**The ABC’s of 4th Grade**

**Class 4-345 Mrs. Castania**

**September 2018**



Dear Parents and Students,

Welcome to the Fourth Grade! I am looking forward to an exciting year together! Here are a few reminders for you to keep handy as a quick reference. Please KEEP this packet and refer to it all year as necessary!



**is for Attendance, Absences, Arrival, and Allergies**

**Attendance** - A successful school experience is the responsibility of the child, the parents, and the school. Your child's progress, both academically and socially, is influenced to a great extent by daily participation. **Regular attendance and punctuality is critical!**

**Absences** - Excessive absences hinder a child’s progress. If your child is absent, please **send a note** for the office upon returning to school. (*This is a school policy as noted in the student planner.*) Whenever possible, doctor appointments should be scheduled after school or on Saturdays. Also, please plan family trips during our scheduled breaks. It is hard for your child to make up work missed in school since most work is hands-on and is done in class. Students will be expected to make up all classwork when absent. (Math lessons can be accessed on Think Central)

**Arrival** – Our school day begins **promptly** at 8:00 AM. Our day’s activities begin as soon as the children enter the classroom. Students who arrive late may find it difficult to catch up with our daily morning work.

**Allergies** – Please let me know if your child has allergies. Also, I would appreciate it if you could provide me with a list of both acceptable and unacceptable snacks or treats that your child can have during birthday and class celebrations.



**is for Birthdays, Behavior, Book Orders, Backpacks and Book Clubs**

**Birthdays** – We enjoy celebrating birthdays! If you plan on sending in a treat for your child’s birthday, please let me know a day or two ahead so I can be sure to set some time aside during the day. There are 29 children in our class. As per school policy, goodie bags will not be distributed in class.

B**ehavior –** Our classroom is our “Land of Hopes and Dreams.” It is a safe and happy environment where lots of learning takes place. We are a classroom family. Teamwork and good relationships are expected. Together we have discussed and developed acceptable classroom behavior and rules. The children are responsible for their behavior choices. When I notice exemplary behavior, your child may receive a positive Class Dojo point. Students earn a homework pass when they reach 20 Dojo points.

**Book Orders -** I will be sending home monthly book order forms from Scholastic Books. You are not obligated to buy anything, but I have found it to be an excellent, affordable way to provide students with appropriate reading material for independent reading ! **Payments for book orders should be CHECKS ONLY, made payable to Scholastic Book Club**. **CASH will NOT be accepted, and it will be returned to you.** You also have the option to place your order online using Scholastic’s website. Our class activation code is **G2XTQ.** A book order flyer will be sent home this week with more information about online orders.

**Backpacks –** Please assist or encourage your child to **clean** out his or her backpack and take home folder **daily**! Loose papers and extra books make it difficult for a child to be organized. Also, students should not be carrying home text books

and unnecessary materials every day! Some of our textbooks are heavy! If not needed for homework or studying, they should not go home!

**Book Clubs -** As times, we will be having Book Clubs that meet during class time. Groups of students will be reading the same chapter book. They will be responsible for reading a set number of pages or chapters by each meeting. In addition, they will be responsible for generating 2 discussion questions. When the book is completed, they will be responsible for creating a group project/reading response activity. Book Club reading will be considered part of your child’s nightly independent reading. Book Clubs will meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

**is for Communication, Class Dojo and Common Core Standards**

**Communication** - Please send me a note if you have any concerns or questions at any time throughout the school year. We will work together as partners to help your child be successful in fourth grade. Notes meant for me should be put in your child’s Take Home Folder, and your child should place them in my mail basket promptly in the morning. I will make every effort to return a note or phone call as soon as possible. In addition, check your child’s planner, as I sometimes jot quick notes in there, too. Please look through your child’s Take Home folder every evening. In addition, I will be available for phone calls or meetings on Tuesday afternoons, following dismissal.

**Class Dojo** - Class Dojo is a communication tool that allows me to update you about your child’s behavior and academics (both positive and negative!) I may also send you photos of class happenings or items of interest. I have sent home information and the procedure for signing up. Please let me know if you are having a problem with the sign up. Class Dojo will be turned on for messages **weekdays** from **7 AM to 6 PM**. Please respect my time at home with my family and refrain from messaging me after 6 PM unless it is an emergency that cannot wait until the morning. Thank you!

**Common Core Standards** - These learning standards in reading and math are aimed at preparing our students for future success by emphasizing critical thinking skills, informational texts, and depth in important math concepts.



**is for Discipline and Dismissal**

**Discipline** – All students have the right to a safe and undisturbed experience for learning. Time spent on discipline wastes valuable instructional time. I promote a positive environment by modeling appropriate behaviors and following a set of classroom rules that we decided upon as a group. If a student makes unacceptable behavior choices, there needs to be a consequence. Examples may include: a private discussion, time out for reflection, an apology note, a written explanation, a negative Dojo point, or a call home.

