



Primary Unit & Third Grade Curriculum

Language Arts

Reading

Using texts as part of thematic studies and in exploration of high-interest genres and authors, our early elementary readers expand their love of reading and learn how reading can enrich their lives. Primary students continue to build foundational reading skills in phonics and word analysis, develop new comprehension strategies, and expand their understanding of fiction and nonfiction text structure. Students' exposure to different genres during readers' workshop and guided independent reading facilitates the goal of reading poetry and prose independently and proficiently. Reading "good-fit" books encourages sight word recognition, an understanding of prosody and expression, and a strong foundation in decoding skills, and thus propels reading fluency.

Following this work, third grade reading is about empowering students to become avid readers and develop a sense of agency about their own reading. As they continue to build fluency and skill as readers, students engage in rich thematic studies that prompt more reading to learn. Through demonstration and supported practice in workshop mini-lessons, children are exposed to high-interest books they can choose and read independently. Instruction in the process and skills of proficient reading such as stamina, fluency, monitoring for sense, comprehension, prediction, retelling, vocabulary, and connections within and across texts targets students' specific strengths and needs.

Writing

Primary students are able to write with greater skill and independence; their increasing phonemic awareness and growing repertoire of writing skills and strategies mean that they are also coming closer to capturing on the page stories that flow so effortlessly from their minds and mouths. They see themselves as authors who can get ideas across to others through writing. They are ready to tackle new challenges and to write with greater intent and meaning, and they begin to understand the value in revising and polishing a piece with the reader's needs in mind. Students will be able to write independently by the end of second grade, writing phonetically but moving towards conventional spelling, and using conventions of writing to support meaning more consistently.

In third grade we capitalize on this newfound confidence to underscore that students' lives and their thoughts are worth writing about. Skills and mechanics of writing build within and across genres (narrative, informational, persuasive, and poetic) through practicing strategies for generating ideas, planning in outlines, increasing writing volume, writing different leads and endings, and revising. Students write across all disciplines, considering the task, purpose, and audience for their writing, developing their unique "writer's voice". The mechanics of writing become increasingly important as students become more effective and sophisticated writers. Cursive handwriting instruction is introduced in third grade.

Speaking and Listening

Engaging in oral dialogue with diverse partners in small and large groups across the disciplines, primary students expand their expressive and receptive communication skills through increasingly sophisticated conversations. Morning and Closing meetings, Responsive Classroom activities, and targeted small group discussions provide carefully scaffolded opportunities to hone strategies for clear and respectful communication. Collaborative projects give students opportunities to practice active listening and interpersonal skills. Learning celebrations and other public events serve as platforms for students to present their work clearly and confidently.

In order to ground their learning and become confident communicators, third grade students have further opportunities to take part in a variety of rich, structured conversations — as part of a whole class, in small groups, and with a partner. Being productive members of these conversations requires that students contribute accurate, relevant information; respond to and develop what others have said; make comparisons and contrasts; and analyze and synthesize a multitude of ideas in various domains. Through their thematic studies, third grade students also practice oral communication skills as they prepare for learning celebrations and the third grade play, which they write and perform collaboratively with their peers.

Math

Through mini-lessons, small group explorations, partner games, and independent activities, Primary and third grade students deepen their conceptual understanding of mathematics and grow in flexibility with numbers, operations, measurement, and geometry. As children strengthen their foundational math skills, they develop mathematical habits and dispositions that will support them throughout the grades. This includes making sense of problems, using tools strategically, and being comfortable taking risks while learning to communicate mathematical reasoning. New concepts are introduced and explored using physical manipulatives, visual models, and authentic contexts. Children share their mathematical understandings in class discussions, and they learn to use pictorial representations and written notation to model, confirm, and adjust their thinking.

In the Primary Unit, first and second graders strengthen their understanding of addition, subtraction, and place value. Children practice thinking flexibly about numbers and the part-whole relationships within a given quantity. To encourage efficiency and accuracy, students try out and reflect on a variety of addition and subtraction strategies, and they use increasingly sophisticated strategies to solve problems. Primary students also focus on understanding whole number relationships of place value, including being able to count and represent items organized in groups of hundreds, tens, and ones using manipulatives, drawings, words, and number lines. Students strengthen their understanding of geometry, measurement, and data through games and hands-on, cross-disciplinary investigations. For example, during a science study of birds, students use tape measures to help classmates measure their “wingspans,” then they compare their measurements with each other’s and with the wingspans of local bird species. Throughout their math investigations, Primary students are working on persevering and learning from their mistakes as they become more confident and creative mathematical thinkers.

