

GRADE THREE
2007-2008



Positive interdependence is a key goal of third grade. Integrating reading, writing, and mathematical skills in order to become more independent problem solvers is an important part of the third grade experience. In order to facilitate students becoming competent learners valued by their peers, each third grader continues to develop social skills that contribute to a learning environment marked by respectful interactions and constructive collaboration.

LANGUAGE ARTS: By exploring and analyzing the basic literary elements (character, setting, plot) that go into all good stories, third graders will develop critical reading and writing skills (e.g. “What is a hero?”; “Who does the main character remind you of?”; “How did the author make you feel the emotions of the events?”; etc.). Some of the class literature selections are *Charlotte’s Web* (White), *Farmer Boy* (Ingalls-Wilder), *Midnight Fox* (Byars), *Stone Fox* (Gardiner), *The Canada Geese Quilt* (Kinsey-Warnock), *The Castle in the Attic* (Winthrop), *The Trumpet of the Swan* (White), and *The Trouble with Tuck* (Taylor). Students are given many opportunities to deepen their connection with varied genres. There is a daily library period devoted to silent reading of material selected by the student. At least once during each day the teacher reads aloud to the children, and they are expected to read each night for 30 minutes. The Junior Great Books Curriculum, a selection of multi-cultural folk tales and activities emphasizing skills in critical thinking, is another component to the language arts program in third grade. Reading and writing across genres are often done concurrently. A key component is probing elements of a story or writing project through discussions. Students cultivate skills in presenting their ideas with clarity and relevant supporting details. The reading and writing of both fiction and personal narratives are emphasized. Attention is given to literary tools (metaphors, descriptive details, dialogue, etc.), plot development and sequencing, characterization, and setting descriptions. Children regularly experience many kinds of poetry as both readers and composers. Reading for information is an integral part of science and social studies. Third graders complete a range of written research activities during the school year. Skills in using the conventions of written language (i.e. spelling, sentence and paragraph structure, capitalization, punctuation) are developed in the editing/proofreading stages of the writing process as well as during daily structured exercises and regular word study sessions.

MATHEMATICS: A key goal of the third grade math curriculum is to develop skills to demonstrate targeted math concepts utilizing more than one approach or strategy. Students gain fluency and flexibility in manipulating mathematical processes within a range of problem-solving situations. The third grade curriculum for mathematics reinforces skills through individual and group investigation, and through the manipulation and practice of math concepts. The University of Chicago School Mathematics Project, *Everyday Mathematics*, is the core of the mathematics curriculum. Supplemental enrichment materials

are vital parts of the third grade math program. Some of the major strands of the math curriculum include: numeration (place value, fractions, decimals), operations (division and multiplication, multi-digit procedures with addition, subtraction, and multiplication); problem solving (estimation, mental and written arithmetic); data collection (using tables, charts, and graphs); geometry; measurement; and patterns. Each child has an opportunity to interact with each concept in a variety of ways. To this end, some of the materials used include base ten blocks, cuisenaire rods, pentominoes, tangram puzzles, calculators, compasses, and various measuring tools. Small-group problem-solving and discussion of strategies are daily components of the third grade math class.

“All life is interrelated.” Martin Luther King, Jr.

SOCIAL STUDIES: In third grade students investigate other cultures to develop an appreciation of the daily life of people from the past and/or from another region of the world; to better understand how climate, geography, and available natural resources affect key elements of any culture, and to learn the many ways the people of these cultures experience(d) successful interdependence. In the fall, we will study New England history through a unit on families and farms of the 19th century. During the winter term, a unit shared with the fourth grade will focus on three African countries. Third and fourth graders will look specifically at the subtopics of food, shelter, clothing, fuel and waste- comparing and contrasting their lives with those of children and families in three modern African countries. . In the spring we will focus, with the fourth graders, on the civilization of Ancient Egypt. Art, drama, and writing projects, along with field trips and visiting experts, are important tools for third graders to build and express their understanding of another culture. Historical fiction, biographical selections, folk tales, the study of artifacts, map activities, and critical thinking exercises will provide students with a range of experiences to increase their ability to understand a culture in greater depth. During our science unit on simple machines, students gain a historical perspective through hands-on exploration of “gadgets from the past” and relate their observations to present and future technology. In both social studies and science, third graders investigate how people use the form and structure of the natural world and the interaction with each other to create ways to solve problems.

