



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Mission Statement.....	3	Language Arts: Grades 1-3	17
Belief Statements.....	4	Overview:	
The Primary School	5	Reading Workshop.....	17
Morning Meeting.....	5	Read-Aloud.....	18
The Classroom Experience.....	5	Reading Assessment	18
“Encore” Classes	5	Writing Workshop	18
Technology for Learning	6	Phonics and Word Study.....	19
The Outdoor Classroom Experience	6	Class Plays	19
Student Voice.....	6	Handwriting and Typing.....	19
Social-Emotional Learning.....	6	First Grade.....	20
Diversity & Inclusion.....	7	Second Grade.....	21
Field Trips	7	Third Grade.....	22
Policies	8	Social Studies: Grades 1-3	24
Homework.....	8	First Grade.....	24
Progress Reporting and Assessment	8	Second Grade.....	24
Extended Absence Policy:		Third Grade.....	25
Home Study and Tutoring	8	Mathematics: Grades 1-3.....	26
Early Childhood: Pre-Kindergarten	9	First Grade.....	27
Morning Meeting.....	9	Second Grade.....	27
Reggio Emilia-Inspired Program	9	Third Grade.....	28
Balanced Literacy.....	10	Science: Grades 1-3	29
Mathematics	11	First Grade.....	29
Social Studies and Pre-K/Third Grade Buddies	11	Second Grade.....	29
Choice	11	Third Grade.....	29
World Language.....	11	World Languages: Grades 1-3.....	30
Library.....	12	First Grade.....	30
Fine and Performing Arts.....	12	Second Grade.....	30
Health and Physical Education	12	Third Grade.....	30
Early Childhood: Kindergarten	13	Library: Grades 1-3	31
Community, Character, and Social Studies.....	13	First Grade.....	31
Reading and Writing Workshops and Phonics.....	14	Second Grade.....	31
Mathematics	15	Third Grade.....	31
Science.....	15	Fine and Performing Arts: Grades 1-3	32
World Language.....	15	Dance	32
Library.....	15	Music.....	33
Fine and Performing Arts.....	16	Visual Arts	34
Health and Physical Education	16	Health and Physical Education: Grades 1-3.....	35
		First Grade.....	35
		Second Grade.....	35
		Third Grade.....	35
		Primary School Faculty.....	36
		Character Standards	37

MONTCLAIR KIMBERLEY ACADEMY

MISSION STATEMENT

MKA's challenging, engaging, and innovative academic program provides a vibrant and transformative education. Our faculty's deep and genuine understanding of our students as individuals and as learners fosters their ethical development, intellectual growth, and personal success. MKA's diverse, collaborative, and inclusive community inspires students to lead lives of noble character, purpose, and distinction.

Evidence of our mission is found in the Knowledge, Vision, and Integrity of our students and our alumni:

KNOWLEDGE:

- Academic excellence
- Intellectual independence
- Love of learning

VISION:

- Personal engagement with the world
- Understanding of human complexity
- A sense of humility and compassion

INTEGRITY:

- Strength of character
- Responsibility as a citizen and leader
- An honorable and generous life

MKA PRIMARY SCHOOL

BELIEF STATEMENTS

We believe that. . .

1. A love of learning is nurtured through opportunities for exploration, creative expression, risk-taking, self-discovery, and choice.
2. Children grow intellectually and meet or exceed increasing academic expectations when they are appropriately challenged and their efforts are celebrated.
3. Developing social and emotional skills is essential for building good character, problem-solving abilities, collaborative relationships, and community—and for intellectual and academic growth.
4. Teachers must cultivate a personal relationship with each child by respecting and honoring his or her diverse perspectives and needs.
5. Engaging and understanding the individual child as a learner requires ongoing assessment for growth to inform adjustments to instruction and learning strategies founded in current educational research.
6. Flexible, student-centered classrooms honor students' voice and choice, provide opportunities to discover and pursue passions, and support creativity.

THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Primary School curriculum fosters a joyful learning environment that both encourages and challenges students to develop not only their academic skills, but perhaps more essentially, their curiosity, ability to problem-solve, and love of learning. Always responsive to the continually growing body of research on how students learn best, faculty consciously craft the curriculum to promote students' academic growth and to ensure that students are able to take increasing responsibility for their learning as they grow. Because research indicates that well developed social and emotional skills are essential for both academic success and personal growth, students' work in the classroom not only stretches them academically, but also purposefully enables them to grow in confidence, trust, and independence. Students learn to understand themselves and one another and to build caring, supportive, and cooperative relationships. Children are actively encouraged to become intellectual risk-takers and lifelong learners in a community that values doing the right thing, guided by the MKA Character Standards.

MORNING MEETING

Students begin each day with a classroom Morning Meeting, one of the most important times of the school day for creating a sense of community and setting a positive tone for learning. Students and teachers interact with one another through four purposeful Morning Meeting components: greeting, sharing, group activity, and morning message. In Morning Meetings, classes consider the MKA Character Standards and the Primary School Anti-Bullying Standards as they develop classroom expectations that form the basis of their social interactions and collaborative learning throughout the day. These expectations are set in keeping with the guiding Primary School slogan: "We Care, We Are Kind, We Are the Cougars." Since Primary School students spend most of their school day in their classrooms, special attention is placed on practicing the skills that foster community, such as establishing eye contact; using an audible, friendly tone of voice; demonstrating mutual respect; understanding emotions and using empathy; managing feelings; and fostering friendships. An integral part of the Responsive Classroom program that provides an effective, research-based framework for social and emotional learning, the Morning Meeting also targets academic skill development and reinforces routines that help students to initiate and structure their learning.

THE CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

In the classroom, students transform into practicing writers, readers, mathematicians, and social scientists. From their first days at the Primary School to their final publishing parties as third grade students, they learn to live the "writerly life." They invest themselves in daily Writing Workshop to become confident writers, able to select and expand on their ideas and communicate clearly with their readers. Through Reading Workshop, even the youngest Primary School students come to see themselves as avid readers who explore books. With teacher guidance, they select books of individual interest that promote their engagement, reading fluency, reading comprehension, and lifelong reading habits. Math lessons encourage students to understand not only the mechanics of mathematics, but also the concepts that inform mathematical computation, thinking, and problem solving. Social Studies additionally encourages students' inquiry, supported by the MKA Research Cycle, not only to find answers, but also to synthesize, interpret, and present information for an audience.

"ENCORE" CLASSES

All students experience "encore" classes with professionals who are subject-area specialists in world languages (French or Spanish), visual art, music, dance, physical education/health, and information literacy (library). Students in K-3 study science with our science specialist, while Pre-K students explore science in developmentally appropriate, hands-on ways within their classroom and outdoors. These opportunities for students to work with experts across their Primary School years provide them with targeted, developmentally appropriate immersion in areas that foster self-expression, as well as intellectual and physical growth.

TECHNOLOGY FOR LEARNING

Technology is integral to learning in the classroom. Teachers intentionally select technology tools that address specific learning objectives and provide varied opportunities for students to collaborate, practice skills, explore ideas, demonstrate their understanding, and create. Technology applications often promote individual growth, amplify student voice, and allow both students and teachers to track progress. Unique to this year, to support hybrid learning in each classroom, iPads are individual for each child (a 1:1 ratio in Pre-K-third grade). Teachers plan varied learning activities for individuals, small groups, or the whole class that incorporate technology tools to support student learning, curiosity, and creativity; capture students' thinking; and provide assessment, reflection, and feedback opportunities. The flexible use of a student-driven digital portfolio tool helps teachers to gather data about students' learning, promotes student reflection and metacognition, and helps parents, students, and teachers to see progress and growth over time.

THE OUTDOOR CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

In keeping with current research on the importance of play to children's learning, all Primary School students have two recesses a day. Recess activities are varied and provide students with nearly limitless choice in how they will move and explore—as part of a team, a group, or individually. The Nature Explore Outdoor Classroom, located behind the Primary School building, provides a host of opportunities for students to explore and play in a garden-like setting with natural materials such as sand, soil, water, and tree trunks. The Outdoor Classroom is a place for children to imagine, construct, create, uncover, share, and ramble—with their classes and during recess.

STUDENT VOICE

Throughout their Primary School years, students develop their personal voices and the confidence that they have important things to share. They develop great poise and confidence in communicating to an audience—from “sharing time” in Pre-K and kindergarten, where students can volunteer to share something meaningful to them, to two writing celebrations a year in kindergarten through third grade classrooms. In a typical year, myriad opportunities to perform include the winter and spring music concerts, where students sing from a repertoire of songs, including at least one in the world language they are studying. In a typical year, students in kindergarten through second grade perform in a play each year, and third graders collaborate to create a third grade capstone experience that is presented to the community. Presenting and acting on stage helps students to develop confidence, take risks, and work together, and these opportunities help them to develop effective leadership skills. This year due to COVID-19, student performances will be adjusted and students will work on these skills in their classrooms. In grades 1 and 2, students may develop small vignettes in classrooms that may be filmed to share with parents. In grade 3, students may share their writing about the Best Parts of Brookside, and this may be filmed to share with parents.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Social-emotional learning and academic growth go hand in hand. Research shows that students who attend schools with strong social-emotional learning programs have higher academic achievement, better mental health, and fewer behavioral difficulties in school, and that benefits persist for them long into adulthood. At the Primary School, teachers help to set the stage for social-emotional learning by helping children grow every day in five social-emotional learning competencies for the MKA community. These social-emotional competencies are:

- Self awareness (identifying and recognizing emotions, recognizing one's strengths and challenges)
- Self management (managing emotions, stress, and actions, setting and achieving goals, organizing and motivating oneself, controlling impulses)
- Social awareness (respecting other people's perspectives and feelings, empathizing, reading social cues)
- Relationship skills (listening actively and communicating clearly, negotiating conflict, cooperating effectively, resisting peer pressure, seeking and offering help when needed)
- Responsible decision making (analyzing situations, identifying and solving problems, making constructive and respectful choices, taking personal, social, and ethical responsibility, evaluating and reflecting on decisions)

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

The Primary School provides the foundation for Diversity & Inclusion work at MKA. Students examine their own identities, sharing what makes them unique and special with our community, so that all students are known, seen, and accepted for who they are. Students explore and appreciate differences and similarities, challenge stereotypes, and acknowledge the range of perspectives within and outside of our community. In keeping with MKA's Mission Statement, to recognize complexity and value empathy, students and adults welcome, embrace, support, and encourage the entire community: its races, cultures, genders, its experiences and economics, its aspirations, abilities, and affiliations. In forming and affirming positive classroom communities, students celebrate and value the differences in one another.

