spring is poetry. After reading a wide variety of poetry and noticing how poets do their work, students write many of their own poems. They each choose several

poems to bring to publication, meaning that they go through a revision and editing process to complete them. Finally, students do research, culminating in a written final product, about different Native American tribes around the country. Working in groups, each child studies a nation such as the Inuits, the Navajos, and the Sioux. The students then work individually to further research a topic of interest within their tribe. Final products may include a written report or a computer presentation.

### ***Social Studies – Immigration Focus:***

In alternating years, we do an in-depth study of the history of immigration to New York City, beginning with Dutch colonization in the 1600s. We begin our work by studying our own families' immigration history. We discuss, map, and graph data collected by each student, giving a picture of our class's origins all over the globe. We move on to learn about the Age of Exploration and how it led to the founding of New Amsterdam. Through field trips, role plays, art, and writing assignments, students learn about the experiences of typical Dutch immigrants, as well as minority groups such as Jews, Quakers, and enslaved Africans. We then learn about the British colony of New York, with a special emphasis on slavery in New York. Trips to sites like the Wyckoff Farmhouse Museum and the Morris-Jumel Mansion are central to this work.

In the spring, we continue our exploration of the history of immigration to the United States, and New York in particular. We learn about the Irish Potato Famine and how it led to great numbers of Irish immigrating to the U.S. We also study our own neighborhood in the 1800s, when it was known as Kleindeutschland, due to the large numbers of Germans who settled down here. We learn about their daily lives in New York, and investigate what the neighborhood was like then, compared to what it's like now. We then move on to study the Ellis Island era of immigration through a variety of experiences. We go on to study how immigration laws have changed over time in the United States, and why. Finally, we learn about present-day immigration through interviews with immigrants. Students study the transcripts of these interviews and make illustrated books depicting the immigrants' experiences. Trips to sites like Ellis Island, the Tenement Museum, the Museum at Eldridge Street, the Museum of Chinese in America, and El Museo del Barrio are central to the spring semester's work.

### ***Writing – Immigration Focus:***

Note: In writing workshop, some of our projects, though not all, relate to our social studies work.

After establishing good writing habits, our first major project is a family history picture book. Students research stories from their families through interviews with family members, and choose a story from before they were born (or when they were too little to remember) to learn more about and make into a picture book. Narrative strategies such as the use of strong verbs, and the creation of powerful leads and endings, are taught alongside research strategies. Students next work on an information book on a topic of personal expertise. They learn to categorize and organize information, and how to write non-fiction in an engaging and accurate manner.

In the spring, we work on three major projects: persuasive letters, poetry, and historical fiction. When working on their letters, students learn to state their opinions clearly and back them up with logical reasons, to divide their writing into paragraphs, and to use

standard business-letter format. The poetry unit may be general, may focus on a particular type of poetry, and may also include songwriting. Finally, in our historical fiction unit, students develop research skills in order to incorporate true historical facts into carefully planned fictional stories.