



The Elementary Curriculum: **An Overview**

LANGUAGE ARTS

The language arts—reading, writing, listening and speaking—play a major role in the educational program of each elementary student. District goals and the New York State Learning Standards guide the language arts course of study. In the elementary grades, students are expected to learn to read, write, listen and speak:

- * for information and understanding,
- * for literary response and expression,
- * for critical analysis and evaluation, and
- * for social interaction.

In South Colonie, we strive to develop students' skills in all modes of communication and to help students become proficient, enthusiastic literate individuals who will contribute to a global society.

Literacy development is monitored through locally developed assessments, standardized, and state tests. The assessments developed locally provide a method for teachers to monitor ongoing progress through systematic observation. Teachers evaluate evidence of what a child already knows, understands, and is able to do. Information gathered in this manner will inform and guide instruction on increasingly difficult tasks.

MATHEMATICS

Elementary children learn to understand mathematics and learn to become mathematically confident through instruction in:

- * mathematical reasoning,
- * number and numeration,
- * operations of whole numbers, fractions, and decimals,
- * measurement,
- * uncertainty,
- * patterns/functions, and
- * modeling/multiple representation.

We strive to make mathematics meaningful and relevant, which means we connect instruction to real-life applications. Many teachers pre- and post-test students' mastery of math skills and concepts and develop lessons and activities to meet students' individual needs.

Third and fourth grade students receive support through computer-assisted instruction. Classroom computers and a computer laboratory allow students to utilize computer technology to enhance their mathematical reasoning. Many math activities are integrated with the science curriculum.

The mathematics curriculum and lessons are aligned with the New York State Learning Standards and the recommendations of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.



SOCIAL STUDIES

The kindergarten through fourth grade social studies program is comprehensive, diverse and multicultural. Students are introduced to:

- * the variety of communities, languages, customs and family traditions as they relate to the responsibility of being a member of a local, state, national and global community;
- * a world interrelated through history, geography, economics and civics; and
- * use of informed choices and decisions on issues that reflect a concern for the community and self.

Our overarching goal is that each student will demonstrate a growing knowledge of history, geography, economics, and the political process. This enables each student to recognize the rights and responsibilities of diverse cultures and realize his/her role as a citizen in various communities.

The student learning goals for the social studies program incorporate the New York State Learning Standards. Students will demonstrate:

- * understanding of significant historical events and developments in our community, our state, and our nation;
- * understanding of significant historical events and developments in world history;
- * understanding of the geography of the interdependent worlds: local, national and global;
- * understanding of how people/societies develop economic systems;
- * the necessity for establishing government;
- * understanding of the roles, rights and responsibilities of citizenship; and
- * understanding of the roles and contributions of individuals and/or groups in society.

SCIENCE

Science in grades one through four is studied for the appreciation of natural phenomena, an understanding of how scientific information is organized, and the experience of conducting investigations. To effect the science program, students are supplied with common textual material published by the Silver Burdett Publishing Company. The text series is comprehensive and spiral in nature, extending the study of various topics each year. These topic areas are:

- * life sciences, including the study of plants, animals and ecology;
- * physical science, including the study of matter and energy; and
- * earth science, including the study of the earth, space, and weather.

Supplemental activities beyond the text also are part of the science curriculum. These activities include the study of ladybugs,

butterflies, duck egg/chicken egg hatching, owl pellets and technology challenges.

THE ARTS

The New York State Learning Standards provide the basic framework for South Colonie's first through fourth grade curriculum in the arts—dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts. The student learning goals include:

- * creating, performing and participating in the arts;
- * knowing and using materials and resources in the arts;
- * responding to and analyzing works of art; and
- * understanding the cultural contributions of the arts.

ART

All students in grades one through four participate in art classes for one forty-minute period each week. Our goal is to provide the skills needed for each student to create and participate in the arts. Students will acquire the artistic skills needed to visually express and communicate their personal experiences. Through their participation in the elementary art program, students will:

- * personalize their work and recognize the uniqueness of the work of others;
- * properly use and select the appropriate materials and tools to produce their intended results;
- * discuss and evaluate their work and the work of other artists based on their knowledge of art and personal opinion; and
- * become motivated to produce independent artwork specifically for the joy of expressing their ideas artistically.

The display of student artwork is an integral component to the elementary program.