As guided by MKA's Strategic Plan, MKA is committed to making its curriculum more multicultural. Multicultural education at MKA is a constant process of inquiry, reflection and engagement that transforms students and faculty, school culture and curriculum, community and society. It is grounded in ideas of equity, anti-bias education and social justice.

To create a truly multicultural curriculum that helps students reach their full potential as learners, MKA faculty at the Primary School:

- Honor their students' narratives
- Provide multiple perspectives within their disciplines
- Provide all students opportunities to understand themselves, other members of the MKA community, and the global society.
- Ensure that MKA is a safe environment in which to explore and discuss multiple perspectives, ask challenging questions, and create positive social change.

The social-emotional learning curriculum is taught hand-in-hand with our multicultural curriculum, instilling respect for all members of our community. Students are encouraged to speak confidently with their own genuine voices, encouraging everyone to examine life and history from a variety of perspectives.

FIELD TRIPS

Please note: field trips are not planned for 2020 but may run in 2021 if health/safety permit.

Class trips are planned both to promote students' learning and to enhance their appreciation for the diverse world around them. Some trips allow students to explore and document their local neighborhood surroundings on foot. Others explore the world beyond the local community. Trips to local environmental centers support students' science explorations, and attending professional theatre productions enriches students' efforts in creating and producing their own class plays. Some trips are designed to integrate community engagement experiences, such as visits to Toni's Kitchen, a local community resource. Throughout the curriculum, the Primary School introduces children to the joys of giving and the responsibility we share in helping members of our immediate as well as our global communities.

POLICIES

HOMEWORK

During hybrid learning and if school needs to become fully remote at any point, homework policies for first-third grade have been temporarily adjusted to prioritize children's well-being. It is important for children to have time to play outside, decompress, and spend time with their families after school and in the evenings. To that end, we will not assign written homework and instead expect that students read or be read to each night.

The homework policy below applies to a typical school year outside of COVID-19.

Homework serves as a daily reinforcement of key concepts taught in the classroom. It also promotes confidence, responsibility, and independence through mastery. Teachers assign homework on weeknights in grades one through three; no homework is assigned on weekends or holidays. First grade students should spend approximately 20 minutes per night on their assignments; second grade should allow 35 minutes, and third grade approximately 45 minutes. These estimates include required independent reading in students' "just-right" books. Teachers encourage students to engage in additional, daily independent reading and to further explore subjects of individual interest.

Parents can help students with homework by designating a study spot where the student can work without distractions and stocking it with work materials (paper, pencils, erasers, etc.). Appropriate ways to provide homework support include listening, assisting with reading homework directions, and reviewing information when needed.

PROGRESS REPORTING AND ASSESSMENT

Reporting about students' progress, their successes/achievements, and their areas for growth is an ongoing process that reflects our faculty's deep and genuine understanding of students as individuals and as learners. Assessment occurs regularly on a formal and informal basis, providing evidence of each student's understanding and informing next steps. Communication with parents is of the utmost importance. The classroom teacher, who also serves as the student's advisor, is the parents' first line of communication. Advisors contact parents on a monthly basis to share students' successes and discuss any concerns about students' academic and social-emotional growth at school. In addition, two scheduled conference days, one in the fall and one in the spring, provide opportunities for more in-depth conversations about students' progress. Flexible use of a student-driven digital portfolio tool for teaching, learning, feedback, and assessment gives parents another window into their child's work and growth over time. A summative written comment from advisors is available to parents through Veracross at the end of the school year. Additionally, at the end of the child's work in a term or terms with an Encore teacher, parents will receive communication from the Encore teacher summarizing the child's progress.

EXTENDED ABSENCE POLICY: HOME STUDY AND TUTORING

Should a student experience an extended absence from school, MKA faculty, under the supervision of the Co-Directors, provide assignments for the student. MKA faculty members complete the assessment of work assigned on a Home Study. The Co-Directors must also approve any policy exception. A student absent from school for an extended period of time for medical reasons may be eligible to apply for home tutoring support through Essex County Educational Services. A doctor's note verifying the diagnosis and estimated length of absence must accompany an application for tutorial support. Tutors may not be available in all disciplines. When available, county educational services may provide tutors for two hours each week per discipline for a maximum of 60 school days. In the event of a lengthy medical absence—generally exceeding 60 school days at one time or in aggregate—a student may be asked to withdraw from MKA. The Co-Directors will consider cases on an individual basis.

EARLY CHILDHOOD: PRE-KINDERGARTEN

Pre-kindergarten is a time for young students to explore, discover, theorize, and revise their thinking based on new experiences. Rooted in the Reggio Emilia philosophy of early childhood education, students' creativity and teachers' guidance make anything possible.

Students learn through a curriculum that develops creative and analytical thinking through hands-on projects and active discovery. Through wonder and observation, students are inspired to ask their own questions and form (and revise) their own hypotheses as they learn. The Pre-K program fosters the development of the child in a holistic sense—emotionally, socially, physically, and intellectually—and creates the foundations for children to view learning as an exciting journey through life.

MORNING MEETING

The Pre-K classroom is a vibrant setting that engages students, both socially and academically. Each day begins with a class Morning Meeting (see description in the Primary School overview). Focus on greeting one another respectfully includes using a friendly tone of voice and establishing eye contact, foundations for positive social relationships. Because Pre-K is students' first exposure to Morning Meeting, this routine is important for helping students to feel that they are part of a classroom community and have a voice within it, and it gives them practice with their listening and speaking skills. As students read and reflect on a morning news message and a question during Morning Meeting, they practice literacy skills to develop phonemic awareness, including sight words, letter-sound correlations, beginning word sounds, and rhymes. Teachers and student volunteers use a pointer to touch each word as the class reads the morning message in unison. Counting the number of days they have been in school reinforces math skills.

REGGIO EMILIA-INSPIRED PROGRAM

The MKA Pre-K program is inspired by the beliefs and practices of Reggio Emilia schools. The Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education originated in the town of Reggio Emilia, Italy after World War II. In this approach, young children are active meaning-makers who learn from hands-on experiences in their learning environments and express themselves in many different ways. The approach is student-centered; students ask questions, explore, and drive their own learning while teachers support their growth through provocations of questions and materials. Children learn in relationships with one another, with their teachers, and with their environment. Relationships are the focal point around which curriculum develops as the children's ideas drive the direction of their learning. The classrooms each have their own *atelier* and *piazza* space for the students to work and play. These are important Reggio Emilia-inspired classroom spaces in which teachers provide provocations to inspire students, and students take initiative for their learning as teachers guide them. The *piazza* is a space that offers a blank slate for creativity and innovation, so it reflects students' learning in ever-changing ways. For example, it can be a laboratory where students explore light and shadow or a place where children construct and build. The *atelier* is the "artist's studio," a quiet, separate place where students can work individually on a specific, innovative project. These flexible spaces provide limitless opportunities for students to imagine, explore, and create to learn.

BALANCED LITERACY

The Pre-K language arts curriculum is designed to facilitate children's active involvement in meaningful language experiences, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing, with the overall goal of building positive attitudes toward self, language, and literacy. Our Pre-K literacy program is based on research from Teachers College, Columbia University, and sets the stage for children's literacy growth as they move through the Primary School.

ORAL LANGUAGE

Oral storytelling and the development of oral language are foundational skills for children's further development as readers and writers. The teachers model oral language by verbalizing their thought processes and, at the same time, gently challenging the children to explain their own thinking. The teachers also model appropriate social language, which helps children to build skills as they learn to negotiate peer relationships. Throughout their day, children build oral language skills as they play, speak in Morning Meetings, confer with teachers, narrate wordless picture books, and tell stories about themselves from photographs and drawings.

READING EXPERIENCES

Pre-K children engage daily in shared reading experiences with picture books, poetry, chants, songs, and rhymes. The reading aloud of big books and charts/songs with enlarged, repeated text familiarizes students with left-to-right progression and establishes familiarity with repeated words and phrases. Students join the teacher in choral reading of the text over several readings, using pictures and words to make meaning. Reading the story, chart, or song repeatedly builds a repertoire of sight words that students recognize as they "read" independently.

"Hug a Book" time promotes a love of books and learning by encouraging students to choose picture books or simple texts to explore independently, with a friend, or within groups based on their interests. Teachers read with students and talk with them about their books. Students may retell the story using picture cues, gestures, and familiar phrases (as they have been taught to do in class), or by recognizing some of the familiar words in the text. During "Hug a Book," students may focus on learning how to handle books, use basic print features, and read pictures carefully. Rereading beloved texts builds fluency and children's identity as readers.

Daily read-aloud experiences of timeless picture books also develop children's love of stories and the written word. Students gather on the carpet as a community of readers to explore storylines, characters, and setting. Children learn various ways to interact with stories as teachers read aloud, and the stories provide a springboard for social-emotional learning and conversations. For example, through reading the picture book *Anansi the Spider*, a work from the MKA Core, students learn the importance of virtuous behavior, the value of making friendships, and the significance of making responsible choices. Comprehension and meaning-making are always at the forefront of children's early reading experiences. Children learn to make predictions and connections and to retell stories as they develop foundational skills for lifelong reading.

