

Building Community

At the heart of the Village School education we nurture a sense of belonging and community. In a multi-age classroom, children build their understanding together. Learning to share ideas, listen to classmates, and support one another's thinking are all skills that are modeled and developed within our daily morning meeting, group discussions and games, and partner work. Children are given opportunities to work collaboratively, learn how to compromise and cooperate on tasks.

Thematic Studies

This year's theme is *Seasons and Cycles*, with a focus on exploring the patterns in local animals, plants and people in New England through the year. Through this place-based study we will explore the customs, traditions and holidays related to the seasons, learn about animals life cycles, as well as how animals adapt to or change with the seasons, and explore how plant life cycles are intertwined with the change in weather. Our study will be culturally rooted in the Tasha Tudor picture book *A Time To Keep*, which chronicles the lives of a colonial New England family through each month of the year. We'll create our own Village School year book in which we'll note the significant events that mark the changes in the seasons at school. Our study will include reading stories, creating art projects, cooking and handiwork as well as spending time in nature.

Reading

During Reader's Workshop children are introduced to strategies that will move them to fluent reading as well as encourage them to pay attention to their thinking while reading. Students are given time to read independently each day and meet with their teacher weekly for individual instruction. 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. Through partner reading and book groups, students are given time to engage in conversations about their books, deepen their engagement with the texts and develop their comprehension skills. Children carry their books home in their book folder each day. They are encouraged to read at home for 15 minutes each day in their *Just Right* books. Reading with your child and having conversations about their books will enhance their reading experience and help them to grow as readers. Read-aloud and weekly oral stories give children the opportunity engage in literature beyond their reading level. These stories are often connected to Theme.

Phonics and Word Study

Word Study is a time for students to practice building English language skills. We use the Fountas-Pinnell program *Phonics Lessons*. Students learn word-solving strategies by studying letter sound relationships, spelling patterns, and word structure as well as word meaning and vocabulary building. A component of word study is spelling. During spelling students learn a range of strategies to help them learn how to spell words and learn how to study for a quiz. Word work helps students to increase their sight word list and serves as a bridge between best choice spelling and conventional spelling.

Writing

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. Each child has a journal in which they respond to writing or drawing prompts. Their journals are also a place to gather ideas for future writing. Children begin to learn the technical aspects of writing while also learning to express themselves in the written language, plan and craft writing pieces, explore different types of writing and to begin to edit and revise their writing. Because it is important for students to let their writing flow and get their words on paper, they are encouraged to use 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: Small Moment Stories, Poetry, and Non-fiction reports. Handwriting is taught using the *Handwriting Without Tears* curriculum, which uses a multi-sensory approach.

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. Second grade students receive nightly homework assignments that reinforce math concepts explored in the classroom. First grade students will occasionally take home games or other homework sheets to solidify skills they are mastering in class.

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 art that is integrated throughout the curriculum on a daily basis, the class has a full session with the art teacher, Leia, on Thursday mornings. The goal of these art projects is to have the children feel successful with new experiences and materials, to have fun, and to spark creativity in a non-verbal way. Children will explore making two-dimensional and three-dimensional pieces with a variety of media including watercolor, clay, and fabric. Art lessons often integrate with the class theme.

Music

Children begin the year singing seasonal songs, songs about growing, and favorite well-known songs in Spanish and English. Throughout the year, movements, dances, and rhythm instruments such as drums, maracas, and rain sticks will accompany many of the songs. All students will participate in weekly recorder lessons in small groups. Students should practice recorder 5 minutes a day at home – it makes a big difference in their progress.

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 use scientific equipment during class including magnifying glasses, 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. Our lessons follow the seasons. Throughout the year we are engaged in the “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. Some topics of study will include mushrooms, insects, seeds, animal tracking and plant growth.

Recess and Physical Education

Recess is emphasized as a time of great learning - physical, emotional and social. Since most of the school day is structured, recess gives the children a blank canvas for imaginative and physical play together. Teachers are present and encourage children to find solutions together when differences arise. The Friday session of Physical Education provides an opportunity for children to engage in a longer session of activity such as hiking, soccer, cross-country skiing and swimming. Loren leads a yoga class on Friday mornings during which children learn poses for strength and balance.