“Intelligence is not so much the capacity to learn as the capacity to wonder.”

Oliver Wendell Holmes

SCIENCE: Broad goals of the third grade science units are to heighten children’s perception when studying natural and manmade objects as well as strengthening their skills in generating both questions and approaches to seeking answers. Each unit of the third grade science curriculum involves hands-on experiences in combination with expository reading and writing, sketching, and reflection. Field trips and guest speakers are also valuable contributions to the learning process. Students are given opportunities to apply scientific investigation to specific areas of interest during each broad area of study. The year will start with a study of spiders and natural habitats found on TGS grounds. Encouragement throughout the year of third graders’ curiosity and concern about their natural world will facilitate a greater sense of the complexities and richness of the outdoors. In the late fall and

early winter, science activities will center on the exploration of simple machines. Taking apart and putting together mechanical gadgets will allow students opportunities to develop skills integral to the investigative scientific thinking process. Open-ended projects such as the multifaceted task of creating and constructing a gear “folk toy” or the building of art straw structures will provide students additional direct inquiry and problem-solving investigations. During the spring term, students will experience an introduction to wetlands. Again, investigations, readings and field trips will contribute to the development of key concepts relevant to this important environmental topic.

ART: The major goals of art activities in third grade are for students to explore with different media and techniques and to sharpen their observation skills and appreciation of different art forms. Students will closely observe masterpieces and learn basic styles and backgrounds of great artists (e.g. Van Gogh, Delaunay, Chagall, Matisse, Monet, Tao Chi, Winslow Homer). Visual thinking strategies are facilitated emphasizing reflection of the multiple meanings contained in art, particularly as it relates to our specific units of study. For example, the attention to detail in the sketches of naturalist, Jim Arnosky, provide a model of observing the outdoors when students are making entries in nature journals; and the subject of Winslow Homer’s paintings provide an additional view into New England life in the late 19th century. Art projects provide third graders continued opportunities to develop elements and principles of compositional design as well as enjoyment creating art. Another important goal in art for third grade students is that they learn concepts and vocabulary related to elements and principles of design in order to enrich group discussions of both famous art pieces and their own original work.

SOCIAL CURRICULUM: Specific lessons as well as ongoing events of a third graders’ daily school experience provide children ongoing opportunities to continue to develop both an understanding of and an ability to effectively cope with feelings and shared responsibilities in a group setting. We define a healthy school community as a place where people have a sense of belonging, where adults and students extend and receive respect in their relationships with each other, and where people feel both a sense of support and personal challenge to help them learn and grow as human beings. Through the social curriculum in third grade, children will also learn to identify positive health habits, and to participate in organized community service (e.g. food collections, fundraising for an international cause, monthly visits to Thompson House Seniors Home).

PHYSICAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: PSD classes for third graders include many varied activities in order to sharpen gross motor skills, develop rhythm, tone muscles and strengthen the cardiovascular system. Throughout the PSD program, the hope is to have each child see development and growth within him or herself. There is emphasis on social skills, working together, choosing fair rules and playing for fun. Each PSD class incorporates skill development exercises and small group games. The third and fourth graders play large group sports, such as soccer and softball, to develop teamwork and an understanding of rules as well as endurance, speed, and ball handling. Cross-country skiing is the major PSD winter activity during which students master basic technique as well as the joy of touring wooded trails during the season. Third graders are encouraged to implement skills and activities of PSD in other active parts of their day (e.g. organizing recess games).

COMPUTER PROGRAM: Students in third grade will apply word-processing programs during creative and expository writing time. Each third grader will develop confidence employing cut, paste, copy, and save commands as they learn independent file management when composing and revising on the computer. Keyboarding skills will be practiced through the Ultrakey and other programs designed to teach touch typing. As part of the science and social studies work, students will utilize internet sources for research purposes.

HOMEWORK: Homework is a valuable connection between parents and school. Assignments can be expected to reflect and support the range of activities and academic objectives in the classroom. Teacher's home notes may be used to stimulate family conversations utilizing concepts from a third grader's current school experiences. Study skills of time management and organization of materials and workspace are important goals for third graders to develop at both school and home. Approximately 30 minutes of homework is expected to be done during the school week, which includes nightly review of targeted math facts. In addition, there is a 30 minute nightly reading commitment. A book or story read with adult supervision is preferable.