

Descriptors of Mathematical Practices – Grade 4

Overarching habits of mind of a productive mathematical thinker	1	In fourth grade, students know that doing mathematics involves solving problems and discussing how they solved them. Students explain to themselves the meaning of a problem and look for ways to solve it. Fourth graders may use concrete objects or pictures to help them conceptualize and solve problems. They may check their thinking by asking themselves, “Does this make sense?” They listen to the strategies of others and will try different approaches. They often will use another method to check their answers.
	6	As fourth graders develop their mathematical communication skills, they try to use clear and precise language in their discussions with others and in their own reasoning. They are careful about specifying units of measure and state the meaning of the symbols they choose. For instance, they use appropriate labels when creating a line plot.
Reasoning and explaining	2	Fourth graders should recognize that a number represents a specific quantity. They connect the quantity to written symbols and create a logical representation of the problem at hand, considering both the appropriate units involved and the meaning of quantities. They extend this understanding from whole numbers to their work with fractions and decimals. Students write simple expressions, record calculations with numbers, and represent or round numbers using place value concepts.
	3	In fourth grade, students may construct arguments using concrete referents, such as objects, pictures, and drawings. They explain their thinking and make connections between models and equations. They refine their mathematical communication skills as they participate in mathematical discussions involving questions like, “How did you get that?” and “Why is that true?”. They explain their thinking to others and respond to others’ thinking.
Modeling and using tools	4	Students experiment with representing problem situations in multiple ways including numbers, words (mathematical language), drawing pictures, using objects, making a chart, list, or graph, creating equations, etc. Students need opportunities to connect the different representations and explain the connections. They should be able to use all of these representations as needed. Fourth graders should evaluate their results in the context of the situation and reflect on whether the results make sense.
	5	Fourth graders consider the available tools (including estimation) when solving a mathematical problem and decide when certain tools might be helpful. For instance, they may use graph paper or a number line to represent and compare decimals and protractors to measure angles. They use other measurement tools to understand the relative size of units within a system and express measurements given in larger units in terms of smaller units.
Seeing structure and generalizing	7	In fourth grade, students look closely to discover a pattern or structure. For instance, students use properties of operations to explain calculations (partial products model). They relate representations of counting problems such as tree diagrams and arrays to the multiplication principal of counting. They generate number or shape patterns that follow a given rule.
	8	Students in fourth grade should notice repetitive actions in computation to make generalizations. Students use models to explain calculations and understand how algorithms work. They also use models to examine patterns and generate their own algorithms. For example, students use visual fraction models to write equivalent fractions.