



VFES MONTHLY REPORT

January 2021 – Team Updates

Kindergarten:

The kindergarten students had a fantastic time participating in our dress up days for our first week back to school. Celebrating mini-thon in a virtual setting was so much fun. Mrs. Swetkowski and Mr. Helsel put so much time and energy into a very fun activity!

Our Wonders themes were about neighbors and living things. Some of our Social Emotional lessons included using strategies to help you remember things, being curious and asking questions, volunteering, and belonging to a community.

We continued working on building our sight word knowledge. Our phonemic awareness lessons included practice with segmenting words, blending, and identifying beginning sounds. We learned about describing words called adjectives. The comprehension strategies we learned were rereading to help understand the story and identifying the main topic.



Our special activity for the month was our snowman activities complimenting the story “The Snowy Day”. The children practiced their fine motor skills while cutting and gluing a snowman. They drew pictures to identify events that happened at the beginning, middle and end of the story!

In math, we learned about digital and analog clocks. We practiced telling time to the hour using the hands on an analog clock and in digital form. Using songs and the 100s chart, we learned about skip counting by 2s, 5s, and 10s to 100.

First Grade:

Happy New Year! First grade started 2021 by making New Year resolutions. A new year is a great time to establish better habits in school and at home.

During phonics in large group reading, our first graders are learning about the long vowels. It is amazing to see how quickly the children can apply learned skills in their reading and writing. We are currently reading in our Unit 3 book of Wonders. During this unit, we focus on making predictions and story elements through various genres. Our Grammar lessons focus on verbs. Our first graders can identify a verb in a sentence and can change the tense of given verbs.

In Science, first grade is learning about comparing and measuring. The children have had the opportunity to work with nonstandard and standard units of measurement.

In Social Studies, our first graders are enjoying a “trip to Japan”. They are learning all about the customs and culture of Japanese people. They even have a few Japanese words in their vocabulary!

First graders love birthdays! In January, we celebrated the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King was the beginning of our school-wide study of famous African Americans in history. Each week we learn about a famous African American and then try to exemplify their character trait in our actions.

February will continue to bring a LOVE of learning! First graders are excited to celebrate the 100th day of school and Valentine’s Day.

We are looking forward to a great 2021 with our first graders!



Second Grade:

During the month of January, our school had the opportunity to participate in a virtual Mini-Thon! Our second graders were so excited to celebrate spirit week and dance. Thank you to Mrs. Swetkowski, Climate Committee, and Mr. Helsel for all your help with organizing and facilitating Mini- Thon!

In Language arts our students have completed Unit 3 in Wonders. Our whole group lessons included reading narrative nonfiction, fiction, and expository texts. Key features of these genres included ordering events in the story, text features that include photos and caption to give additional information, key features to tell a story about a real person or people and real events, point of view, and facts, examples, and explanations about a topic. We are looking forward to what Unit 4 will bring!

In science, the second graders have really been enjoying the unit on changes. We have learned all about chemical and physical reactions. Some of these great lessons included mixtures, solutions, suspensions, dissolving, evaporation, and chemical changes. Ask a second grader to explain the words dissolve, settle, mixture, and solution.



In Social Studies, the second graders have started learning all about China. The children have learned all about The Great Wall of China and how silk is made. We are looking forward to learning more about the Chinese culture.

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 virtual Valentine's Day parties!

Third Grade:

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

We were so excited to be able to kick off the month participating in Spirit Week and a modified Mini-Thon! The third graders had a blast dancing to raise awareness of Four Diamonds which supports kids with cancer.

This month, Social studies has been packed with finishing up Native Americans. The third grade also spent time learning about Martin Luther King Jr. this month. We listened as Mrs. Wills shared a book and talked about his leadership. We also read multiple passages about him! The children learned that Martin Luther King Jr. protested for equal rights peacefully with his words, marches, and sit-ins.

In science, we wrapped up our unit on Rocks and Minerals and began our Land and Water unit! Students learned a lot about erosion, weathering, and how land is affected by water. This will tie in perfectly with our next theme in whole group reading, On Moving Ground!



The third grade wrapped up our reading theme which focused on the history of and future of transportation. We read many pieces of fiction and non-fiction about different types of transportation, how it has changed, and predictions for the future. Students also practiced creating images based on descriptions in the text. A focus is not only being placed on citing text evidence in our responses but also providing an analysis of what the text means in our own words. We are proud of the effort our students put in each day during their whole group reading lessons and their small group meetings!

In writing, students are working on our first big writing piece, Something Beautiful! Students are sharing about one thing that makes their heart happy. We can't wait to see and share the final copies! Next we will take some time to learn cursive and about writing a friendly letter!

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

Fourth Grade:

The schoolwide Mini-Thon was a great way to come back from winter break for the 4th graders! They enjoyed showing off their dance moves.

In science, students have been learning about ecosystems and how pollution affects the ecosystems we live in.

In social studies, we are learning all about the Revolutionary War and the important battles that took place as part of this war.

In language arts, students wrapped up our inferences chapter and are beginning our next novel study. Each class chose a different novel to read this month. We can't wait to hear how much each class enjoyed about their novel. Throughout the novel study, students will work on the reading comprehension strategies that we have learned so far this year.

In writing, students finished their opinion essays about their favorite book. They supported their opinions with strong evidence and reasons to convince their reader why someone should read the book they chose.



The fourth graders have been working hard on their cereal box book reports. They chose a fictional book to read over winter break and have developed a cereal based on that book. Then the students will create commercials to advertise their cereal in a fun and creative way. The teachers are looking forward to seeing what the students have come up with!



Special & Support Area Updates

Art



The art studio at VFE has been very busy working with students to create both individual and collective works inspired by place and storytelling this past month.

Kindergarteners learned about the places we find art, such as museums and murals. They imagined what their own home would look like covered in a mural and what a museum of their own making would include in its collection.

First graders designed a secret language based on the work of Esther Mahlangu and history of Ndebele painting in South Africa and studied Faith Ringgold's Story Quilts to create their own drawn memory squares.

Second grade students studied the work of Austrian painter and architect Friedrich Hundertwasser to design their own buildings and investigated stories told through animals in the Caves at Lascaux and Beatrix Potter books.

Third graders created mixed-media paintings of our school from a birds-eye view inspired by painter Yvonne Jaquette and explored hidden picture books as a form of storytelling.

Place and storytelling were taught to Fourth graders through the art of Inuit printmaker Ningiokulu Teevee and American artist Grant Wood. They created printed arctic animals and hand-drawn, detailed scenes from their favorite Aesop's Fable.

VFEs Adapted Art class explored the collages of artist John Hintunen from the Creative Growth Art Center. The class had a blast creating their own hybrid animal collages inspired by his work.

Along with these individual projects, students worked together to create beautiful gifts for Board Appreciation Month. A collaborative paper quilt expressing gratitude and thanks and origami mobiles built by second grade students were presented to the board and installed at District Administration Offices last week.

