

Valley Forge Elementary

May/June 2017 - Team Updates

Kindergarten:

The kindergarten classrooms have certainly been busy buzzing during May and June. We learned all sorts of cool facts about insects. In our classrooms, we got to watch the amazing metamorphosis of butterflies and ladybugs. The butterflies arrived as caterpillars, formed a chrysalis, and emerged as beautiful painted lady butterflies. The ladybugs arrived as larvae, formed a pupa, and finally emerged as ladybugs! After a few days of observation, we let them go so that the ladybugs and butterflies could live in their natural habitat!



We also learned about habitats in preparation for our trip to the zoo. We learned about the animals and plants in the woodlands, grasslands, ponds, and wetlands. In Science, we moved from insects to magnets to floating and sinking. In math, we learned about addition and subtraction number stories and number sentences. We also covered measurement and fractions.

We had a fantastic time visiting the Elmwood Park Zoo! We also participated in Move-Up day. We will close the school year by finishing our study of habitats.

We hope all the kindergarten students and their families have a wonderful, safe summer!

First Grade:

We made it! June is here and our days together are winding down. Despite our year coming to an end, first grade continues to fill our days with learning and fun!

Our large group reading lessons are coming to an end as we spend time reviewing all the reading strategies we have learned this year. Although “official” reading and spelling homework has concluded for the year, we continue to read every day and hope that this habit will continue throughout the summer vacation.

During our last month, we ended our Social Studies unit on Africa. The children have learned an amazing amount of information. In June, we spent time learning how to play an African game called Mancala and took a look at the literature of Africa. Look out for our suitcases full of souvenirs from our “trip”.

Our latest Science unit on Organisms has brought “pets” to our classrooms. The children created terrariums with Bess beetles and Pill bugs crawling around. They also created aquariums with guppies and snails. First graders learned about the life cycle of a frog by observing a frog in all four stages. Just call us VFE SMART!



For the last two weeks of school, the first grade teachers have planned fun and engaging activities to help make our last days together memorable, educational, and FUN! Please remember to check your schedule of the year end activities to ensure your child is prepared each day.

The first grade teachers are so proud of our students. They have learned and grown so much! Our beautiful flowers are in full bloom! Thank you for your support this year. Have a safe and happy summer. See you in September!

Second Grade:

We have been as busy as bees, or perhaps butterflies, in second grade! Our last science unit was the study of the life cycle of the butterfly. We all watched carefully as our caterpillars went through the process of metamorphosis. It was exciting when our beautiful butterflies emerged from their chrysalises. The study culminated with the release of the Painted Lady butterflies.

In social studies, we studied immigration to America. Students had the opportunity to interview an older relative or friend and present their interviews to the class. It was interesting to learn about life when these people were in second grade. Our year ended with lessons regarding the history of flight.

Of course it wouldn't be May without the always popular and exciting Field Day! Despite the rain, students ran, jumped, scooted, and danced their way through the day. Thanks to Mr. Johnson and all the volunteers for making this day possible.



Always a highlight of second grade is the Writers' Celebration. Students chose a piece of their best writing to read to invited guests. Following the presentations, children shared their writing portfolios and guests were invited to write comments. Everyone was impressed with all the hard work that went into each piece.

We all traveled to The Keswick Theater to watch a live musical production of "Skipper John Jones". The music was upbeat, the costumes were imaginative, and the special effects were wonderful! What a great trip to end the year!

It has been a pleasure getting to know our second grade students and their families. Thank you to the many volunteers who have helped with so many of the activities during the year. We wish you a happy, healthy summer!

Third Grade:

Between practicing for our Pennsylvania Play, learning as much as we can about our great state of Pennsylvania, and visiting Audubon at Mill Grove, third graders have had a busy, short month of June.



Our walls are decorated with the beautiful quilt squares we made during last month's visit to the Duportail House. We also have the woodpecker art we created earlier in the year for display and sale. We will use the donations we receive to provide Audubon with a check for use in their education programs. We are now in our 15th year of our partnership with Audubon Mill Grove!

