



# VFES MONTHLY REPORT

*December 2019 – 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, fine motor skills, and calendar skills.

In addition to those two big projects, we continued to work on composing and decomposing numbers as well as ordinal numbers in math.

In Social Studies, we read our holiday books for Christmas, Kwanzaa, and Hanukkah.

In Science we learned about matter and properties. We also learned about building structures. The students had to try and build a structure that could stand up using straws and connectors. This was a lesson in working together and making a plan!

We are all looking forward to a little break so that we will be refreshed to start again in 2020!

## First Grade:

December is a fabulous month to work in an elementary school. Between holiday celebrations and Winter break, the children are filled with 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 in many ways. First graders coded with Box Island and OSMO. They also coded without electronics by participating in an "unplugged" coding activity. 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 six different lessons about Japanese culture.

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 2020!

## Second Grade:

December is off to a very busy start!

We kicked off this month with a Mini-thon assembly. The children are excited for our spirit week that will take place the week we return from Winter break. Spirit week will help raise money to donate to childhood cancer research.

Second grade has also been working on exciting Winter-related theme reading and writing projects.



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.

We are busy learning about the states of matter in science. 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 enjoyed our Winter parties and look forward to bringing in the new year! We wish all of our families a wonderful time off with friends and family. We are looking 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! A highlight this month was in Social Studies. Each class researched a Native American tribe and created a poster within their small groups with information about them. Then the third grade celebrated these Native Americans with a Pow-Wow! Each class shared their facts with the rest of the grade as they rotated through each room.

The students were also 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, laptops, and desktop computers to explore the concept of writing code. We also have a third grade parent who is an actual coder, Mr. Albert, who came in and guided the students through some challenging activities. It was a lot of fun for all the students!

Many third grade students participated in our Winter Concert which featured our orchestra and chorus students. Mrs. Nation and Ms. Jurik have done a wonderful job leading our musical groups!

This month in Reading we focused on a reading strategy, synthesizing information. We continued 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 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 2020 with these fantastic 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. 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 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. After learning about the Boston Tea Party, the 4th graders couldn’t believe how much tea was thrown overboard by the Sons of Liberty!

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 2020!



## Special & Support Area Updates

### Music:

The music classroom at VFES this year is filled with singing, dancing, and playing instruments! Here are just some of the things we have been doing and learning in each grade...

This past month, the Kindergarteners have been exploring the difference between our speaking voices and our singing voices. We have been learning about steady beat through singing, movement and playing instruments.

The 1<sup>st</sup> graders have been learning about dynamics, *forte* and *piano* (loud and quiet), through singing, moving, and playing instruments as well. We learned about a composer named John Philips Sousa, "The March King," and learned about music from Tchaikovsky's famous ballet, *The Nutcracker*.

In 2<sup>nd</sup> grade we are learning about form in music. Form is the way a song or piece of music is organized. We have been singing and playing instruments to a variety of American folk songs in AB Form and have recently studied music in ABA form by John Williams (the composer of the Star Wars theme) and Modest Mussorgsky (a famous Russian composer).

Our 3<sup>rd</sup> graders just began playing recorders! We learned how to produce a proper sound and play together as a group. We first learned songs by rote and now we are learning to read and play notes off the musical staff.

Recently, the 4<sup>th</sup> graders have been singing songs and playing instruments using a new rhythm, sixteenth notes. We continued the use of sixteenth notes by composing our own songs for our recorders. 4<sup>th</sup> Grade also learned about the famous opera, *Hansel and Gretel*, and all the different roles and jobs that go into putting on a professional performance.

Our band students and beginning orchestra students are making tremendous progress as they learn their very first notes and songs on new instruments! Keep up the practicing!

The VFE Chorus and Encore Orchestra worked very hard to prepare for the winter concert this past week! They did a great job! BRAVO!