STORYTELLING AND WRITING

Through daily storytelling time, students develop their voices and become the authors of many different kinds of stories. Because children develop early writing skills at their own paces, maintaining their confidence and love of writing is the ultimate goal. In the Pre-K program, children first learn to illustrate stories with increasing amounts of detail and describe their illustrations with rich oral language. They progress through well documented, developmental stages of writing development: from writing scribbles and letter-like formations, to labeling pictures, to writing in phrases and eventually sentences as they progress through the Primary School. Teachers guide and support children's growth as writers by coaching them to progress individually through these developmental stages. Students' writing also represents a growing knowledge of letter/sound representation. Children use their "best guess" spelling to capture their ideas on paper—beginning developmentally with initial letter sounds, adding final consonant sounds, and finally considering middle vowel sounds. In particular, students are encouraged to match their "words" to the illustrations that they depict. As teachers confer with students about their writing to help them grow, students come to appreciate being the authors of their own stories and often volunteer enthusiastically to share their drawings and writing pieces with an audience.

NAME STUDY

This part of the balanced literacy program in Pre-K sets the foundation for reading and writing in a playful way. It is an organic, personal way to learn about each other while also learning the letters of the alphabet, noticing their shapes and sounds, and building an awareness of syllables. The name study unit, called “Making Friends with Letters,” engages students joyfully with learning and with one another. Students become personally invested in learning about what they notice in the letters and sounds of their names and their classmates’ names. This unit also serves as a warm up for the literacy work students will later do in kindergarten.

MATHEMATICS

As they begin the *Everyday Mathematics 4* curriculum, Pre-K students investigate a variety of materials and manipulatives as they engage in concrete, hands-on experiences at learning centers and in small group activities. By providing a stimulating environment and encouraging students to ask questions, teachers help students to discover mathematical relationships and practice problem solving in classroom situations. Continuously developed and reinforced through the class’s thematic studies, targeted math skills include number recognition and beginning numeracy, including one-to-one correspondence; beginning addition concepts; shapes; patterns; and graphing. In addition to hands-on and integrated math learning, students also use iPads to practice math concepts through games that track their skills and development and provide teachers with important assessment feedback.

SOCIAL STUDIES AND PRE-K/THIRD GRADE BUDDIES

Students explore social studies connections in many ways, including experiences in social-emotional learning and diversity and inclusion, community engagement projects, and sustainability. For example, students make an effort to reuse classroom materials and recycle when possible, helping them to care for the planet and to develop individual responsibility.

Each Pre-K child is assigned a third grade buddy. Pre-K children enjoy the opportunity to learn from third grade role models, and third grade students develop leadership and mentoring skills as they work with younger students.

This year the goal is to connect the Pre-K and third grade students using technology in the classroom. Being able to have Google Meets with their buddies will give the students an introduction to their buddy so that a connection can be made. The students will also be given the opportunities to draw pictures or write letters to their buddy so that the relationship can be fostered. This way, Pre-K and third grade buddies can safely get to know one another without additional exposure.

CHOICE

The layout of the Pre-K classroom complements the curriculum and invites students to make choices and pursue interests that promote their learning. Students have the opportunity to explore a variety of materials, organized into centers, sensory tables, blocks, and technology. Focus tables that present new activities include exercises in letter recognition and sound-letter correspondence, science explorations, book center, and other specific materials to explore in connection with their interests.

In addition, students use iPads at different points in the day to reinforce skill development. Students can choose from a variety of iPad applications that allow them to practice targeted literacy and math skills. In addition, students can use the iPads generatively to take pictures and videos that document their projects and creations.

WORLD LANGUAGE

Pre-K students are engaged in an age-appropriate language experience, and acquire the Spanish language by first and foremost listening to their world language teacher. The teacher provides input that is comprehensible to the students, using high frequency words and expressions with demonstrative gestures, as well as visuals and props, to tell students a variety of stories. The stories are based on books, videos, and on the students themselves. Students also acquire the Spanish language throughout the year through a variety of songs and a lot of TPR (Total Physical Response).

LIBRARY

Through the use of song, rhyme, read-alouds, and art, Pre-K students are immersed in a wonderful world of books. Students learn how to care for library books and how to distinguish between authors and illustrators, and fiction and nonfiction texts. Students further develop literacy skills by making predictions, adding text to wordless picture books, retelling stories, evaluating illustrations, creating their own stories, and comparing and contrasting similar picture books. They are also challenged to make personal connections to characters in books. When appropriate, the library curriculum connects with the Pre-K curriculum to help reinforce the skills being learned in the classroom.

FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS

A wide range of developmentally appropriate fine and performing arts opportunities promotes development of self-awareness, self-esteem, self-discipline, confidence, cooperation, and motivation for our youngest artists.

DANCE

The Pre-K dance curriculum is Reggio Emilia-inspired and integrated with the classroom curriculum. Students use the Reggio language of dance to explore pathways, patterns, relationships, and shape. In keeping with the MKA Primary School Belief Statements, students learn by inspiring creativity and risk-taking, and they explore their limitless potential.

MUSIC

Students learn music through the Kodaly and Orff methods. They learn to clap and tap basic rhythms of music with instruments. Pre-K students also learn to chant simple rhythmic lyrics. Students also listen critically to music and become adept at identifying instruments and genres of music to perpetuate a lifetime love of music.

VISUAL ARTS

In art class, Pre-K students are challenged to observe the world around them: to look closely and to identify parts, including lines, shapes, colors, and textures. They learn technical skill, design knowledge, and personal expression while exploring the inner world of self, and the world of others, through their artworks.

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The primary goals of Pre-K Health and Physical Education are developing gross motor skills and non-locomotor and locomotor movements. At this grade level, students are introduced to basic spatial relations and awareness. To better develop an understanding of spatial relations, students learn to change direction, dodge and flee, and stop and start in multiple directions.

Students practice skipping, galloping, and hopping in many creative and engaging ways. They work on balance and on tracking and catching large objects, such as scarves and yarn balls.

Health instruction is taught in 4 units in Pre-K. Unit One is Healthy Body/Body Awareness; Unit Two is All About Me: Healthy Mind and Feelings; Unit Three is All Around Me: My Family, Friends and Community; and Unit Four is All Around Me: My Environment.

EARLY CHILDHOOD: KINDERGARTEN

In kindergarten, students build on their Pre-K experiences and continue to learn through exploration and creativity as well as through Reading, Writing and Math Workshops. Academic and social/emotional learning are equally important cornerstones of the curriculum, each providing essential opportunities for students to flourish. Learning is an inviting and collaborative process in the kindergarten classrooms, whether students are gathered for a mini-lesson or working with partners. Students continue to ask their own questions and to revise their thinking as they encounter new ideas and develop the confidence and skills to express them—orally, in pictures, and in writing. They continue to cultivate their content knowledge and their own interests as they explore their classroom environment, rich in materials and manipulatives that encourage experimentation and learning.

The Reggio Emilia-inspired approach to teaching and learning that begins in Pre-K is an integral influence and inspiration in the kindergarten, early childhood experience. Kindergarten “classrooms” utilize flexible indoor and outdoor spaces for students to explore materials, notice details, hypothesize, wonder, and question. Project-based learning is designed to reflect children’s curiosity and interests and provides opportunities for passionate, interdisciplinary, and in-depth learning as students develop as readers, writers, and mathematicians.

COMMUNITY, CHARACTER, AND SOCIAL STUDIES

Students enthusiastically begin each day with a class Morning Meeting (see description in the Primary School overview). As part of their Morning Meeting routines, they practice good communication skills, including making eye contact, speaking clearly for others to understand, demonstrating mutual respect, and fostering friendships. Morning Meetings support one of the main goals in kindergarten: to place each child on a path toward becoming an independent learner and ethical citizen who is part of a learning community.

Developing good character is a primary focus of Morning Meeting and is carried throughout the school day. With MKA’s Character Standards as a guide, students discuss how to be responsible for belongings and classroom materials, respectful of one another and their environment, and friendly to all. Through these conversations, teachers partner with students to help them develop the habits of good character.

Integral to the fabric of the kindergarten classroom community, teachers write students “love notes” to recognize them for something special that they did or accomplished during the school day. When students gather at the end of the school day, teachers read a few love notes aloud to the class. Over the course of the year, all students receive several love notes that celebrate anything from hard work on their writing to a favor they did that demonstrated friendship.

Kindergarten students begin the year with an emphasis on establishing their classroom as a collaborative, interdependent community. The small and large group activities that are woven throughout the day offer opportunities for students to get to know their classmates as they collaborate on projects and engage in activities that develop mutual respect.

Throughout the year, students ask “What makes me, me?” This guiding question both shapes the social studies curriculum and integrates all disciplines. Repeated inquiry and varied exploration to answer this question help children express uniqueness, appreciate differences, and see themselves within their home environment, their school community, and the world around them. Throughout the year, each student will be showcased as “Cougar of the Week.” This is an opportunity for the students to share unique qualities and about themselves and their family and to celebrate the individuality of each child.

In social studies, kindergarten students explore elements of the MKA community that bond the members of MKA’s three campuses. Using the Primary School belief statements as their guide, teachers help students to understand the core values, themes, symbols, and language that are common threads throughout the tri-campus community. First, students learn about the Primary School campus through a name study of both the campus itself and its mascot. A guided tour of the Primary School reveals the people and places that are important to this campus. The second half of the year is dedicated to learning about the physical characteristics of the three campuses. Students explore how the Primary School fits into the MKA community and how the MKA community fits into the Primary School. The curriculum is supported through exploration and reflection times and links closely and intertwines with writing and reading lessons. The children will end the year with the completion of a nonfiction book that is all about an aspect of MKA, partnering with the librarians to complete this project.

