

Fourth Grade Curriculum Guide for Parents



Ann Arbor Christian School
5500 Whitmore Lake Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48105

Phone: (734) 741-4948

Fax: (734) 929-6629

E-mail: office@annarborchristian.org

4th Grade Curriculum

4th Grade Bible

The Bible curriculum, based on *Biblical Choices* by Standard Publishing, aims to teach Biblical knowledge and understanding as well as to give practical applications in living as disciples of Jesus. During first semester, students' study the life of King Solomon and the prophets Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Hosea and Amos. Students also study the history of the kings of the divided kingdom of Israel and the nine prophets who preceded and experienced the fall of Jerusalem and ensuing captivity of the Hebrew people to the Babylonians.

During second semester, we cover the birth of the new church through the study of Paul's missionary journeys to the churches in Rome, Corinth, and Thessalinica. Students will also read and discuss Paul's epistles and several of Jesus' parables.

As the students examine the lives God's chosen people within the Old and New Testaments, they will discover how their choices affected many both during their lifetimes and after their deaths.

They also have the opportunity to learn about the great price Jesus paid to redeem His church and be challenged to guard against obstacles or temptations that hinder spiritual growth. Students will recognize that God's invitation for forgiveness of sins and eternal life is for anyone who wants it and students begin to realize our responsibility to forgive others as God has forgiven us.

In addition, fourth graders learn to show care for their classmates by praying for needs and discover the importance of considering others as being better than oneself, and begin practicing the act of putting others first by serving classmates in a variety of ways.

Generally, each week there is a memory verse that ties in to the lesson. Our desire is that students memorize various foundational Bible passages in addition to passages which students can apply to their own daily lives. Both individual class service projects and whole-school service projects are part of the school year.

A daily morning devotion that includes singing, scripture reading, a lesson, and prayer is part of each day. Students are given opportunities to learn how to pray for the needs of others in a small group setting as well as how to journal or write letters to God as they have an independent "quiet time."

Students experience corporate worship in chapel services twice a month. One is a K-8 chapel and the other is a K-5 chapel. Students are assigned to multi-age "chapel families," in which older students serve as mentors. Also,

older students often put on skits and perform for younger students during chapels.

4th Grade Language Arts

Reading

There are three aspects to reading instruction in fourth grade.

The first aspect involves direct reading instruction based on a class novel that correlates with study units. For example, when studying the fourth grade "Plants and Trees Unit," the class reads *Julie's Tree*. These books serve as the basis for instruction in various comprehension skills, vocabulary development, character analysis, understanding simile, foreshadowing, etc. As these books are read, students will be asked to analyze the characters and themes from a Christian point of view.

The second aspect of the reading curriculum is an individualized reading program which we call our "DEAR" (Drop Everything And Read) time. Students are given individualized goals based on their reading level and read independently for 20 to 30 minutes each day. Student progress is monitored through the use of the Accelerated Reader Program which provides computerized comprehension, vocabulary and literacy quizzes. In addition, fourth graders keep track of all the books they read during DEAR using a book review form. This form tracks the genre of the books read, a short summary and the students' opinion of the book.

The third aspect of the reading curriculum is the at-home reading program (Book It). Students at this age need to read independently at home for a minimum of 20 to 30 minutes per day. Individualized monthly goals are given to each student. Students who meet their goals receive coupons for free pizzas and other similar items.

Fourth graders also practice oral fluency through the use of buddy reading and reader's theater scripts which are performed in small groups for their classmates.

Class Novels

Julie's Tree – Plants and Trees Unit

Lift Off! – Space Unit

The Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler – Matter Unit

The Voyage of the Dawn Treader – Oceans Unit

Gifted Hands, The Ben Carson Story – Bones and Muscles Unit

Caddie Woodlawn – Michigan Unit

Writing

During fourth grade, there is a continued emphasis on the writing process (pre-writing, drafting, revising, proofreading, and publishing) with a special focus on the editing and revising steps. Some of the skills that are taught include proper paragraph format, writing strong topic sentences, proper order and relevancy of facts within the paragraph, closing sentences, opinion versus fact, adding detail, and using descriptive language with the help of a thesaurus. Part of the assessment for each writing project includes examining the revisions or changes a child has made. Students' writing is published and shared in a variety of ways.

The Daily Oral Language program is used to help the students practice and review a wide variety of grammatical and mechanical skills.

