"The prime purpose of being four is to enjoy being four - of secondary importance is to prepare for being five." Jim Trelease

December Calendar

**Friday, December 14th: Bake Sale** Grab some goodies for a great cause as we support [Heifer International](#).

**Tuesday, December 18th: Coffee & Conversations (8:45 - 9:30 am)** Join Ms. Debbie in her office for coffee and conversations. Engage with other VMS families while discussing topics related to your child’s development and education.

**Thursday, December 20th: Winter Gathering (1:30 - 2:30 pm)** Primary and lower elementary families will gather in the classrooms before our break for singing, poems, crafts and refreshments. Everyone is invited!

**Friday, December 21 - Tuesday, January 1: School Closed** Enjoy the winter recess!

Get Involved!

Help us plan our largest fundraiser of the year, the Big Night Out! Join us for our first monthly meeting in January to learn how you can participate in this fun event.

Looking Ahead

**Tuesday, January 1: No School, Happy New Year!**

**Date TBD in January: Big Night Out planning meeting**

**Thursday, January 10th: Dine to Donate at Offshore Ale**

**Tuesday, January 15: Coffee & Conversations (8:45 - 9:30 AM)**

**Friday, January 18: No School, Professional Development Day**

**Monday, January 21: No School, Martin Luther King Jr. Day**

**Saturday, January 26: Open House (9:00 - 11:00 AM)**
This month has been full of American History in the Middle School with the study of the Industrial Revolution. During the late 1700’s and early 1800’s, great changes took place in the lives and work of people in several parts of the world, including the United States. The introduction of power-driven machinery and factory organization created an enormous increase in the production of goods and the quality of people’s lives. Matthew has a very large and detailed project due right before the winter break on this Industrial Revolution. It includes several smaller assignments with emphasis on poetry, geography, science, mathematics, and historical facts. These will be amalgamated into one large “flip book” on the time period.

The literature book we are reading at the same time is Lyddie by Katherine Patterson. It’s a story of a young girl who travels to the textile mills in Lowell, Massachusetts in 1840. To complement that story and our historical studies, we invited the sixth graders to travel with us to Lowell to the Boott Cotton Mills Museum. This National Historic Site is extremely detailed and was a wonderful addition to our study. My sincere thanks go out to Emily Coggins for volunteering to drive us all the way north of Boston in weekday traffic!

We had a visit from Matt Coffey, from South Mountain Company. Matt is an architect who works on the expansion of the cafeteria building at Camp Jabberwocky. He presented a slide show about some of the types of architecture on Martha’s Vineyard. He started with the historical “Cape” and finished with various modernist styles. We were very grateful for his expertise and enthusiasm.

For Zero Waste Week one of the activities we did was a campus-wide clean up. We collected trash from around Camp Jabberwocky, and Greenwood and Norton Streets close to campus. We collected many bags of discarded items!

Debbie Jernegan also visited for a special community building session with the whole upper school. Miss Nora’s lower elementary, Miss Irene’s upper elementary, and the Middle School were all involved in examining behaviors that show kindness and care for our friends. On the flip side, there was a discussion on what happens when that kindness is NOT present…. what that looks like in a community of people working and playing together. All children were active and responsive for this very important opportunity.
Elementary II Classroom
- Miss Irene

The month of November has flown by here in our Upper Elementary class. Tim of Island Grown has guided us in planting our cover crop of peas at Thimble Farm. We also sectioned out a portion of the garden for garlic which we will harvest in the spring. We harvested our lettuce varieties which were growing under the cold frames and the
students took them home to share with their families. Students have become familiar with the plant cell and we will begin a series of plant experiments in the classroom. Middle school will be joining us on a trip to Polly Hill next week on December 4th to learn from Kendra Buresch about plant evolution and to take a stroll around the property.