READING AND WRITING WORKSHOPS AND PHONICS

Units of study in both Reading and Writing Workshops, as well as formal instruction in phonics, begin in kindergarten. Students engage in reading and writing through read-aloud, shared reading, interactive writing, word study, literacy centers, and Reading and Writing Workshops. Students develop their literacy skills as they encounter literature from a wide range of genres, including fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Songs, charts, rhymes, and word play provide a variety of skill development opportunities for students to learn about phonemic and linguistic patterns. Students explore spelling patterns and help to create a word wall that they can reference.

Reading Workshop or literacy centers involve half of the class at one time for focused reading instruction and students conferring about reading with their two classroom teachers. Formats include a short, teacher-focused lesson and students working on their reading individually or with a partner. This time may also be allocated to a read-aloud or word study. Students have individual book bins that they stock with short texts that match their reading level—typically texts with easily recognized words, repeated words, picture support, and simple story lines. As students read, teachers assess individual progress and offer small-group or individualized instruction based on needs.

The units of study in reading are:

- We are Readers!
- Readers Use Superpowers: Reading with Print Strategies and Sight Word Power
- Bigger Books, Bigger Reading Muscles
- Becoming Avid Readers
- Nonfiction Reading

By year's end, students have developed the stamina to read or spend quiet time with a book for more than 15 minutes.

During Writing Workshop, students explore many purposes for writing and use their writing process to better understand themselves and their world. They plan their writing, experiment with many genres and styles of writing, build upon what they already know, strengthen their individual voice in their writing, and see themselves as writers in a writing community. Students share and celebrate their writing in group meetings and in informal and formal gatherings.

The units of study in writing are:

- Launching Writing Workshop - Labels, Pictures, and Storytelling Language
- Show and Tell: From Labels to Pattern Books
- How-To Books: Writing to Teach Others
- Persuasive Writing of All Kinds
- Nonfiction Research and "All About" Writing

Students also learn to add explanations, stories, directions, or other written text to their projects and choice time discoveries. Clipboards are placed strategically around the classroom to encourage students' writing for their own purposes. Students may display this writing for others to see and can return to it to revise or extend their written work.

In addition to the units of study, kindergarten students write responses to literature and also write notes and letters to one another and members of the school community on a regular basis.

The kindergarten phonics curriculum supports students in learning to read and write. Through songs, chants, rhymes, games, play, and explicit instruction, the phonics program aligns with Reading and Writing units of study and helps students to transfer the skills they learn across the day.

The units of study in phonics are:

- Making Friends with Letters
- Word Scientists
- Word-Part Power
- Vowel Power
- Playing with Phonics

MATHEMATICS

The mathematics curriculum is purposefully integrated throughout much of the school day. Kindergarten students participate in differentiated extension activities where they engage in guided math explorations, ongoing assessments of skills development, and practice with the previous day's concepts. Guided explorations allow students to experience hands-on practice of math skills and numeracy concepts that prepare them for first grade mathematics. Following table time, students experience further exposure to math skills and concepts through meaningful Morning Meeting shares, activities, and messages. Through *Everyday Math 4* students begin to recognize patterns by learning about the daily routines. Students deepen math literacy skills within the context of maintaining a daily calendar, observing and graphing the weather, taking the temperature, understanding schedules, and conducting surveys. Students also learn methods of data collection and interpretation. For example, they learn to create and read bar graphs that represent information about class members and their interests. These graphs become a foundation for conversation about their community throughout the school day. Targeted math skills and concepts are presented through whole group mini-lessons followed by partner work and independent practice. Mini-lessons provide instruction and hands-on learning experiences with addition, subtraction, word problems, measurement, classification, and geometry. Careful and regular teacher observations help guide teachers to differentiate the math activities based on students' understanding of concepts and development of skills.

SCIENCE

Kindergarten teachers collaborate with the science teacher to integrate scientific concepts into the kindergarten curriculum, and students visit the science room for science instruction. Building off the kindergarten guiding question of "What makes me, me?," students investigate how organisms are similar and different. Later in the year, kindergarten students consider answers to the question "How can I explore my world?" as they learn about and use their senses and discover some of the many tools scientists use in their work.

WORLD LANGUAGE

Students continue to acquire the French language through comprehensible input in an environment where the language is used during +90% of the class time. The world language teacher continues to provide input using high frequency words and expressions, storytelling based on books and videos, a variety of songs and a lot of TPR (Total Physical Response). New students joining students who have had a previous World language experience in Pre-K have no trouble in the World Language classroom as the teacher provides input that is comprehended by all students at all time. In kindergarten, students start to develop their speaking skills at their own pace.

LIBRARY

Kindergarten students continue to explore the world of literature through the use of songs, rhymes, read-alouds, and art. Students review library procedures and book care, and the selection of just-right books expands to include students' self-assessment of their purpose for reading. Read-alouds reinforce students' exploration of literary elements, such as character, plot, and setting. In-depth study of the works of celebrated authors and illustrators serves as inspiration for students to create their own stories. Students begin to learn the tools of research and are challenged to find answers to their questions using new resources and strategies.

FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS

DANCE

In dance class, students focus on patterns and pathways as they develop their movement skills and begin to understand dance sequences. Students work to create patterns, using shapes and “space stations” that mark locations on the floor, and then dance the pathway that they have created. Dance vocabulary includes directional terms such as “around,” “between,” “through,” “over,” and “under,” and students practice related skills. Dance supports gross motor skill development through work on gallops and skips as well as jumping and hopping. Listening to a variety of music with different rhythms and instruments, students learn to vary their movements. A wide variety of music is used throughout the year to expose the students to different cultures.

MUSIC

In music class, students expand their understanding of basic rhythms using “ta” and “titi” for quarter and eighth notes. The rhythms are printed on flash cards with symbols that represent notes. The students clap and tap the rhythms, which are also written on charts to accompany vocal pieces. Students continue to learn simple vocal pieces for mastery and sing remotely. As part of the MKA Core, students explore Camille Saint-Saëns’ *Carnival of the Animals*, a musical suite that portrays the movement and idiosyncrasies of animals in a zoo through orchestral instrumentation. Through their study, students hear fine music, learn to listen critically, and begin to develop a lifetime appreciation and love of music. Kindergarten students also play the xylophones and are exposed to a simple musical scale to develop their music reading skills.

VISUAL ARTS

In art class, students are introduced to a range of artistic methods and materials. Students are encouraged to approach each assignment with imagination and creative interpretation. They are taught to consider purposeful arrangement of elements to create visual order in their work. Through experimentation, students learn that good design does not depend on adhering to a formula, but rather on observation and experience. Formal principles of organization (balance, contrast, unity, pattern, rhythm) are emphasized. Expectations for skillful execution and the proper use and care of tools and materials help to ensure the success of all work.

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Kindergarten students develop the fundamental motor skills and knowledge that form the foundation for later sports, games, and physical activity. The physical education curriculum has a strong emphasis on the development of fundamental motor skills and movement concepts. Fundamental motor skills and activities such as throwing, catching, running, and jumping are an essential part of class time. The development of these skills are critical to enable students to progress in sports and games.

Kindergarten Health instruction is taught in 4 units. Unit One is Healthy Body/Body Awareness; Unit Two is All About Me: Healthy Mind and Feelings; Unit Three is All Around Me: My Family, Friends and Community; Unit Four is All Around Me: My Environment.

LANGUAGE ARTS: GRADES 1-3

Through the language arts curriculum, students learn to read for meaning and to communicate effectively in written and oral discourse on their way to becoming lifelong readers and writers. They engage daily in the foundational processes of reading, writing, speaking, and listening through a workshop approach, devised and refined from decades of educational research at Teachers College, Columbia University. This approach allows teachers to focus on individual growth and address students' immediate needs through targeted skill development. The classroom environment fosters not only the development of good reading and writing habits, but it also helps to nurture students' love of both reading and writing. Through conferring on their work, students receive immediate feedback from the teacher and one another to guide their skill development and to improve as readers and writers.

READING WORKSHOP

During daily Reading Workshop, students learn through the modeling and practice of literacy skills, such as analyzing word and text structure, questioning to comprehend, and predicting and revising thinking. Students self-select books of different fiction and nonfiction genres at their developmental reading level; read individually, with a partner, or in flexible groups; and discuss what they have read during conferences with teachers and peers. Students keep track of the books they read, which helps teachers monitor reading progress and set reading goals.

The rich format of daily Reading Workshop includes a variety of structures to support students' development of reading stamina, reading rate, and application of comprehension strategies in both fiction and nonfiction. Reading Workshop time begins with a focused mini-lesson on a specific skill or strategy, often to address a particular genre of text (e.g., biography or mystery). Students then practice the skill in their independent reading. As students read, teachers circulate around the classroom, observe, confer with students, and record observations that can help to inform the feedback they give each student to guide next steps in comprehension development. At times, students engage in partner reading—a favorite time that provides the opportunity to buddy with a classmate, read together, and discuss the reading. Reading partnerships enrich conversation and ideas about the elements of the genre students are reading and allow teachers to understand more about students' growing comprehension as they listen to students' conversations. Small-group, teacher-guided reading offers students additional, targeted skill development in a flexible group setting based on a particular, identified need. Reading Workshop comes to a close with the class gathering together to reflect on their reading as they raise questions, share thoughts, or note observations. At times, students may work in centers during Reading Workshop to reinforce fluency skills, using the classroom iPads to record and replay their reading, or participate in a skill-building game. Reading celebrations honor the completion of a unit of study (typically a genre study). Students may dress up as a favorite character, act out a favorite part of a book, or read with a partner an excerpt from a book that they found funny, compelling, or engaging as a reader.