Writing Projects for Fourth Grade

1. Simile and Haiku Poetry – students spend time outside observing nature while taking detailed notes of what they see, hear, smell and feel. These notes are translated into poetry using the Haiku format. Students also try their hand at writing similes to describe their adopted trees. These poems are published into a book and shared within our classroom as well as outside of class.
2. Planet Travel Brochure – Students research a chosen planet and use a blend of facts and opinions to advertise their planet in a travel brochure.
3. Quest Story – After reading *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, students have an opportunity to write their own quest stories. Students develop their characters, their characters' quest, and write detailed adventures for their characters.
4. Famous Scientist Report – After choosing a famous scientist or inventor to research, students write a report covering the individual's childhood, challenges and difficulties, accomplishments and their personal opinion of their chosen individual.
5. Personal Narrative – Using details and descriptive language, students retell a memory from their childhood.

To conclude our study of our state's history, students participate in "The Michigan Extravaganza," an event which celebrates all things Michigan. This project involves researching one of the major historical eras in Michigan's history; Native Americans in Michigan, the first Europeans in Michigan,

missionaries in Michigan, the war between the French and the English in Michigan, logging and mining, pioneers and the development of the Erie Canal, Michigan's role in the Underground Railroad, Henry Ford and the automobile industry, etc. Based on their findings, the students write a brief historical research report and build a model that represents their chosen era. The model and the research report are presented to the student body, parents and family members at our Michigan History Museum, which is a part of our Michigan Extravaganza. Students also enjoy tasting Michigan foods—like cherries, pasties & Vernors ginger ale --and present Michigan folk songs and a small Michigan history skit.

Spelling

As students become older, conventional spelling becomes more and more important. Our fourth grade spelling curriculum is called "Spell It – Write!" Each week, the students receive a basic list of words based on a spelling or phonics pattern. Then, each student individualizes his/her list by adding words that he/she needs to learn to spell. These words may be misspelled words from recent writing assignments or words that the student is interested in learning. In addition, students learn at least one new vocabulary word each week that they have collected from their individual reading.

Public Speaking and Listening

Students are given a variety of opportunities to develop and strengthen their skills in public speaking from chapel presentations to the Michigan Historical Museum presentations. Opportunities are given for positive peer feedback.

4th Grade Mathematics

The fourth grade math curriculum is based on the Scott Foresman – Addison Wesley textbook. The textbook covers such topics as interpreting data, graphing, place value and time, adding and subtracting money, multiplying and dividing by one, two and three digits, geometry, fractions, customary measurement and decimals. Generally, fourth graders will have math homework twice weekly to help them develop greater independence.

In addition to the textbook, students are taught "Rocket Math," which is a simplified method of teaching multiplication facts to young students. It is both enjoyable for the students and helpful in preparing them for the mathematics and algebraic concepts they will encounter later, in middle school. Students also have

the opportunity to work on a variety of math stations such as weighing and measuring, checkbook games, menu math, critical thinking and problem solving activities.

Units = Science and Social Studies Topics

“Units” are Ann Arbor Christian School’s approach to learning science and social studies. Units are not based on a textbook but rather on hands-on, teacher-created lessons which are correlated with reading and writing projects. Thematic units with a Christian focus are integrated in the curriculum with related literature, videos and other opportunities for hands-on activities, explorations and field trips.

Plants and Trees Unit

Trees and plants are something students see every day, yet in this unit, students are asked to take a closer look at these amazing organisms. By adopting a tree, students learn to observe something familiar in a new and more detailed fashion.

Students learn to determine the age of a tree by using growth rings, and describe how events in the tree’s life can affect its growth. Students also learn to use a classification key to classify leaves and make a leaf collection. In addition, by reading a novel about a girl who wants to save a tree, the students are encouraged to consider their God-given responsibility as caretakers of our planet.

Space

This unit integrates language arts, science and social studies as the students are challenged to discover the immense nature of our universe. During this unit, students will be able to describe some characteristics of the sun and the moon and explain their importance. Students also learn how the earth both rotates and revolves, causing days, years and seasons. Students read an autobiography of a mission specialist aboard the space shuttle as well as informational books about planets. Student use information they research to write a travel brochure for a planet. As part of this unit, students visit the Longway Planetarium in Flint.

Matter

In this unit, students have the opportunity to discover the building blocks of matter and the changes that matter goes through. They are challenged to

marvel at the complex and intricate way God designed matter. Some activities students will participate in during the unit are: measuring mass and volume of various objects by using a scale, ruler, and by displacing water; use the periodic table of elements to find out information about various elements; and test common liquids to determine whether they are an acid or a base using red cabbage juice as an indicator. Students will conduct experiments following directions independently, recording observations, and making logical conclusions.

Oceans

In this unit, students encounter the amazing complexity of the ocean. They investigate the ocean and its properties as well as the creatures that live in the ocean. Students name and locate the four oceans on a world map and learn the difference between a bay, strait, sea and peninsula. Students also make a graph plotting the depth of the ocean floor and compare and contrast the three ocean zones (sunlight zone, twilight zone, and midnight zone). Students describe how oceans are polluted and experiment with cleaning up pollutants from the water. In conjunction with this unit, the students read, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* by CS Lewis.

