

## *Valley Forge Elementary—November 2015—Team Updates*

### **Kindergarten:**



We began the month of November with our very exciting tradition of Bear Hunt Day! This fun day consists of 5 stations where the children learn about Native American culture and traditions. To prepare for our special day, we learned about picture writing and practiced it on our Teepee paper. , With the help of Mrs. Small, we erected a huge teepee using the paper the students decorated as our walls. At the stations, the children learned about the Native American's use of corn or "maize", storytelling, crafts, games, and tracking animals. We are thankful for all the volunteers who dedicated their time and resources to making our Bear Hunt Day such a success. We all had a great time and the children learned all about Native Americans. Of course, we connected Native Americans to Thanksgiving and the Pilgrims with several activities related to Thanksgiving traditions.

In Science, we completed our unit on Farming with an engaging lesson that helped the children make a connection between the food they eat and the farm it comes from. We moved from farms to properties of matter. The children learned about solids, liquids, and gases.

Numbers, numbers are everywhere! We continued working on numbers in math and practiced counting and composing numbers.

We also continued to work on the alphabet and learning our sight words as we practice each letter's sound or sounds, the proper formation of the letter, and drawing pictures of words that begin with the letter.

### **First Grade:**

Where did November go? First grade has been so busy, we can't believe December is near!

In reading, we have been learning about determining importance and synthesizing strategies. The children are getting very good at practicing these strategies as they read. We completed our unit on Maps and Communities in Social Studies and are now learning about Japan. As we travel through this island country, the children are creating projects that will help them remember facts about Japan. In Science, we are learning about the weather. As the unit progresses, the children will have the chance to learn about various weather-measuring instruments and take home student-created models to practice what they have learned. In math, we are learning about Geometry. The children have learned all about plane and solid shapes. They can name and recognize these shapes in our environment.

In addition to our academic studies, our first graders attended a concert presented by Cello Fury. The children enjoyed listening to many styles of music and even had the chance to sing along to a few favorites. November gives us an opportunity to express our thankfulness. Our first graders spent time



learning about the first Thanksgiving and wrote about things for which they are thankful. The children are thankful for many things . . . parents included. The first grade teachers are thankful for our fabulous first graders and their families. We wish you a happy Thanksgiving!

## Second Grade:



It was time for turkeys during the month of November in second grade! Students created Favorite Book Turkeys and Thankful turkeys.

Teachers read books related to Thanksgiving such as *A Turkey for Thanksgiving*, *Thanksgiving Is*, and *Thanksgiving at the Tappletons*.

We have been practicing finding the main idea and supporting details in our whole group and large group reading groups. We have also been practicing finding clues in the text and our own thinking to make inferences. Students have been learning about writing narratives. Lessons have included story structure and plot. Creating pictures in our readers' minds has been a focus as well.

Our last science lessons in the study of sound included a study of the human ear and listening to Peter and the Wolf. It was a fascinating unit with many hands-on activities, books, and on-line activities. We will begin Changes after break. Second graders will be learning about solids, liquids, and gases. They will discover what properties each has and what causes one to change to another. In social studies, we are traveling through ancient China!

Conestoga High School students visited our classrooms as part of the STARS program. The older students taught a lesson in responsibility. Our second graders loved having them visit. Another special event in November was Cello Fury sponsored by our PTO. We all loved listening to the music played by these talented musicians and learning about the instruments. Many thanks to our PTO members!

The second grade teachers hope you have an enjoyable Thanksgiving filled with family, friends, and delicious food! We are looking forward to a fantastic month of December filled with fun and learning!

## Third Grade:

Third graders have had a fabulous month of learning and growing! We are proud of all of the effort they put into their first marking period. It is amazing to see how much they have developed since the beginning of the year and we look forward to this continued progress throughout the school year! The teachers are eager to meet with their core parents to share the wonderful things your children are doing each day!

