

## Overview

The third-grade program is designed to provide experiences that will strengthen students' prior learning, enhance their ability to work independently, and extend their knowledge and skills. The program instills in students a love of learning and a desire to explore, create, and excel. The teachers consider the uniqueness of each individual as well as the interdependence of the members of the group. Their goal, with the participation of the third graders, is to establish a climate of respect and safety. Within this environment the students feel comfortable taking risks and can achieve the most out of the experiences available to them.

Becoming more independent, responsible learners is an essential component of the third-grade program. Students are guided on how to record homework assignments accurately, organize and pack all necessary items, and maintain subject binders according to a teacher-prescribed format. They learn about time management and to become accountable for their belongings both at home and at school.

The third-grade teachers strive to incorporate new and different technologies into their curriculum. The teachers utilize Google Drive, Google Docs, and Google Classroom, and they frequently introduce various iPad apps to enhance the curriculum. While many students are facile with the use of these technologies, teachers support all students as they become familiar with the functionality of new apps and software. Children learn to utilize the internet for online research, a component of many of the research projects and activities they participate in during the course of the year.

The social curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum in third grade. Through principles of *Responsive Classroom*, *Open Circle*, and mindfulness, the children learn and practice specific social skills. Five particularly important skills are cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control. Creating a cooperative classroom environment, building positive relationships, and solving social problems, are essential fundamentals and part of the daily routines. Students have frequent opportunities to reflect and evaluate their social competency skills. Meetings are held several days of the week for approximately 10-15 minutes. Topics range from, but are not limited to, current events, "this day in history," and a wide range of social competency and teamwork activities and games. Additionally, when warranted, meetings may be held to work on real world conflict resolution or gender specific topics.

## Language Arts

## Reading

Third grade is a transition year where the emphasis for most students changes from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” However, reading class occurs in small groups where students can develop their reading skills at their own individual rates guided by an experienced teacher. Texts span a range of written forms that includes novels, short stories, poetry, picture books, and nonfiction. Often the reading material coordinates with the social studies curriculum theme of American history. The following titles are third-grade favorites: *Yang the Third and Her Impossible Family*, *Lion to Guard Us*, *Phoebe the Spy*, and *Sarah, Plain and Tall*. Teachers encourage original, critical thinking in their students as they develop their literal and inferential comprehension skills. Students are challenged to make inferences and predictions and to summarize the main idea of a paragraph or story. They examine character development and consider the relationships among characters. Third graders are active thinkers who learn to refer back to the text when searching for answers to questions, identifying the sequence of events, and summarizing.

Third graders often enjoy reading for pleasure during the school day. *D.E.A.R. (Drop Everything and Read)* time is scheduled approximately two to three times a week; however, many students find additional time for D.E.A.R. sessions, especially when they are engrossed in a good book. Teachers help students make appropriate reading selections so that independent reading time is an appropriate mix of challenge and pleasure and students are motivated to finish the books they start and hopefully connect with a particular author or genre. Classroom libraries, in addition to the DCD library, offer a wide variety of genres including realistic and historical fiction, science fiction and fantasy, folktales and myths, biographies and other nonfiction. In addition to reading at school, third graders are expected to read daily as part of their homework.

## Writing

In third grade, writing becomes a key component of the curriculum. Third graders write more independently than in previous grades. They continue to build upon their knowledge of grammar, spelling, and mechanics, and they develop their paragraph writing skills to begin writing longer compositions. Students begin to organize their work, focusing on sequencing of events as they incorporate a beginning, middle, and end to their pieces. Teachers encourage students to use descriptive detail, dialogue, point of view, and figurative language, such as metaphors and similes. Students practice the writing process of prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing.

Students write for a variety of audiences and purposes. They have the opportunity to practice narrative, persuasive, creative, and descriptive pieces. They write formal and informal letters, including thank-you notes. Each third grader also keeps a personal “All About Me” journal throughout the course of the year. In addition, third graders use a variety of reference materials (e.g., dictionary, thesaurus, atlas, encyclopedia) to enhance their writing or to practice guided note-taking for short research reports.

Third-graders are introduced to cursive handwriting allowing for margins and maintaining correct spacing and connections between words and letters. In addition to these handwriting skills, they practice word processing skills as well, using Google Docs, Microsoft Word, or Pages. These skills include, but are not limited to cutting and pasting, using spell check, adding pictures, printing, finding and saving work, and inserting information into a teacher-designed database.