Bones and Muscles

Students will discover the awesome ways in which God has created our bodies to work in this unit. Students identify the major bones in the human body and describe the various parts of a bone. During this unit, students will participate in a chicken dissection using a chicken leg quarter. They explore joints, bone marrow, cartilage, tendons, muscle, and ligaments. Students also learn some ways they can keep their bones and muscles healthy and strong through proper nutrition and exercise.

Michigan History

In our final unit, students learn the vast and varied history of the great state of Michigan. As the geography of Michigan is explored, students discover the physical features of the upper and lower peninsulas and make a topographical map depicting those features. The major historical eras of Michigan's history are covered as students learn about the Hopewell Indians, the French voyageurs, pioneers and the Erie Canal, the lumbering and mining industries, and the role of farming in Michigan's economy. Students also learn about Michigan's natural resources and their role in the development of the automobile industry here. Students will be able to explain the purpose of the Underground Railroad and why it was so active in Michigan. The culmination of this unit is our "Michigan Extravaganza," which is a celebration of all things

Michigan. This activity includes a history museum with hand-made projects built by the students, a Michigan foods tasting, classic automobile rides, and folk songs and a skit performed by the children. All parents and grandparents are invited to this event.

4th Grade Art

The art curriculum helps students learn to recognize, enjoy, and process the aesthetic and cultural diversity present in God's creation. Students explore different mediums for artistic expression including drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, design, textiles and performance. Projects are largely integrated with classroom units to help reinforce learning and to promote cross-curricular connections. Art history and aesthetic criticism are also integrated to expand critical thinking and awareness. Units develop creative problem-solving in order to help students find and express their unique voice in the world.

Our art classes reinforce the classroom curriculum and develop enthusiastic learners through applied art activities. We work to further develop technical skills and to build confidence by experimenting with a wide variety of new media and techniques. Students will learn to contextualize art works by relating them to the cultural and historical climates that influenced them as well as to broaden their perspective on the possibilities of art making. Throughout this exploration, the teacher works with students to help them express their ideas both creatively and clearly so that art can be used as a positive means of self-expression and enjoyment.

4th Grade General Music

The music curriculum helps students learn to recognize, enjoy, and process the aesthetic and cultural diversity present in music. Students explore different instruments for music expression including body percussion, percussion instruments (shakers and whackers), handbells, singing, and Orff instruments. Music instruction is integrated with classroom units to help reinforce learning and to promote cross-curricular connections. Music history and music criticism are also integrated to expand critical thinking and awareness. Units develop the understanding of rhythm, melody, harmony, timbre, form, notation, expression, and performance.

In fourth grade, we emphasize teaching students to participate in making music. Our music classes reinforce the classroom curriculum and develop enthusiastic singers and instrumentalists through applied music activities. We

work to develop listening and music-making skills and to build confidence by using a wide variety of music and techniques. Through the exploration of different styles of music and different ways of making music, the teacher helps students to grow in the understanding and use of music in their daily lives.

Fourth grade music skills include:

- Performing solo and multi-part songs on recorder
- Performing arpeggiated borduns on xylophones and Orff instruments
- Read and write music notation through eighth notes and rests
- Singing rounds, canons and partner songs on pitch
- Instrument identification
- Music expression
- Basic music history

4th Grade Physical Education

Physical Education helps students develop in cognitive, psychomotor, affective, and spiritual domains. The P.E. program at AACCS encourages individual potential, leadership, and participation, which will promote lifelong fitness. Students grow in an understanding of rules, safety, and strategies of games and activities. Both individual and team sports allow for the expression of sportsmanship and sensitivity needed to function in a diverse society. Physical Education reflects the high value God places on human life and the respect we should have for ourselves and for one another. Students are encouraged to model behavior that Christ would exemplify.

Our P.E. instruction includes fundamental skills/movement patterns; attributes like balance, rhythm, and creative movement; motor abilities like coordination, quickness, power, speed, agility and flexibility; fitness (movement, body awareness, muscles, bones, regular exercise); sports skills like playing performance and proper technique; and knowledge and understanding of rules and procedures.

A wide variety of offerings keep students of all skill levels interested in physical activity. Units range from dance and gymnastics to football and basketball at age-appropriate levels. K-5 students look forward to once-weekly P.E. class while 6-8 students enjoy P.E. twice a week.

While technically not part of our physical education program, AACCS offers elementary school children encouragement to get daily exercise with what we call "Mileage Club." As long as the weather allows and we have sufficient volunteer parent supervisors, students can spend all or part of their lunch recess accumulating miles while walking or running on a set course outside the school. Students can earn awards for meeting mileage milestones like 25, 50, or even 100+ miles!