

Valley Forge Elementary—December 2013—Team Updates

Kindergarten:



December has been another busy month in Kindergarten. We celebrated winter and the culmination of our Gingerbread unit with our Gingerbread House workshop. During this unit we read several different versions of the Gingerbread Man/Girl stories. We compared and contrasted story elements such as characters and settings. In Science, we learned about structures and used that knowledge to build a standing structure using marshmallows and toothpicks. This helped us to build our Gingerbread structures at our workshop. The children loved this unit and especially loved building Gingerbread Houses. Thanks to all who helped make this a successful event.

We've been busy working on a "special" gift for our families. This gift involves lots of direction following, sequencing, counting, letter/word recognition, and fine motor skills. On top of those two big projects, we continued to work on our letters and our Math In Focus lessons. In Social Studies, we read our holiday books for Christmas and Hanukkah. We are all looking forward to a little break so that we will be refreshed to start again in 2014!

First Grade:



December is a fabulous month to work in an elementary school. Between the snow, upcoming holidays, and Winter break, the children are full of joy and excitement fills the air!

We hope you have the chance to visit our "Winter Wonderland" hallway. The children worked really hard creating a beautiful picture and a writing piece about winter. In writing, the children are working on expanding their thoughts and sticking to one topic when they write. It is amazing to see their growth from September!

In math, the students are learning about place value. Through this unit, the children will further develop their understanding of numbers and number sense.

In Science, our unit on weather is almost over. Ask your child about the tools meteorologists use to predict and report the weather. Our next unit is magnets. When we return from Winter break, the children will have a chance to explore and learn with magnets . . . so much fun!

On our trip to Japan, the children visited Mt. Fuji and learned about volcanoes. Be sure to ask your child about the erupting volcano in our classroom. The children are enjoying our unit and learning so much about Japan!

The first grade teachers would like to wish all VFE families a happy, healthy, and safe new year! See you in 2014!

Second Grade:



December snow has provided inspiration for activities in second grade! Students wrote descriptive paragraphs using their senses to create images in readers' minds. Some classes also made winter snow pictures. Second graders wrote persuasive letters asking for a special gift. Teachers began teaching the art of persuasion with a book called *Earrings* in which a young girl tries to convince her parents to let her get earrings for pierced ears. We discussed the difference between begging and persuading. The writing process was followed starting with a pre-writing organizer, then a first-draft, and ending with a final draft. Our young artists also made beautiful packages to illustrate their work. The letters were sent home to be delivered to the appropriate person or persons. Hopefully some were able to receive that special gift of their dreams!

We have been learning about ancient China including lessons on geography and the making of silk. Future lessons include the Great Wall, the legend of Fa Mulan, and inventions by the ancient Chinese. It is a rich unit filled wonderful literature. We look forward to the culmination of the unit with our Chinese Round Robin, provided by our PTO.

In science, we have been focusing on properties of matter and how one form of matter can change to another. All lessons include hands-on activities for the students.

The second grade teachers hope you enjoy a relaxing winter break filled with family and friends. Happy New Year to all!

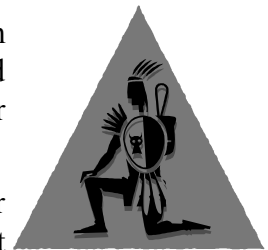
Third Grade:

December was a month full of fun activities for VFE third graders! This month students traveled to Conestoga High School to watch a cultural arts play performed by our high school students! Each year this is a trip our students enjoy and this year was no exception!

Many third grade students participated in our Winter Concert which featured our orchestra and chorus students. The kids did an outstanding job and it was a great show to watch!

The students have been busy with reading and writing stories, creating winter crafts, and practicing reading strategies taught through small and whole group activities. In social studies, we finished our Native American Unit which culminated with a Native American Pow-wow on December 17th. The kids did a terrific job with this unit! In science, our students continued their study on land and water through experiments and data collecting.

We finished up the month with class parties and winter activities! We are extremely proud of the hard work our students are putting forth this year and look forward to a great 2014 with these wonderful





Although November was the month of Thanksgiving, we would like to continue our thanks this month for so many wonderful events and people. We would like to thank Mr. Wong and his students for collecting food items for T&E Cares. The drive collected over seven hundred food items for the charity. A big thank you goes to Mr. Johnson for coordinating Hoops to Help. All the money raised went directly to the Red Cross® to help those in need. The next thank you goes to Ms. C. for coordinating the visit from the Chester County Intermediate Unit and their class about the legal rights of personal property. We would like to thank all the 4th graders who are helping out with the Bus Monitor Program. The 4th grade students are helping the 1st and 2nd graders walk safely down to the cafeteria for their bus dismissal.

We knew the Winter Break was near when we had our Staff Luncheon. We want to thank all the parents involved for their hard work and great hospitality. The winter parties always go off without a hitch and that would not have been possible without all the wonderful parents who help out in all the classrooms. Thank you for all your support so far this school year.



Special & Support Area Updates

Library:



The library has been very busy since the beginning of the school year. It's been wonderful seeing all the children and talking about all the books they have been reading. A number of on-going projects in the library are all-ready in full swing. A few highlights include: (1) the challenge to read 100 books; (2) the "Bookmark of the Month" in which we highlight a staff member's favorite children's books; (3) participation in the Pennsylvania Young Readers Choice Award program; and (4) our display of students and staff visiting libraries around the world. In each grade level, the goal is to increase the student's ability to utilize the library for both research and leisure reading. Each grade is introduced to new aspects of the library which build upon skills honed the previous year. Our goal is to make all students feel confident and comfortable in a library setting. In kindergarten we are reviewing appropriate library manners and the procedures for borrowing books. The students are learning vocabulary applicable to libraries and books including author, cover, spine, and illustrator. First graders are building on the vocabulary learned in kindergarten and are presently being introduced to the books in the Pennsylvania Young Readers Choice Award program. Second graders are going over the organization of the library to prepare them for using the automation system. Third graders are currently working on a project requiring them to find information in a book and then use that information to create a class book. Fourth graders have been learning about resources available in libraries. We are currently working on a unit focused on almanacs.

I would like to ask you to help us in reminding your children when their library books are due. **Kindergarten, First Grade, and Second Grade students' books are always due on their next scheduled library class. Third and Fourth grade students books' are due on the date stamped in the pocket of their books.**

Thank you to all the volunteers who have been helping to make the library run more smoothly.

Happy reading!

