



5th Grade General Studies Purpose Statement Karlana Carpen, 5th Grade Teacher

The General Studies program in fifth-grade cultivates the fundamental skills, knowledge base, and attitudes that enable our students to thrive intellectually and personally in new contexts. We aim to develop responsible, self-directed students with a passion for learning and values that will sustain them as they grow. The fifth-grade program is academically stimulating, multi-faceted, and personal; classroom experiences foster the consolidation of prior learning and the acquisition of new skills while promoting exploration, insight, self-expression, and cooperation. Opportunities for school leadership and service are also an integral part of the fifth-grade experience. Students leave SJCS with a self-confidence that is founded on their accomplishments and enduring connection to community.

The fifth-grade Language Arts curriculum draws upon and extends essential literacy skills, including reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary, and spelling, while developing analytical skills through the study of literature, history, science, and current events. Students read and respond to books of their own choosing as well as assigned reading from a variety of genres. Works of historical fiction that enrich the Social Studies curriculum are core reading, and selections from a variety of non-fiction sources are also assigned regularly. Presentations, brief reports, and at least one longer research project are required. Internet access and research skills are an integral part of the curriculum.

Fifth-grade offers many opportunities to work on writing skills, as students continue to write often and for a wide variety of purposes during the year. Writing assignments include narrative and expository pieces, poetry, news articles, book reports, note taking, research reports, and journal writing. In almost all cases, students are expected to take their written work through a multi-step process from inception to revision, proofreading, and final presentation. In addition, greater awareness of writing as a craft is emphasized through the use of the "6 +1 traits of writing" model, which directs attention to these key facets of good writing: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation. Fifth-graders complete weekly vocabulary development, spelling, and grammar assignments.

Fifth-graders learn and/or strengthen their typing skills by using the "Alphasmart" keyboard typing instruction program. Most written work, and all final copy, is expected to be in cursive or typed. Major writing assignments are expected to be word-processed, which greatly facilitates revision and editing of the initial drafts, as well as final publication.

The Mathematics program is designed to cover a full range of fifth-through-sixth grade mathematics in class, with differentiated enrichment or support to meet the needs of individual students. Major topics in mathematics that are covered in fifth grade include: operations using whole numbers, decimals, and fractions; algebra readiness (variables, functions, and graphing), geometry, descriptive statistics (data sets, probability), and integrated problem-solving. Our curriculum emphasizes conceptual, problem-solving strategies, and computational skills, as well as effective communication about mathematical topics. In the classroom, manipulative materials and applications are used extensively to

promote understanding and spark further exploration. Math Olympiad is offered as an enrichment activity. For all students, the fifth-grade math program is calculated to build enthusiasm and confidence.

In Social Studies, students learn about global exploration, the American colonies, and the founding of our nation in fifth-grade. Fifth-graders use an assortment of resources to enrich their understanding of historical events and contemporary issues, including the "*History of US*" textbook series, historical fiction, field experiences, drama, multi-media presentations, and non-fiction reference materials and internet sites. The development of reading, communication, and thinking skills is emphasized over the acquisition of factual content *per se*. In fifth grade, we also use the grade-level *Daily Geography* program to broaden knowledge of U.S. and world geography. Fifth-graders expand their understanding of maps and mapmaking, and create a personal world map of their own family's history. Readings and discussions include current events, and students are encouraged to expand their use of maps and geographical awareness when they travel.

Our Science program is inquiry-based. Science activities promote an understanding of scientific process through observation, hypothesizing, and experimentation. The focus of our laboratory science program in the fall is "Circuits and Pathways," an extended investigation of electricity. In the winter term, the science program includes a week-long environmental learning experience at IslandWood outdoor school. In the spring, individual students design and conduct experimental research and present their work at the annual school Science Fair. Throughout the year, scientific literacy is fostered through readings and smaller-scale investigations of topics inspired by current events and class interests (e.g., weather phenomena, comets, earthquakes).