**Dismissal** – The dismissal time is 2 :20 PM. Our class walkers will exit from the rear door at the bottom of the stairs on Stieg Avenue. If you usually pick up your child, but are running late, he or she should know to walk up Stieg Avenue and re-enter the building on Barlow Avenue. Your child can wait in the Main Office until you get to the school. It might be a good idea to review this procedure with your child, just in case! **If there is a change in your child's normal dismissal routine, I must have a note. I CANNOT ACCEPT** a verbal change from your child. This is for your child's safety!

**Is for Expectations –**

**I expect all students to**:

* Listen carefully to the speaker (both adults and children!)
* Follow directions
* Turn in **quality** work – complete and neat
* Demonstrate effort each day
* Treat others with kindness and respect

**My students can expect me to:**

* Listen carefully to the speaker (both adults and children)
* Provide quality teaching every day
* Help them become successful learners
* Praise and reward them for positive actions
* Treat them with kindness and respect

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**is for Fire Drills/Evacuation Drills/Safety Drills**

All students will participate and are expected to walk quickly and quietly to our designated exit. We have discussed and reviewed fire drill and other safety drills in class. I take fire drills very seriously, and for everyone’s safety, I expect all students to behave appropriately.

**is for Gym and Growth Mindset**

**Gym -** Our scheduled Gym days are Tuesdays and Thursdays. Please be sure your child wears sneakers on Gym days. Fourth grade students participate in Fitnessgram activities and games during our gym periods. In addition, we will be part of the Dancing Classrooms program. The students will be learning a variety of ballroom dances. There will be a culminating performance at the end of the program. This was a great success last year, and I am sure your child will have fun!

**Growth Mindset –** In our classroom, we try to create an environment that fosters a growth mindset. The children are not afraid to make mistakes. They see mistakes as learning opportunities. We share some of our “Oops” moments and discuss how and what we have learned from them. We read about famous “failures” such as Michael Jordan and Walt Disney. We are inspired by their hard work and growth mindset. We have learned a little bit about how our brain works, and how it needs to be stretched in order to grow. Sometimes we struggle with tough math problems independently, and then we put our heads together to see if we can help each other figure them out. We regularly use the language of growth mindset in our classroom. We use positive self talk to help motivate us to do our best. We offer and accept feedback as another chance to grow. We are keeping a Growth Mindset notebook where we learn about the different ideas related to growth mindset, and we reflect on our learning experiences. Students are aware of the “Power of Yet.” They may not understand something….yet, they might not know something….yet! However with perseverance, tenacity, grit and desire, they can progress and maybe even reach their goals.

**is for Homework**

Your child will have homework each night. The purpose of homework is to reinforce and review what has been taught and practiced in school. I expect homework to be done neatly and completely every night. Your child will copy homework in his or her planner each morning. Many times, ELA will include some writing. It is usually done in a *perforated* spiralhomework notebook. Math homework will consist of a page from Go Math or an online assignment. Twenty minutes of independent reading **is required every day**. Your child will write the title of the book and the page numbers that were read directly in his or her student planner. Please sign your child's planner **after** all homework has been completed, including independent reading.

If there is a problem with a specific assignment, please have your child try to complete it as best as he/she can. Send me a note so that I can address it when we review the assignment.  **I may not correct and grade every homework assignment, but I do check to see that homework is completed on a daily basis.**

We have a monthly “Homework Club” incentive in our classroom. Every student has a magnet on our Homework Club board. As long as all homework is handed in, the magnet remains on the board. If an assignment is missing or incomplete, the magnet will be removed. If, at the end of the month the magnet is still on the board, the student will receive a homework pass that can be used to skip a future homework assignment. On the first of the month, all magnets are returned to the board and everyone starts all over with another chance for a monthly homework pass. It is my hope that this homework incentive will encourage everyone to complete their homework nightly.

In addition to temporarily losing a magnet, your child will be responsible for recording missing and incomplete assignments in our missing homework binder. I use the binder for student accountability and to help determine homework/responsibility grades for the report card.

When a child is absent from school, he or she is expected to make up any assignments that were missed. The students begin each marking period with a report card grade of 4 in homework/academic behavior. Students who turn in quality homework and miss 2 or less assignments will keep the level 4. Between 3 – 5 missing assignments will earn a child a level 3. Students who have 6 -7 missing assignments, **or** turn in low quality work will earn a level 2. More than 7 missing or incomplete assignments will cause a student to earn a level 1 in homework for that marking period. If your child is absent, you can use our class website to find the night’s homework. **Good homework habits** **are** **essential** to a successful academic career. A homework rubric has been glued in your child’s homework notebook.