To grow as a reader, a student must read books at the appropriate independent level. Teachers partner with students to help them select just-right books of high personal interest, that can be read with few mistakes at an appropriate reading rate, and that a student can retell with appropriate details from the story line. Students seek books that inspire them, with characters that they care about and themes they can relate to and learn from. In their reading logs, students record the books they are reading and the number of pages that they read each night. These reading logs provide information about students' stamina and fluency. Through continual observation of students while they are reading and frequent individual conferences to better understand their preferences and skill development, teachers guide students to books that they can engage with and that will help them grow as readers. Sometimes, teachers encourage students to experiment with authors or genres that they would not have explored on their own. In addition, periodic, specific assessments of each student's growth in accuracy, reading comprehension, and fluency help teachers to tailor their book recommendations for students. Over time, students develop independence in the use of the classroom library, make independent book selections, and read in a variety of genres. As the students' fluency and comprehension increase, students progress from easy readers to simple chapter books and then to more complex material.

READ-ALOUD

Reading aloud to students is an integral part of the daily curriculum that exposes students to beautiful, rich language and story lines at text levels beyond those they can read independently. The read-aloud selection may be a picture book or a chapter book, both of which provide shared opportunities for students to learn about story structure, character development, and setting. Discussions of the author's craft influence students' independent reading selections and experimentation with their own writing. Reading aloud also provides essential opportunities to model fluent reading and develop background knowledge and listening comprehension. In addition, the shared experience of listening to a read-aloud helps to foster classroom community.

READING ASSESSMENT

Informal and formal assessment takes place throughout the year and directly informs reading instruction, both individually and in physically distanced groups. Teachers' targeted conferring with students takes place during daily Reading Workshops and immediately informs not only tailored instruction but also developmentally appropriate goals for individual students. In Pre-K and kindergarten, the primary reading assessment tool is Marie Clay's Concepts About Print, which measures alphabetic knowledge and beginning phonics skills as well as understanding of page format. In kindergarten through third grade, the Teachers College Benchmark Assessments provide information on students' growth in accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. All assessments help to identify each student's reading needs and next steps as a developing reader.

WRITING WORKSHOP

The goal for Writing Workshop is for students to develop both their voices and their writing skills as they learn to express themselves and communicate through writing in different genres and formats, both fiction and nonfiction. During each unit of study, students choose their own, genre-appropriate topic and develop their own voice for a writing piece. For example, students engage their imaginations as they write fiction pieces; they reflect and "zoom in on small moments" as they write personal narratives about little things that have been important in their lives; and they act as experts when they write nonfiction pieces about something they know well or have researched and feel passionate about. As practicing writers and editors, students also develop a command of the mechanics of language, including grammar, syntax, and spelling. For each writing genre, students complete full cycles of the writing process. They gather, nurture and develop ideas, write multiple drafts—revising each time—and edit a final draft to create a published piece for an audience. During publishing celebrations two times per year, students share their writing in a particular genre with an audience of peers and special friends.

Each day, Writing Workshop begins with a mini-lesson that focuses on the elements of a given writing genre and models a related strategy or skill. Teachers draw upon read-alouds and other shared reading experiences to model and celebrate the craft of writing for their students—often targeting a specific element of the text or a specific skill for students to develop. Together, the class might examine the elements of a story (from beginning, middle, and end to character and conflict development) or the elements of a how-to book with an emphasis on breaking down instructions and writing for an audience of novices. Once they have been exposed to such a targeted lesson, students immediately set to work applying that understanding or skill in their work on their own writing piece. Students confer with their teacher and their peers throughout Writing Workshop to receive feedback on their piece in progress and then work diligently to incorporate that feedback into their writing. Teachers use these conferring opportunities to assess individual needs and guide students to improve their writing skills. Students learn to self-assess their work and partner with their teachers in setting goals for revision.

Integral to students' development of their writing is the Writer's Notebook. A tool for leading a "writerly life," the notebook is a place for students to gather ideas, observations, memories, and dreams. Students sometimes share their notebook entries with their teachers and peers. Students may choose an entry as a seed or a catalyst for a piece of writing that they will develop during Writing Workshop. Sample work collected in a writing folder demonstrates the student's development as a writer. The teacher and the student assess the folder together, and students learn to understand their own growth and define goals for future writing pieces.

PHONICS AND WORD STUDY

The study of phonics, vocabulary, spelling, and grammar is derived from students' daily reading and writing and becomes part of all written activities within the classroom. Students are encouraged to apply their knowledge of spelling patterns and rules in their writing. When they want to spell a word that is particularly challenging for them, they are encouraged to independently use their "best guess" spelling—writing letters to correspond with the sounds they hear in words—which also supports their development of sound-symbol awareness as readers. Word study offers students the opportunity to explore spelling patterns in connection with the phonetic elements of language and to manipulate word features. *Units of Study in Phonics* from Teachers College, Columbia University, provides an engaging, research-based foundation for instruction in kindergarten, first, and second grades. Best practices in word study instruction, drawn from the programs *Words Their Way* and *Sitton Spelling and Word Skills*, provide a well-researched basis for instruction in third grade. As a class, students are encouraged to play with words to build both spelling and vocabulary skills; they examine common language patterns and brainstorm words that fit a particular pattern, note similarities among the words, and make generalizations. Word games also inform their understanding of spelling patterns. Lists of high-frequency words are integrated into classroom routines and serve as resources for students as they write. As students encounter them, high-frequency words and pattern words are added to the lists throughout the year. Teachers evaluate students' spelling for continuous growth through developmental spelling assessments and through students' writing. The results of spelling assessments help teachers to develop differentiated instruction so that students progress through the developmental spelling stages and feel confident with spelling independently. Of course, word study also helps students to increase their reading fluency as it supports growth in recognizing sight words.

Word study additionally provides a foundation for students to examine and apply their developing knowledge of grammar and usage in their writing. As students focus on word patterns, they also address patterns of language. As they proofread for spelling, they learn to edit for usage, grammar, and syntax. This close attention to language and how it works helps students to become more creative and polished writers. Students' writing increasingly incorporates longer and more varied sentences that use word choice and punctuation to guide the reader and support voice. At the same time, these skills help students to become more engaged and careful readers, who are able to interpret the author's voice and make more nuanced meaning of their reading.

CLASS PLAYS

This year due to COVID-19, student performances must be adjusted. In a typical year, students in kindergarten through second grade perform in a play each year, and third graders collaborate to create a third grade capstone experience that is presented to the community. Presenting and acting on stage helps students to develop confidence, take risks, and work together, and these opportunities help them to develop effective leadership skills. This year due to COVID-19, student performances will be adjusted and students will work on these skills in their classrooms. Kindergarten students will not have a class play this year and will practice the important skills they would gain in a play production, such as confidently speaking and presenting, within their classrooms. In grades 1 and 2, students may develop small vignettes in classrooms that may be filmed to share with parents. In grade 3, students may share their writing about the Best Parts of Brookside, and this may be filmed to share with parents.

HANDWRITING AND TYPING

Students develop their handwriting skills using D'Nealian style print that easily transforms to D'Nealian cursive writing as students move through second grade. Because Primary School students still write most of their pieces by hand, D'Nealian is practiced through the act of writing on a daily basis. Specific instruction in letter formation is supported by a D'Nealian practice book beginning in kindergarten.

Toward the end of third grade, students are introduced to basic keyboarding skills through practice in *Typing Training*, an online program that provides immediate feedback through exercises and games. Students begin to learn about hand positioning, posture, and key recognition on the keyboard. These skills help to prepare students for the fourth grade when they will have their own laptops as part of MKA's 1:1 Laptop Learning Initiative.

FIRST GRADE

READING WORKSHOP

First grade is an exciting year for students as they gain competency in reading. Immersion in a literate environment allows students the opportunity to dive into books and to explore a wide range of literary genres. Students enjoy daily read-alouds, including picture books, chapter books, “big books,” and books projected on a screen so the words are easily visible for students. Sharing books with enlarged print invites students to read along with the teacher and encourages risk taking. These shared reading experiences give students the opportunity to get lost in the world of stories and to develop their own passion for independent reading in books of their choice. (See the Reading Workshop description in the Language Arts section overview.)

During Reading Workshop, mini-lessons focus on the major elements of each genre studied. In a whole group setting, mini-lessons high-light a specific skill and strategy, and students are then asked to practice the skill in their just-right books independently. Through these mini-lessons, students increase sight word recognition, develop decoding skills, and improve fluency, all of which empower students on the journey to comprehending increasingly complex texts.

The classroom library is a welcoming feature of each classroom. Students explore the classroom library to “shop” for just-right books with teacher guidance. They hold five or more just-right books in their personal book bins on a weekly basis, as well as personal book choices of varying levels. Students confer individually with their teacher about their reading and are coached while they read their just-right books. During a conference, teachers might ask students to read a small section of their just-right book aloud to monitor reading fluency, sight-word growth, and phonics knowledge and to gather data to inform instruction. Additionally, one-on-one conversations and conferences promote students’ talking about their reading and help to reveal students’ growth, thinking, opinions, reading preferences, and challenges. By mid-year, students are expected to have developed the stamina to read quietly for at least 20 minutes in their just-right books.

Intended first grade units of study in reading include:

- Building Good Reading Habits
- Word Detectives
- Learning About the World: Reading Nonfiction
- Readers Have Big Jobs to Do: Fluency, Phonics, and Comprehension
- Meeting Characters and Learning Lessons: A Study of Story Elements

WRITING WORKSHOP

In first grade, Writing Workshop focuses on both the craft and the mechanics of writing. As first grade students craft their own writing pieces, they often start with pictures and simple text and progress to more complex and lengthy writing with illustrations. A wide variety of read-alouds provides first grade students with immersion in a literature-rich environment. Students grow in their ability to write fluently as they become more skilled readers who understand the elements of a story. Children’s literature is often used to examine the development of a story. Established authors and familiar stories are used to support students as they develop voice and craft their own writing. These mentor texts provide students with examples of how to convey a story with structure, focus, and guiding transitions. As students develop longer drafts, they learn to revise their work and how to use editing strategies, such as revision strips and carets. These techniques encourage students to make significant changes to their writing that help to clarify ideas and engage an audience.

