

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW FOR KINDERGARTEN THROUGH 6TH GRADE

Thematic Study

All areas of study in the K-6th-grade curriculum are connected by an overall theme. Themes are chosen based on an understanding of child development: younger children are focused on the immediate world around them, and older children are beginning to explore the larger world, both the present, and the past. A typical theme for the Kindergarten children might be ‘rocks and minerals,’ studied for 3 months. Older children may spend the whole year exploring Ancient Greece. Threads from the theme enter all academic areas, such as writing, reading, science, math, etc. Art and music are valued highly for creating direct meaningful connections to the overall classroom theme study.

Theme provides the opportunity for an in-depth study of a specific subject, rather than touching on many unrelated topics over a short period of time. All aspects of the curriculum are integrated with theme. When children leave the Village School for their next phase in life, they will be well equipped with the tools to pursue any field of interest.

Thematic Study throughout the Grades

Kindergarten

Kindergarten takes a theme for 2-3 months. Typical themes are: minerals and rocks, water and ice, nature in spring, birds, Native Americans and so on. Music, art, story, and science are integrated with theme, as well as plenty of hands-on resources and materials. At the end of 6-8 weeks of the theme, the parents come in to participate in the classroom Theme Share, when the children eagerly share their learning, singing and journals with the parents.

1st-2nd Grade

In the 1st-2nd grade, art, science and theme are one. Science is the development of the skill of “noticing”, the basis of all scientific study. The students use art to express their concrete understanding of the theme. All skill learning (including reading, writing, and math) use thematic materials for their basis. When, for example, the classroom is studying Colonial America for the year, much of the reading, non-fiction research, art, music and science are based in Colonial America resources and materials. For further information, see the current 1st-2nd curriculum on the website.

3rd-4th Grade

In 3rd-4th grade, children can delve deeper into theme, as they gain stronger reading and writing skills. Now they are not just learning to read; they are reading to learn. Children can read thematic material on their own, whether non-fiction in magazines or grade-level books, or in the variety of fiction available for this age. A typical theme is ancient Egypt, for the whole year.

5th-6th Grade

Having mastered the basic skills required for reading, writing, and math, 5th–6th graders can begin to use these skills as tools for the exploration of specific themes. At the same time, these skills begin to deepen and improve as the students refine their use of them. Thus, reading becomes an intrinsic tool for the exploration of a theme, both in reading novels based on the theme, and in researching and reading authentic resources. When, for example, the class studies the Ancient Greece for the year, the children’s fiction and non-fiction reading are about Ancient Greece, including myths, geography, science, history, the philosophers and a study of Alexander the Great. The yearly theme study culminates in a play, written by the children themselves and performed on stage in May. For further information, see the current 4th-6th curriculum on the website.

The Mixed Age Classroom

A mixed age classroom offers wonderful opportunities for children to learn from each other. Children of different levels help each other to master new skills. Older children have a chance to reinforce their newly mastered skills by teaching younger ones. Children learn at different speeds and the mixed age group classroom allows for a great deal of flexibility; children who have mastered certain skills can work on new challenges, while socializing with children in their age group. Those who need extra help can learn a skill with a younger group, while still socializing with their peers. The broad range of ages promotes an acceptance of various levels of competence and helps the children assume responsibility for each other, resulting in a number of satisfying cross-age friendships.

Language Arts

Reading, writing, and oral language are all part of the fully integrated curriculum. A love for reading and writing is fostered by daily exposure to poems, stories and songs, non-fiction, as well as journal and story writing. Students learn to read through daily experiences with literature. They are taught from the beginning that they are authors: their journals are an integral part of the day and they write their own stories using pictures, dictation, and best choice spelling (according to age level). As children grow older, they are taught to incorporate more formal writing and spelling skills into their stories and essays.

Math

The math curriculum is designed to help children to understand underlying mathematical concepts and patterns while developing flexibility and competence in computational skills. New concepts are explored through experience with concrete materials. Manipulatives such as unifix cubes, pattern blocks, base ten blocks, coins, rods and geoboards are used. Individual and group work promote problem-solving skills and accommodate a wide range of learning styles and levels. The Village School uses the INVESTIGATIONS math curriculum for kindergarten through fifth grade.

Science

The science program focuses on observation and study of the natural world, capitalizing on the rural location of the Village School. The Village School follows the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for Science. The Curriculum Framework recommends touching upon subjects in all the major scientific disciplines every year. Activities in biology, chemistry, physics, earth science and space science are offered in every classroom. Field biologist Cathy Szal coordinates and guides the study of science.

Creative Arts

Visual arts as well as music, movement, dance, drama, and storytelling all take place as a regular part of classroom activities and are given as much priority as other curriculum areas. The arts also form a rich component of the thematic studies.

The Farm School

The Village School has an ongoing relationship with the Farm School. 3rd-6th grade Village School children visit the Farm School during the school year, working all day in the natural rhythm of a farm. The students develop relationships with animals, staff, and special places at the farm. The students are able to follow the flow of farm life throughout the seasons, throughout the year, and throughout the years.

Field Trips

To deepen theme study, classes visit farms, museums, rivers and other locales for hands-on direct experience