

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 fosters curiosity. The uniqueness of each individual is valued, as well as the interdependence of the class community. Teachers strive to create an environment where students feel safe and respected taking risks, sharing ideas, and bringing their authentic selves.

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 folders. They learn about time management and to become accountable for their belongings both at home and at school.

The third-grade teachers introduce new technologies into their curriculum; the students utilize iPads to access Google Classroom, digital resources and assignments, conduct online research, and use educational apps. Throughout the year, expectations about digital citizenship are reviewed and discussed.

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 social and emotional skills. 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 skills. Additionally, when warranted, meetings may be held to work on 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.” 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 include novels, short stories, poetry, picture books, and nonfiction. The reading material coordinates with the social studies curriculum theme of American history. 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 occurs throughout the week. 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 and figurative language, such as similes and hyperboles. 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 write narrative and creative pieces as well as letters. Each third grader also keeps a personal journal throughout the course of the year. In addition, third graders use a variety of reference materials to enhance their writing.

Third graders hone their print and cursive handwriting, practicing correct spacing and formation and connection of letters. They also practice word processing skills using Google Docs. 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 includes 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. The children maintain personal spellers of misspelled and frequently misspelled words.

Vocabulary building is an integral part of the third-grade program. 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 regularly.

Reading and Language Arts classes are held daily for 40-50 minutes.

MATH

Third grade uses Pearson/Terc Investigations in Number, Data, and Space, 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. Students 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 twelve tables. Students expand their knowledge of benchmark 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 are introduced to the concepts of perimeter area and how to calculate them.

Measurement

Third graders enhance their skills with time and linear measurement. They are exposed to both metric and U.S. Standard units of 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 bar, line, and pictographs.

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 40 minutes in small groups.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Third graders conduct a study of American history. 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. Students read, research, and create models reflecting daily life in America from the 1600s to the 1800s. These activities guide the students as they strive to understand and appreciate the ways that Americans who lived during slavery, colonial, revolutionary, and pioneer periods influence our lives in America today. Activities and assignments emphasize asking questions, researching, and clarifying ideas. 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.

Social Studies classes meet five times a week for 45-50 minutes.

SERVICE LEARNING

Once per week, third graders participate in service learning lessons and activities based on their collective interests. We discuss local and world problems or issues and what can be done to help. Topics have included climate change, poverty, grief, military service, and food insecurity. Students participate in various hands-on activities to engage with these issues.

SCIENCE

The third-grade science program immerses children in inquiry-based activities and problem-solving challenges. Hands-on activities or 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 twice every five days.

LIBRARY

The third-grade library curriculum focuses on information literacy. Students learn how to search on different platforms such as the library catalog, an encyclopedia, and a search engine. We discuss how to conduct an efficient search using keywords. In a unit about misinformation,

students learn that they need to be careful when using unknown websites. They learn several strategies to help them think critically about where information comes from, such as using the “About” page and reading laterally across sources. Throughout the year students will participate in “Book Tastings” where students will be encouraged to explore curated collections of books based on themes. The goal with “Book Tastings” is to have students explore sections of the library and genres they might not normally borrow from.

MUSIC

The third-grade music program seeks to encourage music making through instrumental and vocal work. Using recorders, Orff instruments, percussion, recorders, and Boomwhackers 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, individual and group composition, fostering cooperation and a sense of individual responsibility. Students also develop their music technology skills using interactive notation and composition platforms. Through performance, students develop independence and an understanding of the interdependent nature of the ensemble. Their music class works with the third grade classroom curriculum to collaboratively complement major units of study. Third grade students participate in the Thanksgiving and Winter Assemblies, the Lower School Visual and Performing Arts Assembly, and their class play.

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 employ 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.

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, students 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, each woodworking class is framed by an atmosphere that fosters collaboration and a desire to learn more.

Woodworking classes meet once every five 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 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 understanding of sport-specific rules and strategies developed in earlier grades, students work to advance their skills in soccer,

flag football, field hockey, handball, basketball, floor hockey, volleyball, pickleball, 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 a positive attitude toward health and fitness.

Physical Education classes meet three times every five days.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Grade three students participate in teacher-led discussions and activities designed to support Social Emotional development in the classroom. Through a combination of movement, breathing, storytelling, partner activities and group discussions students practice essential skills that include but are not limited to:

- *Concentration, focus, and attention* - breath exercises, movement exercises and age-appropriate mindfulness techniques
- *Self advocacy and self regulation* - considering bringing our best selves to our community and recognizing our individual and collective needs
- *Recognizing strong emotions* – developing calming strategies
- *Increased confidence and self-esteem* - successfully trying new things in a fun, nurturing and joyful environment

STEAM

The primary focus of the third grade STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) curriculum is hands-on problem-solving and discovery through play. Students use the design thinking process (i.e., think, plan, do, review) through their explorations. They have opportunities to work through an idea and adjust the plan through collaboration with peers and teacher-guided questions. Students explore, make, create, and build with a variety of materials and tools. Third-grade students continue developing skills to understand technology as a learning tool. They begin developing their typing skills using TypingAgent.com. They also gain digital literacy skills through exploration with DCD's technology tools, such as iPads and robots. Students develop computational thinking skills with an emphasis on loops, debugging and game creation.