After finishing tennis we filled in our Thursday gym period with some island hikes. Our first hike included our lunch period because we drove all the way to Waskosim’s Rock. We trekked for 25 minutes up to the highest point to climb the giant whale shaped glacial rock and ate on a grassy area with a view of hills and Vineyard Haven water tower. Next we stayed in Vineyard Haven for a shorter, flat but nonetheless beautiful leaf laden walk/run through West Chop Woods. For our most recent hike, Miss Nora, her dog Jack and her class joined us on an adventure up to Gay Head Moraine trail which is hilly with water views and little bridges over streams. The weather is supposed to be sunny and seasonal this Thursday so we will happily venture out again. During the month of December we will be going to open skate with Miss Nora’s class!

Students are continuing with essay writing but gradually adding different elements to make their writing more interesting for the reader. The focus this week is figurative language and the use of similes, metaphors, and idioms. Spelling lists will continue as well with follow up tests on Fridays. Our MMUN club has started writing their position papers and are thinking about their display boards for the conference.

For history we have finished up our book The Apple and the Arrow and have chosen independent reading until our next literature circle begins. Each student has started an electronic Medieval book on our Chromebooks. The pages of the book have outlines and places to cut and paste information and photos from research online. After the winter break our class will move on to the exciting Renaissance period!

We had our second visit from Matthew who is an architect for the project here at Jabberwocky. He showed us a slide show about some of the houses here on Martha’s Vineyard and some very interesting styles including modern architecture. For art with Miss Nora we had a great follow up with a movie about four very modern and unconventional homes designed by famous architects around the world. One of the homes had a Plexiglas bottom swimming pool that hovered over the living room below which also had a swimming pool. It was great for the students to see that architecture is an art form!
Elementary I Classroom
- Miss Nora

In November the K-2 Class was able to spend some time off campus taking advantage of the wonderful places we have here on the Island. We had a visit to Polly Hill Arboretum to go along with our study of seeds and botany. There we saw Sassafras trees that date back 145-65 million years ago during the Cretaceous Period. The Sassafras trees were around with the Tyrannosaurs Rex dinosaurs. There are three species of Sassafras trees in the world. Two are in Asia and one variety is in Eastern North America including Martha’s Vineyard!

For Zero Waste week we went on a beach clean up. We were excited to see
there were only two pieces of trash on the beach! We all collected treasures. Levi glued all of his treasures together and made a sculpture. We went on a hike on one of the Trustee’s of Reservation trails up-island with the Elementary II class. It was a great trail in Aquinnah. Half way through the trail there is a rock in the shape of a big lion! The students loved it. After we went up to the lookout to see the cliffs and the Gay Head lighthouse. The students pointed out all that they learned from our lighthouse unit. The color code of the Gay Head lighthouse, the type of lens and the three parts. We visited the library a few times to check out books and did yoga with Miss Emily.

Back on campus we started our Whales unit with The Martha’s Vineyard Museum. Each week Miss Beth comes to teach the students about different types of whales and the whaling industry. We were shown the length of a blue whale on the field next to the parking lot. We rolled out a long blue ribbon that was the same size as the field! A blue whale is equal to 3 school buses.

We put our garden beds to rest for the winter and planted some small seeds that are germinating at the Island Grown greenhouse. Now we are studying FBI (fungi, bacteria and invertebrates). Tim brought in a huge bin of dirt/soil/compost. We dug for red wiggler worms, identified the body parts and illustrated them.

In addition to all of that we have been working on time keeping and money!
with us gathered together on the rug. Being together as a classroom community allows for the opportunity to share; sharing lessons, sharing songs and poems, and most importantly, sharing thoughts and feelings. Some mornings, I share a lesson with the children. Over the break I brought out some new lessons. Some of the favorites are kinetic sand, dot painting and animals of the continents map. Some lessons were presented during morning group time and others were presented individually. Many of these lessons are from the Practical Life and Art areas of the classroom. While these activities are fun and rewarding, they also serve many purposes such as developing fine motor control and increasing independence, concentration and coordination.

