

## **FIFTH GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES**

Memorizing facts and information is not the most important skill in today's world. Facts change, and information is readily available. Our goal is to develop and nurture in our students the inquiring attitudes necessary to continue the generation and examination of knowledge throughout their lives.

Developing thinking skills helps students become effective learners. Important skills include inquiry, creative thinking, information processing, reasoning, and evaluation. Essential personal skills include communication, diligence, reliability, the mindset necessary to improve, collaboration, and ethical awareness.

In fifth and sixth grade, the goal is to make use of current events to build geography skills, engender a curiosity about the world around us, and develop the research skills necessary to pursue inquiry. Current events periodicals and online resources such as CNN news, National Geographic, and Scholastic serve as the jumping stones for whole class, small group and individual explorations in the first and second quarters. The project based approach to social studies is informed by the Buck Institute for Education.

In the fifth and sixth grade social studies is organized on a two year rotation; with the focus of the first year on geography of the eastern hemisphere; and the second year geography of the western hemisphere. In the third quarter the social studies and science curricula are integrated in preparation for the Science Fair. In the fourth quarter students are involved in a World Religions unit in the first year rotation, and in an oral history project in the second.

**Outdoor Education** Extended outdoor educational programs are an important part of independent school life. Because building independence and self-reliance is a fundamental goal of outdoor education trips, we limit the number of parent chaperones on fifth and sixth grade trips. Parents work closely with teachers to begin planning for the trip early in the school year to organize fundraising activities that enable the entire class to participate.

**Fifth Grade Trip To VIERS:** For one week at the end of May, fifth graders spend four days at the Virgin Islands Experimental Research Station on St. John involved in hands-on environmental, cultural, and scientific activities. In addition to providing a rich academic program, the trip serves as a wonderful community building experience which students remember fondly for many, many years.