

Valley Forge Elementary—January 2016

Kindergarten:



The kindergarten classrooms had a dreamy January with our Sweet Dreams theme. The children listened to many stories related to this theme. We made "Dream Pillows" which involved each student drawing a picture of something that would help him/her have happy dreams. Then parents helped us iron these pictures onto a pillow case. The children were amazed by the outcome and have reported having very happy dreams!

With the wonderful snow we had, it was only fitting to weave snowmen and mittens into our daily activities. The children created their own snowman and practiced writing complete sentences to describe their snowman. In Social Studies, we listened to the story "Martin's Big Words" and put together a book to learn more about Martin Luther King. In math, we began learning about time to the nearest hour. We are looking forward to kindergarten math night in February. We learned about animal coverings in Science. Our little scientists explored different types of animal coverings and guessed which animal it may have come from.

In preparation for our trip to the Eastern University planetarium, we learned about the sun, moon, and constellations.

First Grade:

Happy New Year! First grade started off 2016 by making New Year resolutions. A new year is a great time to establish better habits in school and at home.



SNOW, SNOW and more SNOW! No need to pretend this year . . . first grade has fully experienced the season of Winter with the Blizzard of 2016! To go along with the weather, we are learning all about snowmen, snow, and winter animals. Please remember to dress your child for the winter weather. When the temperatures allow, we head outside for some fresh air and exercise. Your child must have hat, gloves, waterproof snow pants, and boots to play in the snow during lunch recess and they also need a change of shoes for the classroom.

In Science, the first grade started the month with a study of magnets. The children explored with magnets and discovered amazing magnetic facts. Our study of the rainforest followed our unit on magnets. The Philadelphia Zoo visited our school with a "Zoo on Wheels" program. The children had a great time meeting and learning about various rainforest animals. The children were very excited to find out that VFE will be adopting a rainforest animal this year as we continue our partnership with the zoo. Students are asked to donate money to cast their vote on what rainforest animal they wish to adopt. The funds raised will help provide food for our adopted animal. Thank you to the PTO for this fabulous program. Our study of the rainforest is one of the most anticipated units in first grade. Tradition at VFE is for first grade classes to create the rainforest mural in our first grade hallway. The children cannot wait to partake in this activity; which will take place at the end of our unit . . . stay tuned for further details.

First graders love birthdays! In January, we celebrated the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. by reading books and writing our own dreams for our world. First graders may be little, but their dreams are big!

February will continue to bring a LOVE of learning! We are looking forward to a great 2016 with our first graders!

Second Grade:

Second graders seemed excited to return from Winter Break anticipating a month filled with many interesting lessons and activities. We began the month writing New Year's resolutions. The students have many important goals for 2016! Later in the month, we studied the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Junior. Teachers read a biography and we were inspired by listening to Martin's Big Words. After learning of his dreams for the world, second graders wrote about their own dreams for the future.

We were fortunate to have author/illustrator Brian Pinkney visit school this month. Before his visit, students read some of his books in library and in their classrooms. Some favorites were: *Sukey and the Mermaid*, *Sparrowboy*, and *Jo Jo's Side Kick*.

In math, students have been working on the topics of multiplication, division, and measurement.



Our study of ancient China is coming to an end soon. We want to thank our generous PTO for providing a Round Robin filled with engaging activities. Students experienced paper-cutting with the amazing Mr. Cheng, painting, martial arts, shadow puppets, and learned about how rice is grown. They also used chopsticks to eat traditional Chinese rice. We appreciate the many volunteers who make this event possible.

We are continuing our science unit called Changes. Two favorite activities this month were separating colors and conducting tests to discover a "mystery" mixture! Ask a second grader to explain the words dissolve, settle, mixture, and solution.

We will be glad when warmer weather returns, but in the meantime, we have so much to keep all of us busy! We are looking forward to many fun Valentine's Day projects and parties!

Third Grade:

The third grade was excited to get back from break and continue on our learning adventure together!

