

Fourth Grade

Fourth grade is a journey through high seas and low in a long ship manned by Viking warriors. They spend a great deal of the year with frozen rime in their hair, gusty songs in their heart and ever prepared for glorious battle. The hallways echo with the tromping of their boots and the clatter of their swords, their battle verses reverberate through the walls of the classroom, and all around are infected with the wild enthusiasm. Fourth grade enters this year excited and full of vigor. The excitement never seems to wane.

Fourth grade classes in Waldorf schools are renowned for having the spirit of Vikings. The Norse myths and the ancient oral tradition of the Kalevala, appeal to children of this age. The children delight in the strong characters, their difficulties with each other, their adventures and misadventures.

Powerful speech exercises help to channel the intensity of the group. Some poetry and speech is also chosen for its deep reflective quality. Lively songs sung in rounds are enjoyed by the students. Some songs with a longing or melancholy feeling due to a minor chord are introduced for the first time this year. Songs are also sung in parts and harmony. Instruction in reading musical notation is continued. The soprano recorder is introduced. Students begin to play the violin.

This year the students strive for individual competency and approach to studying. The students become increasingly active in their own learning. When we want to know, how can we find out? We can use what we already know and we can make close observations and come up with some theories. We can also do research to compare the deductions of others with our own, and broaden our understanding. Fourth grade is not about memorizing facts, but generating living inquiry in the student. Over the years, this skill will eventually build up into an ability to write one's own thesis.

The students explore the environment close to their home in Local History and Geography, explore the animal kingdom in Zoology, and stretch into new areas of math through the study of fractions and an introduction to statistics. They write stories and poems and learn more about punctuation, grammar and spelling. The students write their first reports as homework assignments.

Students paint, draw and model as a part of their artistic education. In handwork class, they learn to cross stitch. They learn to draw Celtic knots freehand.

Numerous field trips are a part of the curriculum this year. Those include several trips to the surrounding area to illustrate the history and geography studies. Potlatch is a gathering of various Waldorf Fourth grade classes from the surrounding area, who join together to participate in a local Native American cultural celebration; through crafts, songs, games and stories.

The subjects presented by the class teacher are supplemented by specialty classes in Spanish, handwork, violin and eurythmy.