MUSIC

All students in grades one through four participate in one 40-minute period of music instruction each week. Our goal is for each student to acquire knowledge and skills to become both an active participant and an educated consumer of music. The curriculum in general music includes a balance of tonal and rhythmic activities with an emphasis on skill development. Singing, dancing, music games, listening activities and instrument playing are incorporated into the general music classes. Students are introduced to the basics of reading music through work on recorders, Orff instruments, keyboards and singing. Rhythmic skills are developed through movement activities derived from Phyllis Weikart's *Education through Movement* and other sources.

Beginning in fourth grade, students may participate in music instruction on string instruments. Students receive one 30-minute group lesson each week and participate in one orchestra rehearsal each week.

HEALTH EDUCATION

The elementary health education program offers first through fourth grade students the opportunity to develop healthy lifestyles that continue into adulthood. Health education is offered once per week for a forty-minute block of time. Comprehensive health education topics include feelings, the human body, disease, nutrition, safety, and drug education. The health education curriculum is sequential, building each year upon the curriculum of the previous year.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The physical education program at the elementary level offers a variety of physical activities—games, sports, exercises and skills—related to each fitness component. In each class students are encouraged to improve in areas of cardiovascular endurance, flexibility, muscular strength and agility. In conjunction with these activities, students are expected to develop and demonstrate group cooperation, fair play, sportsmanship and respect, accepting the differences in others' physical abilities and skill levels. Physical education is offered to students in first through fourth grades.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

The South Colonie school district holds firmly to the belief that all students can learn. Our goal is to help each student to become an independent learner and to attain the learning standards and goals established by the district.

Special education services are based on the individual needs of each child. Many programs, services, and placement options are available. We believe that, to the extent possible, services should be provided to students in a setting with their non-disabled peers. The board of education of South Colonie has had a goal to include all students in regular education classes to the extent possible.

Kindergarten through fourth grade special education programs are served by the district's eight speech pathologists and currently receive the services of the school psychologist approximately two days per week and the services of a social worker two days per week. Physical therapy is provided by a contract with Capital Region BOCES as are Orientation and Mobility services and those for the visually impaired.

LIBRARY/MEDIA

The library media center in each school offers a variety of services to students, staff and the community. Each has collections of books, magazines, sound filmstrip kits, book/cassette sets, video tapes and computer software. The collections are integral to the

teaching program in all curricular areas and meet the recreational and informational needs of the students.

Students visit the media center regularly. Students have many opportunities throughout the day to use the media center for book selection or for seeking answers to reference questions. Library instruction focuses on the integration of library skills with classroom curriculum. Library media specialists encourage students to recognize the significance of literature through stories and book talks.

The South Colonie library curriculum is based on the New York State Learning Standards, which require integration of research skills in all academic areas. The goal of our media centers is to develop independent library users and lifelong readers.

Parents, grandparents and community members are invited to become volunteers. An active group of reliable volunteers is needed to accomplish the many tasks necessary to keep the libraries operating. Besides assisting in the circulation of materials and their return to the shelves, parents can help with reading programs and PTA-sponsored author presentations.

COMPUTER-ASSISTED INSTRUCTION (CAI)

Computer-assisted instruction has been an integral part of the elementary instructional program for the past eighteen years. All students in grades three and four utilize computers to practice their mathematics, reading and language arts skills. Students work in individualized sessions, which are recorded by the computer. This information, which identifies subject-specific strengths and weaknesses, is then interpreted by teachers to prescribe future activities to help improve student performance. Teaching assistants knowledgeable in computer applications are present in the CAI labs to direct and assist students.

TECHNOLOGY

In the elementary schools of South Colonie, students are utilizing computer technology as a tool for learning. Increasingly, teachers are creating computer-based student learning projects. For example, a class of third grade students can write original stories using the computer for word processing and, later, combine the stories with audio and computer-generated graphics to create a multi-media presentation.

The school district, through its Technology Committee, has developed a long-range plan for the integration of new technologies into the instructional program. This standing committee regularly reviews the district's progress in implementing new technologies and identifies the district's technology needs.

The major areas of study for students in the elementary grades, kindergarten through four, appear by grade level in the pages that follow. While the content and order within each subject area may vary from classroom to classroom within a grade level, in general all classrooms will cover the subject matter listed. For more information about the curriculum in your child's classroom, please contact your child's teacher or the school principal.