



# VFES MONTHLY REPORT

*December 2012–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.

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. We are all looking forward to a little break so that we will be refreshed to start again in 2013!

## First Grade:

December is a fabulous month in the first grade hallway. Excitement fills the air! We hope that you have had the chance to see our "Winter Wonderland" hallway. The children worked really hard creating a beautiful picture and a writing piece about winter. The children are working on expanding their thoughts and sticking to one topic when they write. It is amazing to see how much they have grown since September!

An author, Janet Wong, visited our school in December and inspired our students to become authors! In reading groups, the children are working on inferring. This is a very difficult skill for first graders, but our children are doing a great job with this concept.

In math, the children have been learning about Geometry. They learned about plane and solid shapes. They can name and spot these shapes in our environment.

Our Science unit on Weather is finished. Ask your children about the tools meteorologists use to predict and report the weather. Our next unit is magnets. The children always love exploring with magnets and find them amazing!

On our trip to Japan, the children visited Mt. Fuji and learned about volcanoes. The children are enjoying our unit and learning so much! The first grade teachers would like to wish all VFE families a happy, healthy and safe new year! See you in 2013!

During the month of December, second grade students were involved in many activities. We enjoyed a visit from the author, Janet Wong. She shared many great poems and stories with the children. The students did some of their own persuasive writing in letters hoping to convince someone in their lives to give them a gift. They had some very good reasons for why they felt the gift was needed. The students also wrote about their feelings toward winter in a poem. In our Holiday curriculum, we have read books about many celebrations and traditions at this time of the year.

In Science, we are investigating all of the changes that can occur with solids, liquids and gasses. The students are very excited and interested in what experiments we will be doing in each class. Ask your child about how long it took them to melt an ice cube. Students were very creative in their thinking of ways to accomplish the task.

We are continuing our study of Ancient China in Social Studies. The students have learned how silk was discovered and that it was an important part of history in China. Also, they heard the Chinese legend of Fa Mulan. We are very excited about our upcoming Chinese Round Robin.

December was a very busy time in second grade and we are looking forward to a wonderful new year with many fun filled learning experiences!

## Third Grade:

Third grade has been busy this month finishing up reading units and writing projects before the holiday break. Students have been working hard in reading groups and as a whole group to continue developing the reading skills we emphasize each day. We have completed our Theme 5 Unit and will begin Theme 6 when we return from Break.

In Social Studies this month we completed our Native American Pow-Wow! This round robin activity had students go from classroom to classroom to learn about and present different Native American Tribes. Students worked extremely hard on this unit and it was a pleasure to watch them present to their classmates about what they studied. We are excited to start our unit on Pennsylvania when we return from break!

In Science we are finishing up our Land and Water unit by exploring the effects water has on our ever changing world! Students are creating streams and tributaries by manipulating the flow of water on soil. They record their findings and see how each experiment leads to different results each class period. It really has been a fun unit that has sparked a lot of interest in experimental science.

December also brought the Janet Wong poetry assembly which our students extremely enjoyed. We also loved the Winter parties and winter crafts.

We are excited to bring in the new year with lots of fun learning projects in January and wish all our VFE families a safe and happy holiday season!

## Fourth Grade:

The month of December was filled with several wonderful activities. We would like to thank the Cultural Arts Committee for having author, Janet Wong visit us. Mrs. Wong told us some insightful stories and showed how they were connected to her books and poems. We had a wonderful time with her presentation to the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. She gave us some great brainstorming tips about writing poetry.

We also want to thank Mr. Johnson for coordinating Hula Hoops for Sandy. All the money raised went directly to the Red Cross® to help those in need.

The next group we would like to thank is all the 4<sup>th</sup> graders who are helping out with the Bus Monitor Program. The 4<sup>th</sup> grade students are helping the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students walk safely down to their bus at dismissal time..

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

## Special & Support Area Updates

### Music

All of the students at Valley Forge Elementary have been very busy learning about various musical styles, genres, and composers. In kindergarten, students are learning about different percussion instruments. They are also learning to use their singing voice both alone and with others.

Our first grade students are studying melody and the ways that notes can move. They are using many different classroom instruments to create their own melodies.

In second grade, students are learning about meter in music. Students are composing and sharing rhythms with their class. Students are also singing songs of several European cultures, including France and Spain.