In third grade, students continue to build their accuracy, efficiency, and flexibility with addition and subtraction. Using an open number line, students explore the difference, removal, and missing addend models of subtraction, and they apply this understanding as they learn to construct and interpret timelines of important historical events in their thematic studies. Third graders also develop a foundational understanding of multiplication and division. Using



pictorial representations of items arranged in equal groups or arrays, they explore the relationships between the four operations, and they use increasingly sophisticated strategies to solve multiplication and division problems. This work enhances their understanding of place value and can be applied to their growing understanding of fractions as pieces of totals or parts of groups. Further, students expand and deepen their understanding of measurement with regard to time, volume, and mass, and they gain experience in representing measurement data. Finally, students begin to connect properties of geometric objects, like area and perimeter, with their understanding of numeracy; they continue to classify, analyze, and compose geometric objects.

Science

First and Second graders are all about exploration and the scientific experiences in our primary classroom reflect this important component of a child's development. In the spring months, primary classrooms use the outdoors as their main scientific classroom, exploring birds and amphibians on a rotating basis. Through inquiry-based lessons in the habitats of these creatures, students make predictions, pose questions, collect data, draw conclusions, and record their observations and understandings in their science notebooks. That type of detailed investigative work continues to build in third grade's study of seeds, water, and invertebrates - three scientific concepts that lend themselves beautifully to exploring the greenspaces and watershed surrounding TPS.

Spanish

Spanish language learning and developing cultural awareness and understanding, are at the heart of developing global awareness. Primary and third grade students explore everyday greetings, songs, stories, and cultural celebrations. As they become more comfortable with Spanish, students expand their vocabulary, increase self confidence, and grow in their self expression. At this level learners are able to follow simple instructions, answer questions, and state basic needs. Students expand their vocabulary and develop their pronunciation and fluency through oral drills, games and hands-on projects. The students are introduced to basic Spanish grammar, and engage in more reading and writing activities.

Physical Education

In the primary unit, students build upon the skills learned in movement class and participate in small-sided games and activities (3 versus 3 or 5 versus 5), in order to develop an awareness of personal and shared space, and an understanding of personal responsibility and social behavior. They become increasingly adept at taking turns, learning about safety, and sharing equipment. Students begin to understand that effort, persistence, and practice will help them reach their goals.

In 3rd grade physical education, students challenge themselves to bolster their skills of teamwork, leadership, and strategies. To achieve these goals, the third grade curriculum focuses on cooperative games, fundamentals of different sports, understanding procedures, improving coordination and body awareness, and fitness fundamentals.

Music

In the Primary Unit and Third grade, students develop their awareness of the elements of music. They study rhythmic and melodic patterns in simple and compound meters through singing, playing instruments, moving, and



listening to a wide variety of music. The students begin learning written music along with musical terms and symbols. Experiences include learning about musicians like Marian Anderson, Duke Ellington, J.S. Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart, engagement in activities around the music of different world cultures, exploring orchestral instruments, xylophones, keyboards, and recorders, and integration with their thematic study, such as when third graders learn a wide variety of spirituals, immigration, labor, suffrage, blues, and jazz music associated with struggles for social justice, then embed this learning into a third grade play on the theme of “How to Build a More Fair USA.”

Art

First and second grade students gain experience in a wide variety of mediums, gradually work on longer projects, explore ideas, and are encouraged to take pleasure in the process. Art projects often coordinate with a theme, incorporating content and process at an appropriate level. Students begin to choose processes and materials that are appropriate to independently express their vision. They gain understanding of line, shape, color, texture, and space, and they begin to explore compositional ideas of pattern, movement, scale, balance, unity, and emphasis.

By third grade, the children are ready to take on more of the planning for the final outcome of their projects. They continue to develop skills with tools and media as they apply them in more sophisticated ways. With a teacher’s guidance, they learn to cultivate their ideas from the beginning to the finished project. Their work often reflects the new depth of understanding and confidence they have achieved.