### Mechanics, Spelling, & Vocabulary

The third-grade spelling program, utilizing words from the online program Spelling City, identifying spelling rules, generalizations, and patterns so that students learn them and may rely on them in their own writing. Each lesson builds on previous lessons and on phonetic patterns learned in previous years. Each week offers new spelling rules that students practice in class and reinforce through homework.

Vocabulary building is an integral part of the third-grade program. The students identify word parts, such as consonants and vowels, syllables, root words, prefixes, and suffixes, and use these parts to help understand new vocabulary. Third graders encounter new vocabulary in the rich texts in reading class as well as the students' own independent reading selections. They learn how to use sentence context as well as their understanding of word parts to determine the meaning of vocabulary words. As part of their word study, students practice alphabetizing and using guide words in the dictionary on a regular basis.

Language arts classes meet daily for 90 minutes total, in three groups for language arts and reading.

### **Math**

Third grade uses *enVisionMATH*, along with its online student and teacher instructional videos and support systems, for math instruction. Teachers integrate problem solving, algebraic thinking, and test-taking strategies into all units of study.

### Numbers and Operations

The students' number sense expands as they compare, recognize, and write numbers through the millions, and apply such skills as rounding and estimation in their problem solving. Most third graders have mastered the basic operations of addition and subtraction and use algorithms to solve problems with larger numbers. A major third-grade math unit involves investigating the properties of multiplication and its relationship to division. They begin to use strategies for solving multiplication and division problems. Students strive for rote recall of number facts for all four operations. Ideally third graders will have mastered or be close to mastery of addition and subtraction number facts and will be working towards mastery of multiplication and division facts through the twelves tables.

Students expand their knowledge of common fractions,  $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{1}{3}$  and  $\frac{1}{4}$ . They use fractions as they solve sharing problems and begin to identify decimals in the context of money.

### Geometry

Third graders identify and differentiate 2D shapes. They recognize perimeter as an attribute of plane figures, including finding the perimeter given the side lengths. They are introduced to the concept of area and how to calculate it using multiplication.

### Measurement

Third graders enhance their skills with time, temperature, and linear measurement. They learn to tell time to the minute on an analog clock.

### Data Analysis

Third-graders explore ways to record data as they read and draw picture, bar, line, and circle graphs.

### Patterns and Algebraic Thinking

Students consider patterns and relationships in a variety of contexts, including number and visual patterns, multiples, and skip counting. Third graders often use algebraic thinking in problem solving.

Math classes meet daily for 45 minutes in small groups.

### **Social Studies**

Third graders conduct a study of American history and geography. This thematic curriculum encourages the students to learn about diverse people and to make connections between the past and present. Team learning and small-group projects are interspersed with individual assignments and responsibilities. Activities and assignments emphasize asking questions, researching, and clarifying ideas. Students read, research, create models, and participate in simulations about important events and daily life in America from the 1600s to the late 1800s. These activities guide the students as they strive to understand and appreciate the ways that Americans who lived during slavery, immigration, colonial, revolutionary, and pioneer periods influence our lives in America today.

Starting with their summer project prior to third grade, each student pursues an in-depth study of a country from which immigrants to America may have come. During the fall, the students study immigration in depth and present their summer country studies at a "World's Fair." Students present art, writing, and other projects, as well as participate in an interactive activity with parents and family members. During the colonial times unit, the students each study their own colony and their own trade. As a final project, they craft a three-dimensional colonial trade shop. Supplemental field trips vary each year but have included a visit to the Paul Revere House, Sturbridge Village, the Ward House, and the Jackson Homestead. Virtual field trips to key

locations, such as Ellis Island, Angel Island, and the Oregon Trail, also support the students' understanding of the various time periods.

Social Studies classes meet six times in a six-day cycle for 45 minutes.

## Science

The third-grade science program immerses children in inquiry-based activities and problem-solving challenges. Hands-on activities and experiments occur during most classes. The curriculum focuses on earth science, and the units of study may include the earth's interior, plate tectonics, and rocks and minerals. Each student maintains a lab notebook in which to document experiments using the scientific method or problem solving using the engineering process. They create and label scientific drawings, collect and document observations, both in writing and in data tables, and formulate inferences. Students frequently use iPads for research, to document their work, and to demonstrate what they have learned.

Science classes meet one to two times every six days for 45 minutes.

## Library

The third-grade library curriculum focuses on studies of authors and genres. Key units focus on works by William Joyce and A. A. Milne. Using the works of Joyce, the students learn to compare an author's/illustrator's work throughout his career. During the unit on Milne, emphasis is placed on the history of the beloved Winnie-the-Pooh. Third graders are also introduced to genre studies such as biography and autobiography as well as trickster tales from around the world, including Brer Rabbit tales by Joel Chandler Harris. The librarian introduces students to online research through teacher-selected sites about the literature under consideration. Children explore a range of literature to spark their personal reading selections. During part of the year, the students enjoy a unit on computer science through coding.