 **is for Independent Reading**

Twenty minutes of independent reading is nightly homework in fourth grade. Some of the New York State tests are between 70 and 90 minutes long. Therefore, reading stamina is crucial. Please be sure that this reading is an uninterrupted block of time. Your child should write the title and page numbers read directly in his or her planner. This year, we will be implementing literature circles for independent reading. More details will be discussed in class. Independent reading books should be brought to school each day.

 **is for Just Right Books and Journeys**

**Just Right Books -** Children have been taught how to pick out “Goldilocks” books. These are books that are not too easy, and not too hard for your child to read independently. By fourth grade, your child should know how to pick out a “just right” book. As an added resource, guidelines for picking just right books and leveled book websites are on our class web page.

**Journeys –** is our literacy program. It aligns with the Common Core Standards. All Journeys textbooks and materials are available online by logging into Think Central.

**for Kindness**

Kindness towards our classmates is essential for developing and maintaining a learning environment based on respect and caring for one another. An ongoing theme in our classroom community will be “**CHOOSE KIND.”**



**is for Lunch and Library**

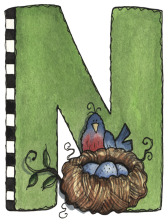
**Lunch –Fourth**  grade has early lunch. (Period 4 from 10:24 – 11:14)

**Library** - Your child will be permitted to check out books from our class and school library. If you do not send back a signed permission slip, your child will not be able to check out a book from the school library. Students may also take out books from our classroom library. Please remind them to properly care for all library books.

** is for Money Collections and Mathematics**

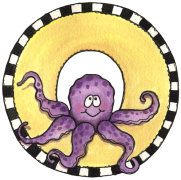
**Money Collection -** if you are sending in money for ANY reason (lunch, book orders, trips, PTA, etc.) please be sure to send it in a sealed envelope. **Clearly label it with your child’s name, class, amount enclosed, and purpose.** Remember: Scholastic Book orders should be paid by check only, or by using a credit or debit card for online orders.

**Mathematics –** We will be using Go Math again this year. It is fully aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards. Please protect all of your child’s math workbooks by covering them with clear contact paper. All Go Math resources and textbooks are available by logging on to the Think Central website. There is an **Interactive Student Edition** that is very helpful and can be used when your child is absent or needs to review the material covered in class. The children will also be using the SOLVE strategy when completing challenging math tasks in class.

**is for Nightly Reading and Notices**

**Nightly Reading –** Your child will be responsible for nightly reading. Much of this will be part of a literature circle/reading group book, however, your child can choose to read any book that is at their reading level. Your child will be writing the title and number of pages read directly in his or her planner. This will be checked each morning.

**Notices** – During the course of the school year, your child will bring home many notices that need to be signed and returned to school. Please ***help me*** by reading and returning signed notices ***the next day*** whenever possible. It makes it very difficult to keep track of all the paperwork when notices are not received in a timely fashion. **It will be GREATLY appreciated! I thank you in advance for your cooperation in this matter.**

 **is for organization**

Please encourage organization skills with your child. Check and clean out the Take Home Folder **each day**. Remove any loose papers or unnecessary books and supplies. Set aside an area for your child to do his/her homework each day. Be sure your child comes to school prepared with books, homework, and 3 sharpened pencils **daily**.

**is for Parent Involvement and Parties**

**Parent Involvement -** Parent involvement is essential! Your support of school activities, projects, and assignments makes your child feel important and sends the message that you value school!

**Parties –** Please let me know, in writing, if you are interested and available to plan the activities for one of our parties. (Halloween, Winter holiday, Spring holiday, and End of the Year) Craft activities, puzzles, and games are possible celebration suggestions.



**is for Questions**

**For me**: Please contact me if you have any questions regarding your child’s education. I will make every effort to meet with you or contact you promptly to discuss your concerns.

**For you:** Ask your child specific questions about his or her independent reading. In an effort to improve reading comprehension and problem solving skills, ask questions that are open-ended and encourage critical thinking.

**For your child:** Encourage your child to ask *themselves* questions about what they are reading and the world around them. Use the internet with them to research things they wonder about and help them discover ways they can find answers to their questions. View our class webpage and visit Wonderopolis.org for a daily question to explore.

** is for Restrooms** We have a sign in/out book for trips to the restroom. Children should use the bathroom before leaving for school and during lunch time. Your child will be allowed to use the facilities whenever necessary. However, please remind them not to abuse this routine. Also, discuss with them, as I will, appropriate, safe, and responsible behaviors when using the restrooms.