Intended first grade units of study in writing include:

- Small Moments: Writing with Focus, Detail, and Dialogue
- How-To Writing
- Nonfiction Chapter Books / “All About” Writing
- Writing Reviews
- From Scenes to Series: Writing Fiction

PHONICS

Word study and phonics are yearlong foci in first grade, and the phonics units are linked with the reading and writing units. Through these related units, students develop a deeper understanding of the connections between spelling, reading, and writing. Teachers use the *Units of Study in Phonics* from Teachers College, Columbia University, to support spelling and phonics skills development. The phonics lessons are engaging and joyful, and children are active participants in their learning. Lessons are designed to support learning in fun and meaningful ways. Students become “word detectives” as they study spelling patterns and sounds. Students begin the year using approximate spelling because it allows them to write their thoughts fluently and demonstrate their phonemic understanding. This natural developmental stage leads to conventional spelling, given time and instruction. First grade students develop their ability to read and write a list of high-frequency words that grows throughout the year.

Intended first grade units of study in phonics include:

- Talking and Thinking About Letters
- The Mystery of the Silent E
- From Tip to Tail: Reading Across Words
- Word Builders: Using Vowel Teams to Build Big Words

SECOND GRADE

READING WORKSHOP

In addition to ensuring that students acquire the appropriate reading skills and strategies, the goals of reading instruction in the second grade classroom are to make reading an enjoyable part of students’ lives and encourage students to become lifelong readers.

Reading instruction in second grade builds on skills and strategies taught in first grade to further develop reading comprehension, phonics mastery, and critical thinking skills through reading both fiction and nonfiction texts. During Reading Workshop, teachers focus mini-lessons to model effective, genre-specific reading strategies and to reinforce and extend more complex phonetic skills. (See the Reading Workshop description in the Language Arts section overview.)

Reading aloud to second grade students is an integral part of the curriculum because it exposes them to beautiful language and writers’ craft at text levels beyond those they can read independently. This exposure is important to students as developing readers and as young writers who often seek to imitate and experiment with authors’ voices and styles. During the discussions of read-aloud books, students not only learn more about the author’s craft, but they also examine story structure and story elements and discuss helpful comprehension strategies. Read-aloud selections are often connected to themes the class is exploring.

Teachers use the information that they gather about their students as readers during reading conferences and through more formal reading assessments to guide second grade students to self-select just-right books. Teachers are continually assessing not only students’ reading comprehension and fluency, but also their accuracy and strategies for solving words and monitoring meaning. Teachers continually monitor students’ progress and look to ensure that students are selecting the next level of appropriately challenging books to ensure growth into reading more complex and nuanced texts.

Students are encouraged to share their interpretations of the books they are reading to motivate readers to deepen their comprehension through conversation.

Anticipated units of study in the second grade reading curriculum include:

- Second Grade Reading Growth Spurt
- Becoming Experts: Reading Nonfiction
- Accelerating Readers’ Growth in Longer Fiction Books
- Bigger Books Mean Amping Up Reading Power

Independent reading is part of both Reading Workshop and nightly routines. During Reading Workshop, students build their stamina to read with engagement and comprehension for increasingly longer periods of time. Students read for a minimum of 15 minutes every night as part of their nightly routine. As the year progresses, students are asked to do some writing about their reading to convey their thinking and comprehension.

WRITING WORKSHOP

The goal for Writing Workshop is to empower second grade writers with a voice to enhance their self-expression and a confident command of the mechanics of language. Students keep writing folders to collect and generate ideas for writing topics. They expand selected topics through the steps of the writing process to produce published works, which they celebrate after each unit of study. Second grade students learn to revise and edit their writing for correct use of capitalization, end punctuation, word choice, and spelling. Students' individual writing folders help both teacher and student to track writing growth over time.

Students continue to write in many of the same genres that they did in first grade, including small moments, opinion writing, and fiction. Second grade units of study deepen students' understanding of how to further develop their thinking and writing in these genres.

The anticipated second grade writing units of study are:

- Lessons from the Masters: Improving Narrative Writing
- Nonfiction Writing: Writing Nonfiction Books and Writing for an Audience
- Poetry: Big Thoughts in Small Packages
- Realistic Fiction

PHONICS

To become effective readers and writers, second grade students engage in phonics lessons to further enhance their phonetic development. They learn to apply phonics principles to polysyllabic words and to increase their accuracy in the conventional spelling of high-frequency words. Proofreading for correct spelling becomes an even greater focus as they edit their writing pieces.

Anticipated second grade phonics units are:

- Growing into Second Grade Phonics
- Big Words Take Big Resolve: Tackling Tricky Words
- Word Builders: Construction, Demolition, and Vowel Power

THIRD GRADE

READING WORKSHOP

In third grade, Reading Workshop intentionally strengthens and reinforces reading routines to enhance independent reading of just-right books and encourages reading for both meaning and pleasure. Third grade students are taught how to use reading tools, such as post-its, to keep track of plot and character and read more deeply into texts. Teachers encourage students to use these tools and to make them part of their reading habits. Students practice critical thinking skills as they learn to infer about characters and plot, and they practice identifying evidence to support the predictions and inferences they make from their texts. To expand their thinking about the books they are reading, students engage in "book talk," which promotes deeper understanding through sustained conversation and collaborative thinking with their peers. In addition, students learn to write about their reading thoughts. (See the Reading Workshop description in the Language Arts section overview.)

Students' ongoing work as readers informs teachers about their progress and potential next steps. Students record their progress in reading logs, which provide the teacher with valuable information about stamina and engagement in reading. During Reading Workshop, teachers observe students reading and confer with them about the progress they are making, the strategies they are using, and their comprehension. Based on all of the information they gather, third grade teachers tailor daily mini-lessons to address targeted skills for reinforcement or to provide appropriate challenge. As third grade readers, students are expected to build and maintain their reading stamina to read for 30 minutes during Reading Workshop and to read for a minimum of 15 minutes per weeknight.

Read-alouds continue to be important in the curriculum. Picture and chapter books are often used to model reading strategies and skills and to expose students to vocabulary-rich language.

The reading units for third grade include:

- Building A Reading Life
- Mystery: Foundational Skills in Disguise

- Reading to Learn (Nonfiction Reading)
- Character Studies
- Research Clubs: Elephants, Penguins, and Frogs, Oh My!
- Social Issues Book Clubs

Formal and informal assessment takes place throughout the year and directly informs reading instruction, both individually and in groups. In addition to targeted conferring with students on their independent reading during Reading Workshop, the Teachers College Benchmark Assessments provide information on students' growth in comprehension, fluency, and accuracy.

WRITING WORKSHOP

For third grade students, Writing Workshop focuses heavily on honing craft in the revision process and on developing skills for editing effectively and independently. As students become more familiar with a variety of literary genres, they explore and experiment more with the elements of those genres and make connections with their personal writing. Through read-aloud books, mini-lessons, and models of effective writing, teachers help students to explore and understand the differences between narrative and non-narrative writing. In particular, third grade students focus on using effective hook sentences and adding colorful details to stretch their explanations and enhance evidence-based writing. In writing small moments or fiction, they additionally focus on including realistic dialogue and building tension.

Understanding and knowing how to speak to an audience are primary considerations in the revision process. Opportunities for feedback are embedded throughout the curriculum. Students are taught a repertoire of editing strategies and are encouraged to edit their writing daily.

Integral to the development of writing in third grade is the Writer's Notebook. Because writers learn to write by leading a "writerly life," students are encouraged to develop the writing habit of using their Writer's Notebooks to record observations and thoughts. Students often share their notebook entries during class; this allows them an audience for even the "seeds" of their writing. These notebook entries then become the catalysts for longer writing pieces that students produce as parts of the third grade units of study, listed below:

- Crafting True Stories
- Changing the World: Persuasive Speeches, Petitions, and Editorials
- The Art of Information Writing
- Once Upon a Time: Adapting and Writing Fairy Tales
- Best Part of Brookside: A Third Grade Memoir

The MKA Writing Challenge (described in the Academics section of the MKA website), an assessment for learning given in the spring, helps MKA to better understand students' writing skill development.

WORD STUDY

As part of word study, students continue to engage in inquiry and exploration of written language to enhance comprehension and spelling strategies. Beyond phonetically based spelling patterns, they go into greater depth in their study of word transformations to examine suffixes, possessives, plurals, and nonstandard spelling patterns. Reading and spelling multisyllabic words becomes an important focus in third grade. An understanding of syllabication helps students to decode and to spell multisyllabic words. Students are expected to know and be able to spell correctly in their writing a significant number of high-frequency words. Word study skills and spelling strategies are mixed with vocabulary learning throughout the year. New words that students encounter in their reading, writing, and spelling become the focus of vocabulary study.

SOCIAL STUDIES: GRADES 1-3

While the Primary School curriculum at all grade levels and in all areas provides an understanding of the global community, students begin their social studies explorations with concepts of individual identity, celebrating the uniqueness of each child. Students' exploration of individual development and identity is supported by MKA's Diversity and Inclusion Statement of Purpose, Character Standards, and Social-Emotional Competencies. Students engage in discussion to explore the meaning behind holidays and observances that honor their own cultures as well as historical events and leaders known as models of good citizenship.

Through their growing understanding of similarities and differences between themselves and others among various communities and cultures, students develop an appreciation for what it means to be a caring citizen. Students consider their responsibilities and their impact in their school community in context such as service and sustainability and make connections to how their actions can affect the wider world. In addition, students continue to learn about the power of their own voices by exploring the ethics and moral responsibility inherent in effective communication, particularly with the use of technology tools. Social studies provides an opportunity for students to engage in research skills, such as questioning, exploring, evaluating, reflecting, solving problems collaboratively, and sharing their findings in meaningful ways.

