

Community Building

The foundation for all learning at the Village School is a strong sense of community. The children view themselves as integral members of their classroom and the larger Village School community. Students learn the important skills of learning with and caring for others. Academic learning is enhanced when the children feel both safe to contribute their own original ideas and are open to hearing the ideas of others. Community building activities are present throughout the day, from morning meetings to group book talks to cooperative games. As part of community building, we are also working on ways to instill a growth mindset within our class. We are aiming to have a ‘can-do’ attitude and the students are learning about why this is important for their brain development.

Thematic Studies

Our Theme this year is *Colonial America: Land and Sea*. For the first half of the year we will focus on what it was like to live in a Colonial American village. We will learn about early American culture from clothing to food to jobs to family life. Each child will become a member of the community and become our expert on a trade. They will research a trade and build a diorama of their shop and/or home. We will have special days that focus on Colonial games, a typical school day, and evening entertainment, to name a few. Field trips include going to Sweetwater Farm and Old Sturbridge Village. The second half of the year puts us in the sea aboard a whaling ship. We will learn about life on a whaling ship and the diverse culture that existed on the ships. Like the village, each child will become a member of the whaling community and learn that role in depth. We will learn whaling terminology and whaling songs throughout the winter. As part of the whaling unit, the students will also learn about whales and research a whale as part of a research project. We will go to Gloucester for a tide pool study and a whale watch.

Reading

During Reader’s Workshop children immerse themselves in a wide variety of books. Children are exposed to many different genres, from non-fiction to chapter books to poetry. This year’s units of study will help students build the strategies they need to decode as well as help them to think deeply about the books they read. Students are given time to read independently each day. A majority of their time is spent reading *Just Right* books. These books help them practice and develop skills, and offer the right challenge to extend their learning. Students are also given time to engage in conversations about their books. To enhance continuity between home and school, children carry their books home in their reading folder each day. Students should spend at least 20 minutes each evening reading independently, with additional time spent listening to stories read by adults. Engaging in conversations about what your child is reading (predicting, making connections, and questioning), can lead to amazing discussions. Children also take part in literature circles where the whole class reads the same book and has rich discussions about the story. Children often listen to read-aloud books that are connected to Theme. Some of the books they will hear are: *Nicholas: A Massachusetts Tale*, *Peggony Po*, *Oxcart Man* and *Cal and the Amazing Anti-Gravity Machine*.

Word Study

Word Study is a time for students to practice building English language skills. Students learn decoding strategies by learning and studying word chunks, spelling patterns, and syllables. Dictionary skills and vocabulary building are incorporated into Word Study as well. A component of word study is spelling. During spelling, students learn spelling rules, words that break rules and other words. They also learn the conventional spelling for their best choice spelling words. Once students learn the words, the words go onto the wall and students are expected to spell these words correctly in their writing. Word Study helps students to increase their sight word list and serves as a bridge between best choice spelling and conventional spelling.

Writing Workshop

Writer’s workshop is a time for students to think about their own stories and to communicate with others through writing and drawing. While becoming more skilled with the technical aspects of writing, children are also learning to find their own voices, craft writing pieces, explore different types of writing and to think carefully about language. Because it is important for students to let their writing flow and get their words on paper, they are encouraged to use their “best choice” spelling. Teaching students a variety of strategies to spell unknown words empowers them to record their stories onto paper. Some units of study for this year are: Poetry, Personal Narrative and Report Writing.

Journal

Through journaling, children learn to record, value and reflect upon their own experiences. They are also creating seeds that may grow into later writing. Journal is a time for students to think about what is important to them and to get it down with drawings and/or words. We also use the journal as a place to collect the poems of the week. The children paste in the poem and write and draw about it. What they write about varies and helps them to work on close reading of poems.

Math

The *Investigations* math curriculum offers students opportunities to have multiple experiences with mathematical concepts through games and other hands-on activities. The students construct their own understanding and have a true sense of ownership of mathematical strategies and ideas. Children are encouraged to use multiple strategies to solve problems and engage with peers to stretch their thinking. The mathematical strands of number sense, geometry, data, and measurement are woven through the year. *Investigations* is aligned with the mathematical common core state standards. A letter explaining the mathematics will be sent home at the beginning of each unit. Students will receive homework that reinforces math concepts explored in the classroom.

Spanish

Spanish is taught through movement, stories, games and songs, and is based on the TPR (Total Physical Response) system. 2nd – 3rd grade students will practice basic greetings and phrases, learn to respond to common classroom instructions, and work together to act out short stories in Spanish.

Art

Along with the art integrated throughout the curriculum on a daily basis, the class has a full session with the art teacher, Elizabeth on Thursday afternoons. The goals of the art program are: to encourage the joy of the creative process, increase each student's artistic confidence, expose students to a wide variety of media, and enrich the class theme for the year. Over the course of the year students will have the opportunity to work in media such as drawing, painting, sculpture, printmaking, bookbinding, paper and fiber arts in art-focused projects and lessons designed exclusively to integrate with Colonial America--such as marbling, embroidery, silhouette portraiture, weaving, and making paint.

Music

This year 2nd- 3rd grade students will sing a variety of new and traditional theme-related music. Challenges will include singing in rounds or parts, using rhythm instruments while singing, and learning to clap rhythms written on the board. Students will also continue to study the recorder, with some songs overlapping between singing and recorder class to help students learn to play by ear. Recorder students should practice for at least 5 minutes a day at home.

Science

Our focus in science is connecting children with the natural world, building observational skills, doing hands-on experiments and introducing basic scientific concepts. The students use different kinds of scientific equipment during class including magnifying glasses, dissection and compound microscopes, plant presses, and thermometers. The science curriculum is planned throughout grades K-6 so topics are introduced during an appropriate theme and developmental stage. The topics we'll explore this year include natural dyes, herbs, rocks with a rock collection, the chemistry of baking with biscuits, candle making and candle experiments, weather, ice experiments, a buoyancy lab, boats, compasses, ocean habitats, tidal pools, shells and whales. Each student selects a tree to observe throughout the school year. We will make a leaf collection, do bark rubbings, map our tree, observe it in winter, make a bud collection and a twig drawing, and make observations as the trees bud in the spring.