



VFES MONTHLY REPORT

December 2017 – 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. 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 involved lots of direction following, sequencing, counting, letter/word recognition, and fine motor skills. In addition to 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, Kwanzaa and Hanukkah. In Science, we learned about matter and properties.

We are all looking forward to a little break so that we will be refreshed to start again in 2018!

First Grade:

December is a fabulous month to work in an elementary school. Between the first snowflakes, 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 created a personal narrative about winter. When writing personal narratives, the children are working on expanding their thoughts while 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, we completed our unit on weather. The students are experts on predicting our upcoming winter weather. 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!

In Social Studies, our first graders took a virtual field trip to Japan and are busy learning all about this island country.

Before Winter Break, our homeroom moms planned fun Winter parties for our classes. The children had a great time wearing PJs to school and welcoming Winter!

The first grade teachers would like to wish all VFE families a happy, healthy, and safe new year! See you in 2018!

Second Grade:

Second grade has been very busy in the month of December.

We started the month off with our exciting kick-off assembly to this year's Mini-thon. Students learned how together as a school we can help raise money that helps support childhood cancer research. The children are excited for our spirit week that will take place the week we return from Winter break. Spirit week culminates in our entire school dancing for a cure.

Second grade has also been working on exciting Winter-related theme reading and writing projects. Students have enjoyed narrative and opinion writing pieces along with Holiday curriculum books that help us to appreciate our diversity within our school.



In Social Studies students are studying Ancient China and learning all about China's rich traditions. We are excited as our unit culminates with a Chinese Round Robin in January where students go from room to room to learn different cultural lessons taught by many instructors.

In Science we are busy learning about the states of matter. Students are learning about why liquids can turn from a solid to a liquid to a gas. The hands-on experiments offer the students many discovery learning opportunities and have our students engaged and involved with the scientific method.

We look forward to our Winter parties and bringing in the new year! We wish all of our families a wonderful time off with friends and family and look forward to many more exciting learning opportunities when we return in January!

Third Grade:

December was a month full of fun activities for VFE third graders!

The students were very excited to participate in the "Hour of Code" this month. Students were able to select activities from a variety of websites on the iPads and/or laptops to explore the concept of writing code. This was a highly enjoyable activity for all students!

Many third grade students participated in our Winter Concert which featured our orchestra and chorus students. Mrs. Nation, Mrs. Mertz, and Ms. Huang do a wonderful job leading our musical groups!

This month in Reading, we focused on creating images which is always popular as the students are able to draw pictures that represent the picture they make in their mind while reading. We also continue to practice looking back in the text to answer comprehension questions and formulate written responses to the text that include restating the question, citing text evidence, and summarizing our answer. In Writing, we continued our unit on narratives, some personal and some imaginative. Students have been working on elaborating on events using their senses.

In Social Studies, we finished our Native American Unit which culminated with a Native American Pow-Wow on December 15th. Each third grade class was able to share the research they did on their specific tribe through posters and/or Pic Collages on the iPads! After break, we will move onto the Lenni Lenape, our local Native American tribe. In Science, our students continued their study on land and water through experiments and data collecting.



In all Math classes, students have been busy solving both single-step and two-step word problems. We are asking the students to read these word problems carefully and be able to decide which operation is needed to solve the problem. Using bar models to represent their thinking is a great way to conceptualize their problem solving. Please reference the Student Websites link on our VFE homepage for more practice in bar models and problem solving. You will also find a variety of other popular websites the students can access at home.

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 2018 with these awesome third graders!

Fourth Grade:

It was a December to remember for us! Fourth graders were so excited to participate in The Hour of Code that took place this month. Special thanks to Mr. Albert who came into each 4th grade classroom and kicked off the month of coding for us. He showed the kids code.org, took them through different levels, and answered some of their coding questions. What a blast! Throughout the month, we explored many different types of coding apps and websites and will continue to do so throughout the year.

We are continuing to utilize reading strategies as we read a variety of texts in large group and small group instruction. The reading strategy that we are focusing on now is making inferences. Soon the students will practice creating images while they read. This is when they visualize what they are reading and use their senses to imagine what can be smelt, felt, touched, seen, heard, and even tasted throughout the story.

We are moving from narrative writing to opinion writing in fourth grade. It has been exciting to see their writing develop and progress since the beginning of the school year.



In social studies, we are learning all about the causes of the American Revolution. We have done some fun activities where the kids have been able to really imagine what it was like to be taxed unfairly without representation through our “King’s Pennies” activity. Soon our 4th graders will compete against other groups in their class to build the tallest and strongest “Liberty Pole”. After this, we will be learning all about the battles that took place as part of the American Revolution.

Finally, our little electricians have been hard at work in the science lab, learning all about circuits, troubleshooting, and even making their own filaments. They can’t wait to build their own homes with working lights!

We want to thank the PTO for a delicious staff appreciation lunch that took place this month. We are very lucky to have amazingly supportive families here at VFE. We also want to wish everyone the best as we look forward to an exciting 2018!!



Special & Support Area Updates

Library:

Kindergarten students have been listening to different versions of *The Gingerbread Man*. They're continuing to develop visual literacy by paying special attention to the pictures in books and "reading" what the illustrator is saying.

Library students in first grade are exploring kamishibai stories from Japan. These "paper theater" stories have provided a wonderful vehicle to discuss Japanese culture, folktales, and storytelling.

Second graders are continuing to explore the various library sections and are putting their alphabetization skills to work to help them when searching for books.

In Third Grade, students are developing an understanding of the Dewey decimal classification system. They've had a lot of practice getting into the stacks and paying attention to the call numbers. Biographies in the 921 section have been a special focus as students will be working on biography projects in the new year.

Fourth graders have been engaged in the research process - utilizing various materials such as almanacs, non-fiction books, and online encyclopedia to locate information about different states. Keyword searching and identifying the right tool for each information need have been the focus of our work. Mini-lessons about using reliable and sources and proper citations are helping to develop smart and ethical researchers. Students are excited to create PowerPoint presentations to share their research with classmates.

Students at all levels have heard or read books from the Pennsylvania Young Reader's Choice Awards list and are gearing up to vote in March for their favorite.

The VFES library has circulated almost 11,000 books to students, staff and faculty since September. We've added almost 400 new and donated books to our collection. Thanks to the many parent volunteers for helping and to the community for the continued support of our library program.

