

Valley Forge Elementary—October 2015—Team Updates

Kindergarten:

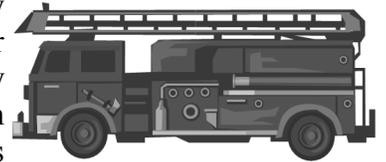
October was a busy month in the kindergarten classrooms. We had a visit from Mother Goose who provided us with an interactive lesson that combined Mother Goose rhymes with the alphabet. She is very entertaining and educational at the same time. The children could hardly contain their laughter throughout her program. Thank you to the Cultural Arts committee for providing us with that. We learned all about fire safety through our visit from the Berwyn Fire Company! We were reminded of how important it is for us to learn our address, remember to get out and stay out when there is a fire, and to have a meeting place outside once we are out of our houses. It was really fun to see all the cool tools on their truck!



In language arts, we continued working on our letters and sight words. We began working on stretching and writing words in our Writer's Notebooks. Our hallway is beautifully decorated with our first writing and painting project. Science was exciting as we learned about different types of farms and about all the things we get from a farm. In math, we learned about patterns, ordinals, and numbers to 10. We had fun visiting the Book Fair and topped off the month with Scary Gym and our very fun Halloween parties!

First Grade:

October is so much fun when you are in first grade! We celebrated fire safety month with a visit from the Berwyn Fire Company. Firefighters came to our school to teach the children about fire safety. The children had the opportunity to see a fire truck and learn about the equipment on the truck. The teachers then continued the study of fire safety in the classroom. Each first grade student was able to pretend to be a firefighter with a paper-made firefighter hat!



In reading groups, the children have been working on creating images as they read. Readers who create images, visualize, and make connections better understand what they read, so please practice the strategies when you are reading at home.

Our Science unit on the Solar System is in full swing. The children have enjoyed learning about the planets, stars, and sun. With each lesson, the children created a project that coincides with what they have learned. Our next stop is the moon. Be on the lookout for a souvenir from our trip!

We finished our Social Studies unit on Maps and Communities. The students will now use these map skills as we "travel" to Japan. The children will learn about the geographical location of Japan as well as the culture of Japanese people.

In Math, our first graders are busy learning different strategies for solving addition and subtraction problems. The children are getting very good at finding different ways to solve math problems. We encourage our first grade families to practice math facts at home...practice makes better!

While October consisted of many exciting lessons, the most anticipated events were connected to the end of October. The Book Fair, Scary Gym, Halloween parade, and classroom parties all added to our exciting month. The children had a fantastic time celebrating! Thanks for helping make our October spooktacular!

Second Grade:

If you are a Valley Forge second grader, October is a fantastic month! Early in the month, students brainstormed fall words and wrote descriptive paragraphs. Later in the month, we read Halloween stories and discussed story elements and sequencing. Some children made haunted houses and wrote narratives using the haunted house as part of the setting. We traced dinosaurs and located information about the dinosaur. Research reports were then written.

The reading strategy we have worked on this month is asking questions to help us to understand what we are reading. Students completed an organizer recording their questions about a book they read. In large group reading instruction, we read non-fiction and fiction books about the moon.

In math, students have been learning about regrouping in addition and subtraction. We focus on the application of these skills in “real world” problems. Students will soon begin learning about bar modeling to help in problem solving.

Second graders have been very involved with the study of dinosaurs. Dinosaur time periods, fossils, and how paleontologists learn about dinosaurs are some of the topics we have presented. It was fun to connect writing with social studies when students wrote about their research.



We recently completed our first science unit, Balancing and Weighing. Students expanded their understanding of the relationship between balance and weight as they explored hands-on activities. Density was a concept presented as students discovered why split peas weighed more than the same amount of oat cereal. One favorite activity was constructing a mobile. We also read a biography of Alexander Calder, the artist who invented the mobile. Our next science unit is the study of sound.

The second grade teachers would like to thank the volunteers who participated in the Book Fair, Scary Gym, and Halloween parties. We are always grateful for your support in making Valley Forge the wonderful community it continues to be. Those events are so important to our children.

Please remind your child to bring a jacket and other cold weather gear to school each day. The days are getting chilly, and we go outside every day, even in the cold weather. We are looking forward to November and many more exciting learning opportunities!

Third Grade:

Third graders have had a busy October!

In Reading, our theme focused on the question “What is light?” We read a variety of nonfiction, fiction, and poetry pieces about shadows, prisms, rainbows, and cameras. Through these passages, we practiced making inferences and answering text-dependent questions. Third graders are practicing being “text talkers” and our favorite sentence starter is “in the text it says...”