Finally, our last week of classroom activities have been geared toward preparing our students to move up to Fourth Grade. They are ready as we are sure you are as well to make this big move. From all of our Third Grade Teachers, have an enjoyable summer vacation!

Fourth Grade:

 We can't believe that the year is already coming to an end! It's always a bittersweet time in fourth grade as we send the kiddos off to middle school. There are so many fun and exciting things to end the year with including Field Day, the Spring Concert, the Talent Show, Career Day, the Glenhardie Pool Party, our Philadelphia Field Trip, and this year our first ever 4th Grade vs. Faculty Basketball Game! Each event was a huge success and the kids and staff will have these fun memories to think back on for years to come!

The fourth graders are also still busy in the classroom! We have ended our Motion and Design science unit. The students enjoyed the final design challenge project where they got to work in teams to design a specific type of vehicle that had to travel a certain distance in a specified amount of time. Each group worked really hard to try and make this happen! We have moved on to our final unit, Microworlds, where the students are learning more about optical microscopes and are examining objects and describing the observable properties under these microscopes.

In social studies, we are traveling westward and learning about Lewis and Clark, the California Gold Rush, and the War of 1812. The kids have sure learned a lot about their country's history this year!

The students have also been working on a realistic fiction piece in writing. The teachers have seen them really grow as writers this year!

Parents—be sure to check out Valley Forge Middle School's website for some helpful information for next year. You will find a 5th grade supply list and summer reading list among many other resources!

We are so proud of the hard work from the students this year and we will miss each one of them as they move on to 5th grade. Here's to a fun and safe summer for all!



Special & Support Area Updates

Library:



With the final chapter of this year coming to a close, it's time for a moment to reflect. This year we had almost 27,000 circulations and have added nearly 800 new and donated books to the library collection! The library is a busy hub of learning, reading, researching, presenting (and a good bit of laughing too).

Kindergarteners spent the spring semester enjoying fiction and non-fiction about chickens and pets, examining the structure of alphabet books, and enjoying many of the new picture books in our collections.

Earlier this spring, we laughed our way through the Anansi stories in first grade, identifying character traits and discussing trickster stories and "tell me why" tales. Recently we completed a research project on African animals during library time. Teams of students created an informational multi-media poster on the ipad to share their new knowledge with other first grade classes.

This spring, second graders were introduced to the OPAC – our online catalog. Many found it empowering to be able to conduct a search and locate a desired book on their own. Most recently, many of the second graders used books from our non-fiction section for mini-research projects on a wide-ranging set of topics.

Students in third grade used websites from the Audubon Society and the Cornell Ornithology Lab and worked in pairs to find out about birds. Using Word, they shared the information gathered to create "wanted" posters. The biography section of our library was heavily utilized during the third grade's preparation for the Famous Person Wax Museum.

Our fourth graders delved more deeply into research with their PAL projects, selecting a topic of their choice, and utilizing many print and online resources in the process. Students worked on their research in the library and we had great mini-lessons on creating effective and attractive presentations. The final focus for fourth graders was media literacy. Students discovered many of the ways media is constructed and learned to ask important questions such as: Who created the media message? What is its purpose? How might different audiences interpret the message? Who is included (and excluded) from the message?

Of course, we've made time at every grade level to enjoy reading and discussing the literature.

Thanks go out to:

- The students and families who have returned their library materials or paid for lost ones. It helps us maintain our wonderful collection for the use of all students.
- Mrs. Sachs and the parent volunteers who helped out in the library this year covering new books, running the circulation desk, and shelving. Your time and talents are much-appreciated.
- The PTO and parent community for your support and gifts to the library, especially the 4 cool blue chairs for students. All of the students benefit from your kindness and generosity and the resources will be well-used.

It has been a fantastic first year and I am grateful every day that I get to work with such wonderful students, faculty and parents. Remember to visit your public libraries this summer and keep reading!