**is for Schedules, Spelling , Supplies, Script and Safety**

S**chedules -** Monday: Drama 12:42 – 1:27 Ms. Zee

**T**uesday: STEM 12:42 – 1:27 Mr. Galvin

Wednesday: Science 8:48 – 9 33 Ms. David

Thursday: Drama 12:42 – 1:27 Ms. Zee

Friday: Science 11:50 – 12:35 Ms. David

ETAS will be on Mondays and Wednesdays. Gym is Tuesday and Thursday.

**Spelling -C**orrect spelling should be incorporated in *all* written assignments.

**Supplies -** Please be sure your child comes to school with the tools he or she needs to be successful**.** Sharpened pencils with erasers, glue sticks, crayons, and markers often need to be replaced. Personal sharpeners are *not* allowed in class. Your child should sharpen pencils nightly, at home. On occasion I will have your child bring home his supply case so you can replace missing or empty materials.

**Script** - Fourth Grade students are expected to practice writing legibly in script. There is an interactive link on our class website that provides instruction and practice in letter formation for cursive writing. It allows you to create and print your own practice sheets. Please make use of this resource if your child needs it.

**is for Testing, Tasks and Technology**

**Testing -** This year your child will be taking New York State tests in English Language Arts, Math, and Science. The ELA test will be given **April 2 -4, 2019.**  The Math test will be given **May 1 – May 3, 2019.** The state tests have been shortened to 2 days each instead of 3 days each. In addition, in fourth grade students will be taking a written and performance based Science test. More information about testing will be given as the year progresses.

**Tasks -** During the year, students will be required to complete several performance tasks in ELA and Math. These challenging tasks are done over several days and are completed entirely at school.

**Technology -** Our class will be using several online math and reading resources during the school year. Among these are Reflex Math, Common Lit, Readworks, Prodigy, and Think Central. Your child will be given usernames and passwords for each. They will be glued in their planners, but it may be a good idea to write them down somewhere else in the event they get lost or fall out of the planner. There will be online HW assignments, so please let me know, in writing, if your child DOES NOT have access to a computer or tablet at home. In that case, I will provide a paper copy of the assignment or activity.

 **is for Unique** - Each child in our class is unique and wonderful. In our class we celebrate our differences and similarities. We also learn about the variety of cultures within our class. If you have a special tradition you would like to share with us, please let me know! We will be creating cultural projects in the latter part of the school year.

**is for Visitors**

We enjoy having classroom visitors. If someone in your family has a special career, talent, or activity that will enrich our learning experiences, please let me know. We can schedule a classroom visit!

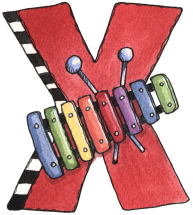
 **is for Water Bottles and Web Site**

**Water Bottles -** Students are permitted to keep a water bottle in a backpack pocket and drink from it during the day as long *as they don’t become a distraction to learning*. (“Crunching” plastic bottles is a distraction!) Think "green" and purchase sports bottles that can be refilled! Frozen water bottles drip, so please be sure to wrap them in aluminum foil or a foam bottle holder.



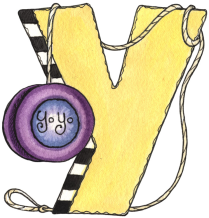
**Web Site –** I have established a class website. You will be able to log on to get the week’s homework, connect to fun and interesting learning links, and have access to other classroom information. Please add this to your “Favorites” on your home computer. I provide this as a tool to use when a student is absent. It is not to replace copying homework in the student planner. Also, while I try to update the website frequently, sometimes changes occur during the day that may cause me to adjust assignments. The web address is:

**https://mrscastania.educatorpages.com/**



**is for X-tra Special and eXciting**

Fourth grade is an e**X**citing year! We can look forward to trips, special events, and lots of fun activities! Each child is e**X**tra special. Thank you for sharing them with me this year!



**is for You!**

Please remember that **YOU** are your child's first and most important teacher. No one can influence your child's life in the way that you can! Help to make your child feel successful this year by discussing your child’s school day with them. Ask questions like, “What did you learn today?”, “What did you work the hardest on?”, or “What are you getting better at?” “What did you have trouble with today?” What can you do to get better at \_\_\_\_?” These questions lead children to reflect on their day and academic activity . Don’t let them tell you “nothing.” Ask your child about our read aloud book, shared reading, Smartboard activities, or math work. The way your child perceives your feelings about his or her school and teachers will have a direct effect on how he or she feels about them.

**Be positive when discussing school. Encourage hard work and show an enthusiasm for learning. It is contagious!**



**is for ZZZZZZZs**

It is so important for your child to be alert and ready to learn each day. Set an appropriate bedtime and be consistent. Setting and keeping a bedtime is a wonderful gift you can give to your child. It will help them to be attentive and prepared to learn each day! Don't forget to read a book before bedtime!

**I am looking forward to a great year!**

**Mrs. Castania**