

# A Family's Guide to the Third Grade Curriculum at



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The Third Grade program offers a comprehensive curriculum that sparks a passion for learning. Studies challenge students' natural curiosity, guide them in their personal growth, and cultivate self motivation and responsibility. Through both traditional and hands-on (constructivist) learning experiences, students build on basic skills to expand their intellectual abilities. In the process, they become critical thinkers who question assumptions about the world around them.

While the curriculum celebrates diversity and fosters each student's sense of self, it also promotes a sense of responsibility to the concerns of the community and the world beyond. A balance between group work and individual learning is maintained. The program emphasizes both foundational skills and higher-level thinking skills since analysis, synthesis, and critical thinking require factual knowledge, organizational skills, and basic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics.

## **LANGUAGE ARTS**

The Third Grade curriculum uses a variety of approaches to ensure that children acquire proficiency in reading and writing, as they develop a love of literature and learn self-expression through the written word, oral presentations and drama. Each student is encouraged to develop confidence as both a reader and an author, capable of communicating information and creative ideas. Students are introduced to diverse literary genres, including literature representing many different cultures.

Recognizing that not all children learn in the same way, we teach reading skills through various approaches that combine the building of sequential skills in

readers'/writers' workshop that includes:

- development of sight vocabulary
  - use of phonetic clues
- attention to contextual/visual clues
- independent reading time both in and out of the classroom
  - strategies for word attack
- the importance of reading for meaning

## **WRITING**

Writing experiences are closely connected to reading. If the focus in reading work is a genre such as fairy tales or poetry, students may subsequently write in that genre themselves. Skill work in writing is also related to meaningful, real-life applications. A writing process is emphasized in which students think of an idea, write a draft, revise it, edit their work, and finally publish it. There are also opportunities to publish for a broader audience, such as in the School's annual literary magazine *The Spider Web*.

Lessons are designed to build writing process skills. Spelling and handwriting are taught within the context of the children's own writing, while using the *Spellwell* and *Zaner-Bloser Grammar* series for skill reinforcement. *The Handwriting Without Tears* program is continued in third grade with a focus on cursive writing.

## **MATH**

The Third Grade math curriculum, Math Trailblazers, embodies several approaches based on years of research about how children learn mathematics. The program enables students to investigate mathematical concepts and develop skills in the basic operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division as they learn to think mathematically. In addition to being able to solve equations quickly and accurately, students learn how to make use of these skills in problem-solving.

Students develop greater understanding of mathematics through the use of manipulatives, guided exploration, and teacher-directed activities. Once conceptual understanding is achieved, students practice basic operations through games, individual and group collaboration, problem-solving applications, computer exercises, and paper and pencil tasks. Students also build a repertoire of ways to communicate their mathematical thinking, while their enjoyment and appreciation of mathematics grows.

Third graders learn that while computations have one right answer, many mathematical problems have a number of valid solutions, and that multiple strategies may be used to discover these solutions. Problem-solving may include: sorting, classifying, making graphs, exploring geometric relationships, measuring, applying logical reasoning, making predictions, devising strategies, collecting, organizing, and interpreting statistical information.

## **SOCIAL STUDIES**

The curriculum is premised on a progression of awareness and understanding that gradually expands a child's view of self and the world. Many themes in Social Studies tie directly into our Language Arts and Drama program. Field trips are also planned in order to enhance and enrich our students' understanding of these themes. Along with weekly discussions of current events, third graders will also explore in-depth: the work of the United Nations, Native American cultures, The Fifty States, and our School-wide theme based on one of the Quaker Testimonies.

## **COORDINATE CLASSES**

Students have their classroom curriculum enriched by the coordinate classes offered for further exploration of creative expression and movement. These classes include: Science, Computer, Sports, Art, Music, Library, Spanish, and Health.

## **SCIENCE**

The science program is based on children's natural curiosity about their world and their need to explore, ask questions, and search for answers. The primary goal of the curriculum is to help students learn to think scientifically. Third graders meet for science in the lab, learning to generate and investigate scientific questions as they study rocks and minerals, properties of matter, chemist and plant growth and development. Topics covered in third grade help students develop a solid core of scientific knowledge. Science studies are often integrated with Social Studies topics. Instructional materials include: appropriate reading material, films, visual aids, microscopes, tools, animals for life-cycle studies, and our many School gardens.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

The work in the computer lab is integrated into the curriculum, thus allowing greater access to technology for both students and teachers. The goal is to create a technology-infused curriculum that provides an empowering, creative, and multi-sensory learning experience for children.

In third grade, students learn keyboarding skills and become independent users of the "tools" of the computers to create individual and group projects. Students learn to create, save, retrieve, and manage their files in a variety of programs.

## **SPORTS**

Third graders have sports classes three times a week. The program is aimed at total body fitness and physical development as well as cooperative play. Children learn many specific skills, including listening, following directions, awareness of space, agility, manipulative skills, endurance, strength, and socialization.

As third graders gain more refined skills, activities are focused on the actual sports. Many of the sports activities are modified to enhance team play, skill development, and group cooperation. Children learn rules and formulate and apply strategies.

## **ART**

The Art program develops each student's innate creative abilities by encouraging individual self-expression and visual awareness. Students explore design, shapes, color, textures, composition, balance, and both abstract and representational themes through a variety of media that includes: paints, crayons, pencils, markers, printmaking, clay, and fabrics.

## **MUSIC**

Children experience many types of music twice weekly as they learn the elements of music: dynamics, tempo, rhythm, pitch, timbre, form, texture, and harmony. The program is a composite of methodologies through which experimental learning and improvisation are followed by music literacy. Singing and movement are integrated in the classroom through games, and students learn to read and sight-sing music through solfege (do, re, me) and hand signs.

## **LIBRARY**

Students visit the library twice a week. Once for literature-related experiences that focus on the joy of reading, using the library as a resource, and again to select books for research or enjoyment. Library use is integrated with classroom curriculum as children begin research projects on topics of study.

## **SPANISH**

The approach to teaching Spanish is experiential, interdisciplinary, mostly oral, and integrated into the daily routine. Students meet with the Spanish teacher two times a week. Spanish vocabulary is introduced at that time and then is reinforced by the classroom teachers.

## **COMMUNITY SERVICE**

Children at FSH are exposed to the concept of community service through their classroom curriculum as well as through projects organized by The American Friends Service Committee. Each year, the third graders and their teacher organize the Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF program. Students educate the school community, collect the boxes, and count the money that is sent to the UN. Third graders also purchase an animal/s from The Heifer Project with the money they collect selling donated pet food that they repackage and price themselves.

Recycling is a major focus of the community service program as children reduce, recycle, and reuse to cut down on the amount of trash left over from the classroom activities and lunch time. The children learn how to value and protect our natural resources as well as how to help others understand the importance of doing so.

## **MEETING FOR WORSHIP**

Third graders attend each fifth-day (Thursday) meeting for worship with the rest of the School at 9:30. We walk silently to the meeting house, and take our place on the wooden benches where we remain seated in silence. Because Friends believe that each person has access to God through the Light within, students worship in silence waiting for God to speak with them directly, and move them to deliver their message

aloud. It is not unusual for a meeting to be entirely silent. After 15 minutes or so, we close with the Quaker hymn, *As We Leave This Friendly Place*. All students shake hands with those nearby and meeting for worship is concluded. All are welcome to attend.

One month out of the school year third graders develop a query or question for the School to consider as they sit in silent worship. The query grows out of the Testimony being examined that year.



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