We kicked off the month with a special assembly with Betsy Ross to learn about our nation's flag. The students learned many interesting facts about Betsy's life and the history of our flag! We have also been busy continuing our Social Studies unit on Native Americans focusing on the Lenni Lenape as well as our science unit - land and water. This science unit will end soon and we will move onto chemical tests!

The third grade also wrapped up our reading theme which focused around forces of nature. We read many pieces of fiction and non-fiction pieces about weather and the impact it has on our lives. Students also practiced determining which information was important to the main idea and which was interesting but unimportant. A focus is not only being placed on citing text evidence in their responses but also providing an analysis of what the text means in their own words. We are proud of the effort our students put in each day during their whole group reading lessons and also their small group meetings!

In writing, we have begun our unit on imaginative narratives which students are eager to try. This will be an opportunity for them to let their imagination soar and use some ideas from a variety of mentor texts that we will read together. After this unit, we will spend time on writing informative pieces and also writing opinion pieces.

The third grade was also visited by representatives from the John James Audubon Center with whom we share an educational partnership. Each class was treated to a bird drawing lesson and learned about how John James Audubon accurately depicted birds in his drawings using taxidermy. Students are currently sketching their own bird drawings that will later be on display at the Audubon Sapsucker Festival and then used in a fundraising auction during the Ice Cream Social!



The third grade is enthusiastic about the learning experiences ahead in February!



The month of January went by very fast, and we had many wonderful learning experiences. When you walk down the halls of the Fourth Grade, please take time to read the different writing assignments written by the students. There are also goals for the New Year and our most memorable times of 2015.

We started the final challenge in our electric circuits unit. We are constructing our “buildings” and wiring them so the lights can turn on in every room.

The Fourth Grade would like to thank the PTO and the Cultural Arts Committee for the two programs that they sponsored. We enjoyed having Kit’s Interactive Theater visit us with Betsy Ross. We had a great time being part of her performance and learning many new and interesting facts regarding the causes of the American Revolutionary War. We also enjoyed author/illustrator, Mr. Brian Pinkney, and learning the many events that helped shaped his life and his creative process for writing many wonderful books.

In closing, we would like to thank the custodial and maintenance staff for the tireless effort they put into clean-up after Winter Storm Jonas left us over 2 feet of heavy snow.



Special & Support Area Updates

Library



The library continues to be a busy place. Reading, researching, and responding to literature have been taking place in all of the grades. We've circulated over 14,000 books and more than 500 new books have joined the collection since the beginning of the school year. We appreciate all of your efforts to help your children return books on time. Special thanks to all of the parent volunteers who help the library run smoothly.

Kindergarten students finished a sweet winter unit on Gingerbread stories to coincide with their gingerbread house making in Mrs. Riley and Mrs. Diamond's classes. We are exploring the differences between fiction and non-fiction with penguin books – a perfect topic for this wintery weather! Kindergarteners are excited to browse the stacks for their book selections.

First graders have just finished a unit on Japanese folktales. Mr. Wong became their "Kamishibai Man" using the story cards and theater to present both old and new tales in a fun format. We've discussed the elements of folktales as well as aspects of Japanese culture and customs that were featured in these stories.

In second grade, students explored personal narratives and word play through the work of authors such as Lois Lowry and Louis Sachar. We've also worked on alphabetization and dictionary skills which will help students as they search for materials on the shelves. In the coming months, second graders will be learning how to use the OPAC (online public access catalog) to locate materials. You can access it from home from the VFE Library web page: tesd.net/vfelibrary.

Third graders are continuing to refine their researching skills and locating materials in all areas of the library including the biographies in the 920s and 921s. Many of the students read a biography of a famous artist gaining both background knowledge and an understanding of the elements of a biography. When note-taking, instruction focused on which pieces of information should be copied directly (for accuracy) and which ideas should be rephrased in the student's own words. The laptops in the library have been well-utilized when students learned how to create informational reports using Word.

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 assessing the reliability of sources and proper citations are helping to develop smart and ethical researchers. Students are excited to be learning PowerPoint so they can share their information with their classmates.