FIRST GRADE

Students begin the year with Responsive Classroom activities to create a lasting sense of classroom community. Friendship, inclusivity, and citizenship are key components of this first unit. Students explore the idea of community through the creation of classroom rules and discuss the importance of rules, values, and responsibilities. The MKA Character Standards — which encourage community members to be respectful, friendly, responsible, confident, temperate, fair, informed, and honest — are woven throughout the curriculum and revisited in teachable moments daily.

Students also participate in a yearlong study of community, first exploring the MKA community and then taking an in-depth look at the components of a town, using Montclair as a case study. They learn that a community shares resources, maps, institutions, and services that meet the needs of the people. As part of first grade's core work, students engage in a study of Virginia Lee Burton's book, *The Little House*. Through this study, first graders learn about their connection to nature and the towns and cities around them. This classic book enriches the first grade's social studies focus on community and town, providing opportunities for discussions about change, curiosity, growth, and values.

SECOND GRADE

The second grade social studies curriculum focuses on the themes of rights and responsibilities, MKA Character Standards, identity, and the state of New Jersey. Students begin the year by exploring the classroom as a community of learners with individual strengths and shared responsibilities. Together, they collaborate to write their own classroom rules as they consider how the actions of the individual affect the community. Students learn about the shared values of the entire MKA community via the MKA Character Standards. Through books read aloud, students explore these ideas of strong character and learn the value of being part of our thriving community.

Through their study of identity, students examine themselves as individuals via their own unique traits. Students also learn the value in understanding that there are parts of themselves that other people can see and parts that are hidden from immediate sight. Together, students examine the definition of identity and read picture books to deepen a broader view into a variety of different perspectives. Through the terms *mirror*, *window*, and *door*, students learn that books can serve as reflections of our own experience or gateways into other, diverse experiences.

Finally, students focus on the geography and other unique aspects of our state of New Jersey. Beginning with an investigation of maps and the role they play, students learn cardinal directions and other elements of maps such as keys and legends. With New Jersey as the focus of their study, students explore bordering areas, landforms, water, bridges, and major towns. Students explore types of communities, such as rural, suburban, and urban, and the locations of these communities throughout the state.

THIRD GRADE

The overarching themes for third grade social studies are identity, citizenship, global awareness, and social action. Lessons in American history and geography, as well as discussions of current events, support students' understanding of the importance of common values. The year begins with community-building lessons, discussions, and activities that foster classroom relationships. Each student explores facets of their personal identity and is challenged to understand how identity shapes his or her perspective of the world. The second half of our identity unit focuses on the development and acknowledgement of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination. Discussions focus on how to take appropriate action when you see or hear something that is hurtful to someone's sense of identity.

During our second unit on citizenship, students explore concepts of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship with a special focus on voting in the United States. Students engage in lessons and discussions that will help them understand voting as both a right and responsibility within a democratic society. Attention will be given to how voting rights have changed over time, as well as the procedural aspect of voting and elections in the United States.

In the second half of the year, students engage in a study of the United States of America with a special focus on Migration, Communities, and Culture. Students discover how each state contributes to our diverse nation. The last unit of the year focuses on building an awareness of how students' personal and collective actions create positive change in their communities.

MATHEMATICS: GRADES 1-3

Students gain an understanding of and increased comfort with mathematics through daily, hands-on learning tasks that actively engage students' interests and sharpen cognitive skills through collaboration, independent work, problem solving, and inquiry. The *Everyday Math 4* curriculum, developed by the University of Chicago School Mathematics Project, provides the basis for the Primary School math program. It reflects the most recent findings in math education research and provides a developmental structure that progresses from concrete to representational to symbolic/abstract. Students master skills and concepts as they move through the spiraling curriculum that repeats applications of the same material at more advanced levels throughout the year and from year to year. Computational fluency practice provides students with opportunities to think like mathematicians while strengthening their number sense and deepening their understanding of underlying mathematical concepts. Learning tasks differentiated to meet students' learning needs help students extend their thinking by asking and attempting to answer not just "what?" but also "how?" and "why?". As they explore math in the context of other disciplines through measurement, graphing data, and geometry, students see connections between the math skills they are learning and their everyday lives. Estimation, patterning, probability, and problem solving further increase the development of critical thinking processes that students need to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

Typically, Math Workshop begins with a mini-lesson in which teachers demonstrate a new skill or concept for students and provide opportunities for guided practice as a class. Then, students practice the new skill or concept independently or with a partner, depending on the needs of the students and the learning objectives for the lesson. Teachers often form small groups for reteaching a specific concept or for stretching students through enrichment. These groups change according to students' needs with regard to each new concept or skill.

In addition to the *Everyday Math 4* resources, teachers skillfully enrich math lessons to further reinforce the curriculum and challenge math learners with explorations, games, books, and projects created by a variety of experts in math education. Through materials and activities that allow students to discover and understand mathematical concepts, students participate actively in experiences that foster creativity, curiosity, insight, abstract and quantitative reasoning, and problem solving while developing fluency with mathematical language. Students gain a solid background in arithmetic, geometry, algebraic reasoning, measurement, and mathematical inquiry. To support students' learning progress, teachers model mathematical thinking, encourage students to use representations to build their mathematical understanding, foster collaboration to promote learning, and require students to apply their understanding independently. Activities are rooted in real-life situations and problems. Students in Pre-K through grade three are introduced to thinking like a computer programmer as they prepare for and participate in the nationwide Hour of Code.

Children deepen their understanding of mathematics and practice reasoning skills through *Everyday Math 4* Open Response and Reengagement lessons. Day 1 of these two-day lessons provides the opportunity for students to solve a challenging problem that involves more than one possible strategy or solution. On Day 2, students reengage with the problem by examining and discussing their own and other students' solutions to deepen their understanding of the mathematical content and practices involved. Students then revise their own work from day one of the lesson. They draw upon their mathematical understandings, ask good questions, and communicate their mathematical thinking.

Students increase their computational fluency through practice and review to develop skills through traditional methods, such as computation sheets, practice using fact family flashcards, hands-on explorations, and games. Students' progress in acquiring basic skills fluency is continually assessed, and instruction is appropriately adapted to meet the needs of students at varied developmental levels. To enhance skill development through practice with immediate feedback, children use technological tools, such as the calculator, iPad, and laptop, when appropriate. Students can also access *Everyday Math 4* resources online for further information and practice.

FIRST GRADE

Students learn new skills and concepts and further develop, at a greater level of mastery and understanding, many of the skills that are taught in kindergarten. Emphasis is placed on growing numeracy, including developing number sense, counting, and related patterns; learning fact families to support addition and subtraction; and understanding both place value and part-to-whole relationships of equal shares (fractions). Frequently, students play games, explore and manipulate math materials, and solve problems to demonstrate their understanding and ability to apply mathematical concepts. Teachers vary these activities to match first grade students' developmental levels. As students delve into problem solving, they learn how to identify problems and use a variety of mathematical representations, such as diagrams, tally charts, and tables, as organizational tools to support logic and to solve problems. Students often create products that range from pattern art composed of basic shape blocks to graphs of data collected from their classmates.

Students engage in some of the following mathematics units of study during their first grade year:

- Counting
- Addition (one- and two-digit)
- Subtraction (one- and two-digit)
- Place Value and Comparisons
- Attributes of Shapes
- Geometry (one- and two-dimensional shapes)
- Telling Time on an Analog Clock
- Equal Shares (Fractions)
- Mental Arithmetic
- Number Stories
- Open Response Number Problems

SECOND GRADE

Second grade mathematics ensures that students attain greater mastery and fluency of basic addition and subtraction skills, at the same time that it develops greater understanding of concepts and more varied approaches to solving real-world problems. Students develop math reasoning through game playing, math manipulatives, and written work. Developing mental math and estimation skills is an additional focus.

Students build on their understanding of many concepts learned in first grade. For example, students expand their exploration to include three-dimensional shapes and gain deeper understanding through comparing, drawing, and reasoning about shapes. They also explore the concepts and mathematical vocabulary of size, directionality, and location. Students learn to write “number sentences” (equations) as mathematical models for number-story problems. Further work with place value evolves using base ten blocks as students experience addition and subtraction with larger numbers. As foundations for multiplication and division, students create arrays, form equal groups, and write number models to represent them. They explore multiplication by using repeated addition, arrays, and skip counting, and develop a beginning understanding that division is the concept of creating equal groups and equal shares. Second grade students learn the partial sums and expand-and-trade subtraction algorithms to add and subtract double-digit numbers. Calculator use helps students to extend their manipulation of numbers beyond their developmental ability.

Work in math stations and on projects also provides students opportunities to explore concepts and practice skills through hands-on engagement or through computer or iPad use. These experiences allow students to make choices, explore interests, and practice their math reasoning.

Unit tests and regular assessments of basic addition and subtraction fact knowledge, as well as more informal, ongoing assessments, help to guide instruction. Educational technology resources allow students to demonstrate and share their critical thinking with teachers and peers. Students save and curate their individual and group work in their own portfolios.

The anticipated units of study in second grade include:

- Establishing Routines
- Addition and Subtraction Fact Strategies
- Addition up to 4 Addends
- Place Value and Measurement
- Whole Number Operations Number Stories (Addition and Subtraction Algorithms)
- Comparison Number Stories and Interpreting Number Stories
- Measurement and Data (Inches/Yards and Centimeters/Meters)
- Geometry and Arrays
- Equal Shares (Fractions)
- Open Response Number Problems

Nightly *Everyday Math 4* Home Link assignments are intended to provide review and practice with concepts and skills learned in class. Second grade students are also expected to practice basic addition and subtraction facts for five minutes each weekday to build math fact fluency.

