



VFES MONTHLY REPORT

December 2018 – Team Updates

Kindergarten:



December has been another busy month in Kindergarten. We celebrated winter and the culmination of our Gingerbread unit with our Gingerbread workshop and winter party. 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 the party. 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 2019!

First Grade:

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

The first grade team participated in Hour of Code this month with a Round Robin. The children had the chance to explore coding on different devices. First graders coded with i-pads, laptops, robots, and Osmo. In addition to these classroom devices, first graders coded without electronics as well as participating in an "unplugged" coding activity and topped the day off with a coding dance party! First graders are amazing at computer programming!

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

We completed our unit on weather in Science class. 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!



Our first graders are enjoying their "trip" to Japan during Social Studies lessons. The children learned a lot about this island country during our Japanese Round Robin. Our first graders visited each first grade teacher to participate in five different lessons about Japanese culture. Be sure to ask your child about their latest adventure to Mt. Fuji!

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 2019!

Second Grade:

During the month of December, we had the opportunity to participate in the hour of code. The Hour of Code is a chance for our students to be introduced to computer science and computer programming. Each classroom participated in plugged and unplugged coding activities. We had a special visitor, Mr. Albert, come around to each classroom to help us use hourofcode.org.

In science, we have finished our unit on sound and have started our new unit on changes. We have been learning about chemical and physical changes.

We have finished our Dinosaur Unit in social studies and completed our dinosaur research projects. We are now learning about Ancient China.

The second grade was very excited to attend the upper division winter concert and to celebrate during our holiday parties. We have also been busy making a lot of fun winter crafts during the month of December!



Third Grade:

December was such an activity-packed month for third grade! The third grade is in competition with the rest of the school donating coins for our coin challenge. We are collecting coins to donate to the Four Diamonds Pediatric Cancer Research Center. We are very grateful to all!

In Language Arts, students have been learning and practicing skills of reading deeply into a passage and responding to text-dependent questions orally and in writing. They are also at various stages of writing personal narratives that focus on something special.

In Science, third grade continues working on the land and water unit - working in teams completing experiments, observing, and recording the dramatic effects that water can have on land.

In Social Studies, we continued our unit of study of Native Americans with a round-robin activity. Each class researched a specific Native American tribe and created posters as well as other props for their tribes. Each student presented their facts to the rest of the grade in the form of a Pow-Wow. We are so proud of the work each group put into these projects!

Each class will also enjoy a much-anticipated class winter party! As we look forward to the winter break spent with family and friends, we are already planning a fresh new start for the New Year!!



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. Each class took time to let the kids explore various coding apps and websites. Dance Party on code.org was a real hit!

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 smelled, 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.



We would also like to thank each of the parents that contributed to our 4th grade STEAM cart. Mrs. Moreno used the supplies to put together an amazing cart that we will be able to use for many different STEM and STEAM activities. The first activity that we are using the STEAM cart for is a tea container lesson where the kids are given a bag of supplies (pipe cleaners, popsicle sticks, clothespins, rubber bands, tin foil) to create a container that would protect and keep a tea bag safe. After learning about the Boston Tea Party, the 4th graders couldn’t believe how much tea was thrown overboard by the Sons of Liberty!

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. Lastly, we want to wish everyone the best as we look forward to an exciting 2018!



Special & Support Area Updates

Library:

The year is flying by and the library has been a busy place this fall. We are all enjoying the new library layout. The new chairs, tables, and shelves brighten the space and make it more a more flexible learning environment.

Kindergarten students have been listening to different versions of folktales/fairy tales, identifying key story elements, and discussing similarities and differences between stories. We are 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 have been immersed in the works of Caldecott award-winner, Chris Van Allsburg. His realistic charcoal drawings and fantasy stories that end with a twist are engaging and through-provoking. After the winter break, we will begin exploring kamishibai stories from Japan. These “paper theater” stories provide a wonderful vehicle to discuss Japanese culture, folktales, and storytelling.

Second graders are continuing to explore the various library sections and literary genres. With the entire library open to them for book selection, they are putting their alphabetization and categorization skills to work to help them when searching for books.

In Third Grade, students are developing an understanding of the Dewey decimal classification system through a mini-research project about animals. After selecting a non-fiction book and taking notes, students really enjoyed using PicCollage on the iPads to create an informational poster. After break, the Biographies in the 921 section will be 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 encyclopedias 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 sources and proper citations are helping to develop smart and ethical researchers. After the break, students will be creating 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. Many of the students have begun to investigate Maker Space materials in the library - building, problem-solving, and engaging with classmates.

 The VFES library has circulated almost 14,000 books to students, staff, and faculty since September. We’ve also added almost 600 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.

