

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.

Thematic Studies

Our Theme this year is *Native Americans*, with a focus on the Northeast Woodland tribes. Story is the vehicle through which we learn and explore Native American culture. The children hear a story of the week (or every other week) and think about how the stories reflect a tribe's beliefs and way of life. When appropriate, we use stories from other regions of the United States. We investigate questions that we have about Native American culture and explore the lives of early and contemporary Native Americans. Children have experiential and visceral experiences as they gain an understanding of theme. Their learning opportunities include making dreamcatchers, making and playing games, a monthly full moon project, field trips to Plimoth Plantation and the Pequot museum, and creating stories. Theme is interwoven into the other disciplines and culminates with an end of the year celebration.

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 book 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 take part in small groups and whole class literature circles where they read the same book and have rich discussions about the story. Children also work on writing about their reading. Children have frequent opportunities to listen to stories during read aloud, which are often connected to theme. Some of the stories they will hear are: *The Sign of the Beaver*, *Sees Behind Trees* and *My Side of the Mountain*.

Word Study

Word Study is a time for students to practice building English language skills. Students learn decoding strategies by 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 strategies to help them learn how to spell words and learn how to study for a quiz. They also learn the conventional spelling for their best choice spelling words. Word work 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 the stories they have and to communicate with others through their 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, Report Writing and Por Quoi (Just So Stories).

Journal

Through journaling, children learn to record, value and reflect upon their own experiences. Journal is a time for students to think about what is important to them and to get it down with drawings and/or words. This is also a place where we keep our poem of the week and have opportunities to respond and reflect upon the poem.

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. 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. Students practice basic greetings and phrases, learn to respond to common classroom instructions, and work together to act out short stories in Spanish.

Art

Besides 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 have fun, have children feel successful with the art they are creating, enrich the class theme for the year, and provide opportunities to draw, paint and work with clay. At the same time, we will study Native American arts and crafts and make our own pinch pots, spirit animals, dream catchers and more.

Music

This year we are singing Native American songs, as well as songs about nature and the seasons. Challenges will include singing in rounds or parts, using rhythm instruments while singing, and learning to clap rhythms written on the board. Students continue recorder, with some songs overlapping between singing and recorder class to help students to 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 some basic scientific concepts. The students will use a number of types of scientific equipment during class including magnifying glasses, dissection microscopes, compound microscopes, plant presses, and thermometers. The science curriculum is planned throughout kindergarten to 6th grade so topics are introduced during an appropriate theme and developmental stage. The topics we'll explore this year include invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, birds, fish and mammals. We will study the phases of the moon, the reason for the seasons, the solar system and an introduction to constellations. In the winter, we will explore tracking and do a series of water experiments. In the spring we will turn our focus to seeds, seedlings, and the Three Sisters Garden, as well as incubating chicken eggs. Throughout the year we will be doing our "Special Place" project. The student selects a place in the woods to observe throughout the school year. We will make a leaf collection, make a map, make observations throughout the year, and build a debris hut.