I have introduced painting at the easel. While many children have done easel painting at home, doing it at school provides many more opportunities to expand the lesson while still enjoying the aspect of painting. A child must first put on an apron, get the paper on the easel (which often requires a friend's help), put his/her name on the paper (which also needs a friend’s or teacher's help), decide what to create, and then clean up once finished. The clean-up process has many steps starting with hanging the finished product on the rack to dry. A bucket with water and a cloth is used to wash the easel to remove any leftover paint, and if needed, a towel is used to dry off any excess water so that the next person’s paper doesn’t get wet. The apron gets rolled back up and put back on top of the easel. It seems so natural for us as adults to assume that this is what happens when one is done painting, but for a child, each and every step is a growth in his/her sense of order and level of concentration. Following each step and checking to see if the lesson is ready for the next child is a complex sequence which builds independence, order, concentration, and coordination.

A special shout out goes to Teddy and his family for taking such wonderful care of Nutmeg, the guinea pig, over the break. Nutmeg was enjoyed by all!
Primary 1 Classroom
- Miss Cristina and Miss Rebecca

I hope you all had a wonderful time during the holiday. The cold weather already started but at least it’s not raining. We go outside everyday! Outside time is essential to all the children. After a morning inside with their quiet, concentrated work, it is important for them to have unstructured, physically active play time. In terms of winter clothing, please consider the child’s ability to dress himself or herself. Part of the Montessori philosophy is that each child become independent and able to care for him/herself. Please try to include clothes for your child that are easy for him or her to maneuver.

This month, we started with one of my favorite days, 'Special Visitor Day'. I love seeing the students with their special visitor. The morning of their arrival they get very excited as they think about which lessons they want to show them.

Several new lessons have been added to the environment. The children have been exploring the new materials independently. They are curious about everything, eager to explore and discover.

The Montessori 3-6 year old learning environment is designed to encourage each child to move, touch, and manipulate. The children have freedom to work independently based on their own initiatives, with gentle and respectful guidance from the adults. Some examples of the new lessons and materials include apple cutting, a matryoshka doll and painting.

We are using our stand-up easel now for painting big pictures. It is important for preschool children to have experiences with large motor activities, and this large brush work will allow them to stretch and draw with their dominant hand across their mid-line. As with everything in the classroom, the children are learning to clean up after themselves and prepare the exercise for the next person who will use the easel.
Late Day
- Miss Weezie

We hope that our VMS families enjoyed a happy holiday break. As we approach a particularly hectic time for all of us, let's try to incorporate a sense of peace and well-being in our busy lives and think about how we affect our children. Screen time, though a very effective distraction, can be stimulating and detract from a child's natural creativity. Let's instead try to incorporate some quiet reflective time in nature with our children. It can be a struggle, however, it is attainable. Nature walks, collecting loose parts and living things and listening help us achieve peaceful times together. With the help of their absorbent mind, the child will easily pick up on the many scientific principles hidden in nature...principles that simply cannot be learned through a screen or any other artificial source. If you want the best future for your children, give them the best opportunities to connect with nature.

Music and listening skills are complimentary. Students have enjoyed learning
new seasonal songs such as "Over the River and Through the Woods", "Five Fat Turkeys", "Come Little Leaves", and "Listen to the Water".

P.S. I recommend boots for outdoor play due to our rainy weather this fall.

Recommended Reading
"At Home with Montessori" by Patricia Oriti (available in the VMS office!)

Book Corner for Parents
"Robot-Proof: Higher Education in the age of artificial intelligence" by Joseph Aoun

"Yardsticks: Children in the Classroom Ages 4-14" by Chip Wood

"The Six Stages of Parenthood" by Ellen Galinsky

Book Corner for Children
"What Do You Do With An Idea?" by Kobi Yamada
An independent school serving PreK through Grade 8. Fostering a lifetime love of learning, one child at a time.