



VFES MONTHLY REPORT

December 2020 – Team Updates

Kindergarten:

The kindergarten children continue to amaze us with their resilience and hard work. This month they faced the challenge of working through a snow day and met that challenge with flying colors.

Our Wonders Big Ideas were about what we can learn by going to different places and what we know about the people and places in our neighborhood. Our grammar focus was on types of sentences and identifying describing words. The sight words we learned were “go” and “you”. We continued to practice identifying key details in different texts.

In Science, the students finished the unit on agriculture and learned about different animal coverings such as scales, feathers, and fur. The students practiced identifying different animal coverings by sorting pictures of animals.

In Social Studies, the students learned about Native American storytelling and listened to the Christmas and Chanukah books from the Holiday curriculum.

Our kindergarten mathematicians practiced counting and writing numbers between 11 and 20. They also learned about solid shapes such as cylinder, sphere, cube, cone, and pyramid. We looked for flat shapes on the faces of the solid shapes and used shapes to make patterns.

We had fun playing coding games in celebration of the Hour of Code. This global movement strives to bring awareness to and interest in computer science.



We ended the month with our Gingerbread theme. We read and compared different gingerbread stories. We worked on developing our fine motor skills with some fun Gingerbread crafts!

We continue to marvel at how our students and families are managing school this year. We are thankful for the Valley Forge community and wish everyone a wonderful Holiday Season!

First Grade:

December is a fabulous month to work in an elementary school and virtual teaching has provided us with almost the same experience. Between holiday celebrations and Winter break approaching, the children are filled with joy and excitement fills the virtual air!

Our first grade students participated in Hour of Code this month by exploring two coding programs. Angry Birds and Moana were great programs to allow the kids to experience coding. We encourage our first graders to continue practicing!

In reading, our first graders completed unit 2 of Wonders. During this Unit, the first graders practiced short e and u as well as digraphs and blends through our phonics lessons. We then learned about the story elements and finding the main idea while reading both fiction and non-fiction stories. At the end of unit 2, the children had the opportunity to write their very own fantasy story!

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 on Comparing and Measuring. Don't be surprised if you find your first grader measuring household items. The best way to learn is through hands-on practice!

Our first graders have completed the unit on Communities and Maps and are getting ready to begin a study of Japan. The children will learn all about this island country and the Japanese culture.

Before Winter Break, the first grade teachers planned exciting virtual parties for our first graders. The children had a great time wearing their Winter PJs and welcoming Winter!

The first grade teachers would like to wish all VFE families a happy, healthy, and safe new year! See you in 2021!

Second Grade:

December has been a busy month for the second graders!

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.

In Language Arts, the students began working on Unit 3 in Wonders. During Whole Group, we discussed the essential question - how can people help in their community? The children learned about narrative nonfiction texts and even had the opportunity to write their own personal narrative!

In science, the students are busy learning about the states of matter. The children are learning about why liquids can turn from a solid to a liquid to a gas.

In Social Studies, we continued to learn about maps. Our next unit will focus on learning about China.

The students have been busy making a lot of fun winter crafts! We enjoyed our winter parties and look forward to bringing in the new year! We are wishing all our families a wonderful winter break and looking forward to many more exciting learning opportunities when we return in January!



Third Grade:

December was a month full of learning 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 to explore the concept of writing code. This was a highly enjoyable activity for all students!

This month in Reading, we focused on synthesizing and monitoring our understanding. Students did a great job searching the story for clues to better understand something from the story that was not stated. They also learned strategies that they can apply if they do not understand a word or part of the text. We continued to practice looking back in the text to answer comprehension questions and formulating written responses to the text that include restating the question, answering in our own words, citing text evidence, explaining the evidence, and recapping the question and answer (RACER). All of our reading groups have enjoyed our novel study on Freckle Juice. In Writing, we continued our unit on personal narratives. Students have been working on elaborating on a small moment using their senses.

 In Social Studies, we have been learning about different Native American tribes. Students have also read a book to learn more about holidays that are celebrated by different cultures this time of year.

In Science, our students continued their study on rocks and minerals through observing experiments, data collection, and readings.

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 continue to encourage your children to work on their fact fluency. It will help them in future units this year!

We finished up the month with class parties and winter activities! We are extremely proud of the hard work and adaptability our students are putting forth and showing this year. We look forward to a great 2021 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. Each class took time to let the kids explore various coding apps and websites.

We have finished our second novel study of the year, Absolutely Almost. Students enjoyed reading the novel as a class and made connections with the main character, Albie. In the new year, we will introduce a new comprehension strategy - making inferences.

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. After this, we will be learning all about the battles that took place as part of the American Revolution.

In science, students have been studying ecosystems. They are learning about different types of ecosystems and how living and non-living factors affect the surroundings.

It has been a great few months in 4th grade! We hope that everyone enjoys this well-deserved break. We want to wish everyone the best as we look forward to 2021!!



Special & Support Area Updates

Music:

While this has definitely been an unusual first half of the school year, music-making at VFES has continued with singing, dancing, and playing instruments! To find your child's music lessons on Schoology, go to their music course. All folders are labeled by date with the most recent lesson at the top. For ideas to find or make instruments to use at home with the lessons, please look back at Cycle 1 and 2.

Here are just some of the things we have been learning in each grade...

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

The 1st 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 recently listened to music from Tchaikovsky's famous ballet, *The Nutcracker*.

In 2nd 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 3rd graders just began playing recorders! We learned how to produce a proper sound. We first learned songs by rote and now we are learning to read and play notes off the musical staff.

Recently the 4th 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. 4th Grade also recently 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 through virtual lessons! Keep up the practicing!

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