Students were thrilled to finally be able to share the rocks they collected for their rock collection! It was exciting to see all of their hard work and how much they learned about testing and identifying rocks and minerals. I think there are a few future geologists in our grade! We have also begun our unit on Land and Water. The third graders are eager to go to Science Lab to bulldoze their stream tables then watch what happens when they pour water over the land and observe the impact it has. One of the most important lessons in this unit is the faster the water flows, the more erosion occurs!



In Social Studies, we are well on our way to learning about the Native American tribes of North America. Each class will then focus on a specific tribe. The Pow Wow will be held on Monday, December 21<sup>st</sup>. Students will share their research on each tribe's shelter, ceremonies, art, food, clothing, climate, and location. The third graders will rotate through each tribe, listening to their classmate's presentations. It is always an exciting day in third grade!

In Language Arts we focused on the reading strategies of synthesizing which is very similar to making an inference and monitoring understanding. This is what good readers do as they read to ensure comprehension. We discussed the many strategies you can use if you are reading something which doesn't make sense. The most important is to reread! We read a variety of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry pieces ranging in topics from alternative forms of energy to reading *Female Firsts*, a piece about females who were leaders now and then! In Writer's Workshop, we are continuing to practice the art of writing a personal narrative. The third graders have practiced "showing not telling" and staying in one moment of time. All of this is through writing about what or who matters most to them and what lies in their heart. When students have trouble thinking of a topic to write about, many refer to their heart map or their beautifully decorated writer's notebooks. Through mentor texts, authors model what this writing should look and sound like. This month we used *When the Relatives Came* and *Something Beautiful* and wrote about our own something beautifuls and special moments shared with our relatives. You will enjoy reading the wonderful narratives written by our third graders in the hallways!

We look forward to a great month of December filled with fun activities and learning opportunities!

The month of November came and went in a flash. The hallway is decorated with Turkeys in Disguise and some other wonderful writing assignments. We hope that you get to read some of these wonderful stories. The 4<sup>th</sup> grade started a new unit in science. We are learning about electricity and how electricity is important in our daily lives. We are also learning how to conserve electricity.

We would like to thank the Cultural Arts for bringing Cello Fury to our school for a wonderful and energizing assembly. We would like to give Mrs. Swetkowski a huge thank you for coordinating the food drive for T/E Cares. Each grade brought in specific items for this food drive and the bins were overflowing with the generosity of our school family. We would also like to thank all the parents that met with us during the Parent/Teacher Conferences at the end of the month.



## 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 are doing and learning in each grade...

Since the Kindergarteners had Bear Hunt Day this month, we learned songs about bears! We have also been exploring the difference between our speaking voices and our singing voices.

The 1<sup>st</sup> graders have been learning about dynamics, forte and piano (loud and soft), through singing, moving, and playing instruments. We learned about a composer named Franz Joseph Hayden. He was famous for writing the *Surprise Symphony*. We are also doing some square dancing and lots of singing!

In 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, we are learning about form in music. Form is the way the music is organized. We have been singing a variety of American folk songs in AB Form. Some of them include *Old Dan Tucker*, *Tideo*, and *Rocky Mountain*.

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 are also learning songs by rote and soon we will begin to read songs with note names off the musical staff.

This past month, the 4<sup>th</sup> graders have been writing musical compositions for their recorders to perform for the class. They have also been singing songs from many different parts of the world. Through the performance of these songs, we not only learn musical concepts but we also gain an appreciation for different cultures.

Our 4<sup>th</sup> grade band students and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade orchestra students are making tremendous progress, as they learn their very first notes and songs on new instruments! Keep up the practicing!

The chorus and 4<sup>th</sup> grade orchestra is also working very hard to prepare for the Winter Concert! Don't forget to mark your calendars! Parents are invited to the 2:00 PM performance on Thursday, December 10<sup>th</sup>. The students are very eager and excited to perform for their family, friends, and teachers!