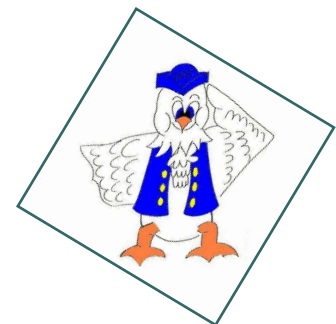
In third grade, students are learning about how to read music. They are also creating and performing movements to songs that they created.

Our fourth grade students are hard at work with the recorder, learning to play various songs to share with the class. They are also learning about folk music traditions in America.

The Valley Forge Chorus and 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Orchestra recently performed their winter concert, complete with music about snow, hot chocolate, peace, and this glorious season. The concert also featured the newly formed Valley Forge Percussion Ensemble playing the Ukrainian Bell Carol.

### January Events

- 1/1 NO SCHOOL
- 1/2 Japanese Round Robin - 1st Grade
- 1/3 Audubon Society- 3rd Grade
- 1/4 "Bucketfilling Day"
- 1/10 Kit's Interactive Theater- 4th Grade
- 1/16 PAL for Parents—4th Grade
- 1/17 Betsy Ross -3rd Grade
- 1/21 NO SCHOOL
- 1/24 Philadelphia Zoo's Remarkable Rainforest
- 1/29 District Kindergarten Math Night
- 1/31 Kindergarten to Eastern University Planetarium



## Special & Support Area Updates, *continued*

### Reading

**Kindergarten Bridge** students have been working hard and having fun at reading time with us. We have been reviewing letter sounds from A through M so far. A multi-sensory approach is being used to learn the letters. The children are practicing the letter sounds in isolation and at the beginning of words. The children are forming their letters through tracing, use of white boards, play dough, and paints, as well as working on their alphabet books. Through stories and poems, we are reinforcing early literacy strategies along with reading and listening strategies, such as predicting and re-telling. We have incorporated online, interactive books to enhance these literacy experiences. We are also reviewing concepts of print, such as identifying a word and a sentence, and following left to right print.

**First Grade Reading Club** students are continuing to develop their early literacy strategies of decoding, phonological awareness, phonics, fluency and comprehension meaning seeking strategies. In the groups we are working on short vowel sounds and rhyming word families. We are also working on beginning sounds of words using games and manipulatives. We have been building words by manipulating letters and sounds using letter tiles and white boards. The children are utilizing thinking skills to predict a story by drawing on past knowledge, looking at the cover of the book for clues, and taking a “picture walk” prior to reading the story. The children have been working hard and improving their skills.

**The Second Grade Reading Club** students have been reading a variety of high interest books. We’ve been making predictions about the books by using the background knowledge we share and by focusing on clues found in the cover picture, in the title, and in the illustrations. Phonics and decoding lessons are incorporated through teaching strategies such as sounding it out, looking for pattern clues within the word, and reading ahead for context clues. With the stories we read, we are building comprehension strategies of surveying, predicting, using background knowledge, determining the main idea, summarizing, retelling, and sequencing the events.

Members of the **Third Grade Reading Club** are reading high interest books, both fiction and non-fiction. We preview each book before we read it by making predictions using the title, cover picture, and our background knowledge. New vocabulary is introduced prior to stories. We engage in story recall and sequencing activities, and respond to what we read. Comprehension activities include oral and written responses to questions about the characters, the story setting, and the plot. Third-graders are also building words with letter tiles to support decoding, phonics, and spelling.

The **Fourth Grade Reading Club** members have been reading a variety of fiction and non-fiction stories from the Soar to Success and the Flying to Literacy series. In order to develop comprehension skills, the students have been applying specific reading strategies to their reading such as setting a purpose for reading, making predictions before and during reading, summarizing events from a story and analyzing character traits after reading. We also use board games as a fun way to reinforce these reading strategies. Word-manipulative games are used to support decoding, phonics, and spelling.

We continue to incorporate the use of technology into all of our programs as well. We have used the Smart Board and interactive online books to enhance our instruction.

Feel free to check out the website below which includes many free resources for practicing Literacy and Reading Skills. <http://guest.portaportal.com/vfereadingSincerely>,

Sincerely,  
**Mary Beth Humbert**  
**Mary Anne Keith**  
**Jaelyn Klunder**  
**Iris Mander**