Library classes meet once every six days for 45 minutes (except Fridays).

## Music

The third-grade music program seeks to encourage music making through instrumental and vocal work. Using recorders and Orff instruments, students are exposed to traditional notation, reading skills, and concepts of melody, rhythm, tempo, and dynamics. In addition to traditional

repertoire students have opportunities to create their own music through improvisation and group composition, fostering cooperation and a sense of individual responsibility. Through performance, students develop independence and an understanding of the interdependent nature of the ensemble. Performance opportunities include the December Holiday Assembly and the March Lower School Visual and Performing Arts Assembly.

Music classes meet twice every six days.

## Visual Art

Third graders continue to develop their foundation of skills and vocabulary to create and discuss works of art. The lessons garnered during the creative process are more important than the final product. Young artists have the opportunity to think critically, take risks, and be self-reliant when solving problems. Students are nurtured and supported through periodic group discussions, through prominent display of their work, and through community-wide assemblies. Drawing in perspective is the main focus of the year. Students learn to draw cubes, cylinders, and pyramids. They also utilize one-point perspective to create a detailed landscape. Students also draw from life to develop their observational and drawing skills. They come to a deeper understanding of the structure and routines of a working studio. The studio is a tool itself, and students learn to purposefully utilize and care for the space and materials.

Visual art class includes art history as students study the life and work of a particular artist and create a piece in the artist's style. Leading up to the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Service Day, students view and discuss William Henry Johnson's *Fighters for Freedom* Series. Portraits include Booker T. Washington, Harriet Tubman, Marian Anderson, Abraham Lincoln, John Brown, Frederick Douglass, and George Washington Carver. They also watch Marian Anderson perform *My Country 'Tis of Thee* and Dr. King's *I Have a Dream* speech.

Visual art classes meet once every six days.

## Woodworking

The third-grade year in the woodworking studio builds on past woodworking experiences. Basic concepts and techniques are examined early and reviewed with frequency in an effort to solidify understanding. Third graders continue to develop their independent skills, but, as they are becoming more social at this age, collaborations among students take on an importance in the studio. During the course of the year, the children gain a basic sense and understanding of measurement. As students achieve additional skills and techniques, they have the opportunity to attempt a broader array of projects. Candy machines are a favorite third-grade project.

Throughout the year an atmosphere that fosters collaboration and a desire to learn more frames each woodworking class.

Woodworking classes meet once every six days.

## **Drama**

Once a year, DCD's drama teacher writes a theatrical play expressly for the third-grade students. Each student has a larger speaking a role than in previous years, and all students will have a minimum of ten lines each. The third-grade play involves multiple groups of actors. Some scenes will contain only two or three actors on stage, while some scenes will have the whole class on stage. This project allows each child to expand his or her creative skills and learn how to command the stage with only a small number of actors on stage.

Third-grade students learn how to annotate their script with directions during rehearsals. They learn the difference between upstage, downstage, stage right and stage left, and they learn the importance of marking their script with different stage positions for every line of dialogue. The students develop confidence acting on stage alone or in a small group. They learn to use props effectively and react with other characters for every line of the play. A goal at this age level is helping the students understand that acting using body language is as important as delivering a line. Students are asked the essential question, "How can I react to other actors on stage in order to create a realistic situation?"

Drama classes meet for approximately 15 rehearsals prior to performing the class play.

## **Physical Education**

In third grade PE class, students participate in a variety of exercises, movement activities, team sports, and cooperative games. The PE teachers present games and activities in a number of formats, allowing students to work individually, with partners, in small groups, or as a whole class. Building on the foundation of physical skills and understandings of sport-specific rules and strategies developed in earlier grades, students work to advance their skills in soccer, touch football, field hockey, handball, basketball, floor hockey, volleyball, pickle ball, baseball, and lacrosse. Manipulative skills include throwing, catching, kicking, collecting, striking, punting, dribbling, and volleying. Gymnastic and rhythmic activities include balancing, tumbling,

vaulting, creative movement, and swinging on ropes. Third graders also participate in *FitnessGram*, which teaches correct form for a variety of stretches and exercises. Teachers actively promote sportsmanship, teamwork, and fair play. The program encourages students' healthy physical growth and the development of positive attitudes toward health and fitness.

PE class meets for 45 minutes four times every six days.