In Science, students were excited to discover which minerals were which and then learning about the many uses minerals have in daily life. As a culminating project, students will collect an egg carton of twelve different rocks at home and then complete the various tests in school on those rocks. This project is due Friday, November 13. Please email your child’s core teacher if you have any questions! The next unit is Land and Water which explores the relationship between land and water using a stream table!

In Social Studies, we are wrapping up our study of maps and globes. We will then start our unit on the Native American tribes of North America. We will explore the relationship between the climate in which the tribe lived and the effect it had on what they ate and wore as well as their shelter. Later in our unit, each class will be given a tribe to research and then share their research with the grade during our third grade pow-wow!



A highlight of the month was going to the Mill Grove Audubon Center, the home of John James Audubon. The Audubon Center is our third grade partnership. We are fortunate to visit twice a year on field trips and have them visit our classrooms once for an in-house field trip. Students enjoy learning about the life of John James Audubon and his love of drawing birds and also visiting with the owls that are cared for at the center. Later in the year, we will raise money for the Audubon Center by selling our bird pictures during the Ice Cream Social!

The month ended on an exciting note as students attended the Scary Gym and had our always enjoyable Halloween parade and parties. Thanks to the many parents who volunteered their time or sent in donations for the parties!

Third grade is looking forward to the many learning adventures that November presents!



October once again slipped right by us in a blink of an eye. The hallway is decorated with so many fall-themed writing assignments, falling leaves, and flying bats. You can tell that we were gearing up for our big Halloween Parade. In science, we saw the first-hand effects of what agricultural runoff, acid rain, and road salt can physically do to an ecosystem. In Social Studies, we are currently learning about the early French, Dutch, English, and Spanish colonies that came to North America for more freedom or to find the streets paved in gold. A warm thank you goes out to the Cultural Arts Committee for bring us the actors from the Walnut Theater. We also want to thank all the parent volunteers who helped make the Book Fair a smashing success for all the students and staff. Another huge thanks goes out to all the volunteers who helped make the Scary Gym an exceptionally fantastic time for all the students. Mrs. Moreno did a great job coordinating the magnificent field trip to the Camden Aquarium. We had a great time and learned some new interesting facts about the creatures that live there. We ended our month with our traditional Halloween Parade and individual class parties and we thank all the homeroom parents for making the individual classroom parties a great success.



Applied Technology:

The Dell laptops carts have been seen rolling down the hallways at Valley Forge. First graders are learning how to carry the laptops, log into the student account, and get on the internet. They are using the Raz Kids website. Students in second grade have been exposed to a coding website called Kodable. They are enjoying moving Marty through the maze which focuses on ordered thinking skills. Third grade classes are using the iPads in their language arts and math centers. Students in fourth grade have started practicing their keyboarding skills using the Type to Learn program.



To make technology more accessible in the classroom, the VFES home page has a new webpage called Student Websites. This page is designed to allow students to easily navigate to sites used in the classroom. The page is formatted by grade and special areas and is automatically uploaded when opening Internet Explorer.

Special & Support Area Updates

Art



Kindergarten artists are discovering their “art eyes” and learning how artists see the world. We made fun “art glasses” and then drew our eyes while looking into mirrors. We are currently making owls from scraps of paper with big eyes! We are using the alphabet to make shapes for our owls!

First grade artists are using the sun as a motif and observing how the sun is seen around the world. We made bright suns to warm up the hallways. We are currently working on clay suns.

Second grade artists are having fun with dinosaurs! We began by observing bones while making a white skeletal painting on black paper. Next we made detailed drawings of dinosaurs working with large shapes first then concentrating on contour lines. With our knowledge of shape and form, we pinched and pulled clay to make an amazing clay dinosaur.

Third grade artists started the year with painted beach scenes. We divided our paper into 3 parts: land, sky, and sea. We took one class to paint background and another to paint details on top using the tempera cakes. We are now working on “Mona who” portraits.

Fourth grade artists are studying American artists. We started the year with a beach still-life. Buckets, towels, shovels, and other sand-shaping tools were set up in the center of the room. After sketching with pencil, we finished with colored pencil. Next classes worked on a group project focused on the amazing artworks of Chuck Close. Working together on a big grid, we made patterns with crayons and then added watercolors for a resist effect. In addition, Mrs. Braun’s classes started the year with learning about American artist, Roy Lichtenstein. Inspired by his comic popart paintings, they created their very own comic strip.