Teachers assess students' mastery of skills through unit assessments and ongoing assessment of fact fluency in addition and subtraction. Teachers also gather information about students' skill mastery through observing their work in math stations and through students' periodic self-assessment of their own progress.

THIRD GRADE

In Math Workshop, children refine mathematical skills in measurement and problem-solving applications as well as in geometry, where they explore more sophisticated symmetry concepts and work with perimeter and area. An introduction of algebraic concepts and reasoning becomes more distinct with activities involving missing addends; missing factors; parentheses; and the recognition of square numbers, attributes, and function rules. More work with grouping further refines multiplication and division concepts in solving real-life problems. Students learn that division is the inverse operation of multiplication and work to develop proficiency with multiplication facts.

The following are anticipated units of study in third grade math:

- Math Tools and Time (Bar Graphs)
- Multistep Number Stories and Number Models for Two-Step Number Stories
- Fractions (Comparing Fractions, Equivalent Fractions, and Fractions in a Number Story)
- Multiplication and Division
- Multi-digit Multiplication
- Operations (Number Sentences with Parentheses and Order of Operations)
- Geometry (Area, Perimeter, Line Plots)
- Elapsed Time
- Measuring to the Nearest $\frac{1}{4}$ Inch
- Open Response Number Problems

Because fact fluency is an important skill for learning higher-order math, continued practice with math facts and playing related games at home are strongly encouraged beyond the nightly *Everyday Math 4* Home Link. Once students have mastered the concepts of a given operation, they practice several strategies for remembering the related basic facts. Unit tests assess progress and understanding of the concepts studied, and teachers also periodically assess fact fluency.

SCIENCE: GRADES 1-3

Science classes meet in the science room, where students develop an awareness that science involves a continuous process of discovery to generate solutions for everyday life and to find answers to the great mysteries of the universe. Students' observations and experiences with everyday phenomena comprise a foundation for understanding scientific concepts. As a result, the science program provides students with experiences that engage them in the practice of science and engineering, promote early literacy in those areas, and help them construct an accurate understanding of scientific concepts.

Designed to stimulate students' curiosity, the program encourages students to explore the broader spectrum of science, including basic concepts of life sciences, physical sciences, and Earth and space sciences. Within this context, students learn about their human footprint and explore scientific concepts in relation to sustainability and conservation. Studying science as inquiry, students learn beginning science process skills, such as questioning, ordering, measuring, observing, and collecting data and explaining its significance. They engage in laboratory experiences, outdoor exploration, and multi-media experiences. Hands-on laboratory activities provide students with opportunities to undertake their own investigations while they learn the experimental process and learn to think like a scientist. Collaboration and reflection not only help students to better understand scientific concepts, but also help them to develop a sense of cooperation and responsibility in problem solving. Opportunities to collaborate, problem solve, and share thinking occur through grade-level-appropriate projects.

Students keep a science notebook where they use their growing scientific vocabulary to record observations, questions, measurements, comparisons, and interpretations. Notebooks also help students develop the habits of titling, dating, and numbering their notebook pages; writing about what they see using numbers and measurements; making and labeling detailed drawings; and writing or drawing reflections or questions.

FIRST GRADE

Students explore the role of a scientist as they engage in experiments that provide them with opportunities to undertake their own investigations while they discover some tools of science. They record their observations and take notes in their science notebooks. As they use their senses to explore their world, make observations, and formulate testable questions, students are introduced to the concept of a fair test. Each classroom exploration begins with a question that the students answer through experimentation, discussion, data collection, and analysis. Students consider how simple machines help with work, investigate light energy, explore weather and weather patterns, and discover plant life cycles as they investigate seeds.

SECOND GRADE

Students further develop the inquiry skills of questioning, ordering, measuring, observing, and collecting data. They record the results of experimentation in their science notebooks where they work to explain the significance of the data that they collect. Students expand their understanding of a fair test as they begin to formulate their own experiments. Through studying animals and their habitats, students learn how organisms adapt to their environments and how they react when their environments change. Using their imagination, they design and create an animal with at least two physical and behavioral adaptations. Students explore balance and motion and investigate properties of matter.

THIRD GRADE

As they explore Earth and space sciences, students research Earth's place in the universe, study space exploration, and engage in various experiments to understand the principles of flight. Students continue to develop their inquiry skills as they observe, over time, the characteristics of arthropods, including structure, function, behavior, basic needs, and growth. Students synthesize and interpret their scientific observations as they develop an understanding that plants and animals within an ecosystem are dependent on each other. The students research various ancient and modern day inventions from all around the world and engage in interactive and creative learning to refine their problem solving skills. They engage in various STEM challenges and design and construction projects to understand the engineering design process.

WORLD LANGUAGES: GRADES 1-3

Introduced to either French or Spanish in Pre-K, students continue their study through third grade. Teachers make the language comprehensible to all students through a variety of strategies while using the target language the majority of the time. Much like babies and toddlers learning languages from their parents by hearing it spoken aloud repeatedly over time, Primary School students acquire world languages by listening and understanding before they are able to speak. Although students generally develop listening and reading (receptive language) skills in the target language before speaking and writing (productive language) skills, their language acquisition journeys are developmentally unique according to their learning styles. In addition, language students further develop cross-curricular skills, such as concentration, listening, oral expression, vocabulary development, logical thinking, classifying, predicting, collaborating, and problem solving. Teachers aim to build children's confidence and love of learning, with the ultimate goal of communicating in a supportive, positive, and engaging learning environment.

FIRST GRADE

First grade students further develop listening comprehension. They are introduced to beginning reading skills through exposure to text containing familiar material, often in the form of stories previously comprehended by the students through a variety of activities, such as theater, "Movie Talk," "Picture Talk," or "Listen and Draw." At their own pace, students start reading and communicating by answering questions, chorally or individually, and by using familiar expressions to make requests and statements. A variety of tools help students to acquire language. The most important tools are visual clues on the walls, which consist mostly of frequently used written vocabulary and expressions.

SECOND GRADE

Students focus on developing the skills of listening comprehension and speaking while increasing proficiency with beginning reading and writing skills. Through a variety of stories, games, songs, TPR (Total Physical Response) and many more activities, students acquire new vocabulary and expressions. At their own pace, students start reading individually and communicating by answering questions, individually or chorally, and by using familiar expressions to make requests and statements.

THIRD GRADE

Third grade students work continuously to strengthen and expand upon their target language acquisition skills of listening comprehension, reading, speaking, and writing. New content is introduced orally, with gestures and visuals for support, and is reinforced in different contexts through storytelling using a variety of tools. Third grade students are gently led to start writing, often by responding to a visual prompt, using the language they have acquired and the visual clues provided by the teacher.

LIBRARY: GRADES 1-3

The librarians collaborate with classroom teachers to instill in students a love of reading and to provide them with an integrated and interdisciplinary information literacy curriculum. The library program aims to enhance students' appreciation of literature as a way to transport them to an entirely new world where their imaginations can run wild. At the same time, the library program is designed to support students' development of many literacy skills taught in the classrooms. For example, library classes provide a rich learning environment for students as they participate in storytelling and making connections to literature. Students express new understanding through the writing process and visual literacy activities. Using a variety of print and digital resources, students access information, synthesize what they learn, and demonstrate their understanding.

Students explore a wide variety of literature through song, rhyme, read-alouds, and art that bring stories to life. Learning about the library's collection and how it is organized supports students in developing strategies for independently selecting books to check out and take home. Varied resources, including audiobooks, ebooks, and electronic databases, accommodate different interests. The library's information literacy curriculum plays an essential role in preparing MKA students to thrive in today's rapidly changing world.

FIRST GRADE

First grade students explore storytelling and discover the elements of story by creating their own characters, settings, and plots in library. As students grow as readers, an emphasis is placed on identifying books that are a good fit for each student. Students are encouraged to consider their purpose in selecting a book. Students learn how books are made, and the parts of the book, then explore the elements of non-fiction books, such as the table of contents and index.

SECOND GRADE

Students begin using MKA's online library catalog and learn the skills necessary to find and identify appropriate library materials to take home. Students build upon their research skills by learning how to safely use online sources to locate new information. Students explore Kamishibai, a traditional form of Japanese storytelling and create their own Kamishibai story.

THIRD GRADE

Third grade students become independent library users as they learn how the library is organized and expand their searching skills. During a mock Caldecott Award unit, students explore how illustrations support the meaning in picture books as they evaluate four potential Caldecott nominees and articulate an argument for why their choice should win the award. Students continue to develop research skills as they learn about the importance of considering sources of information and why it is important to appropriately give credit when using another's creative work.

FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS: GRADES 1-3

Students gain interpersonal skills and self-confidence as well as an appreciation of the arts from their earliest years at MKA. The art program strives to increase students' ability to understand and describe the visual world around them. MKA's encompassing arts curriculum focuses on both content and skills and cultivates an independent and lifelong curiosity and a love of learning. Students are encouraged to use the art room as a place for creative thinking and problem solving. Children's classwork in the arts is closely connected to the learning they do in their other classes. Through their study of the arts, students expand their communication skills and develop a range of tools for exploring all areas of learning. Each year, students apply acquired art knowledge and skills in dance, music, theater, and the visual arts and celebrate their growth in productions and exhibitions, including classroom plays, musical and dance performances, and an annual art show that transforms the gymnasium into an art gallery.

DANCE

In dance class, students explore movement through exercises and imagery that create an awareness of how body parts move through space. Students develop a love of learning and an appreciation of dance through the opportunities they have for exploration and creative expression as they study dance. They experience freedom and joy of movement in a supportive atmosphere. Dance gives children a forum to develop social and emotional skills as they take risks, solve problems, and work together to find success.

Students are exposed to specific content that focuses on the elements of dance: space, time, body, and energy. They engage in self-assessment, group assessment, and observation to support their growth as dancers. Students develop their basic, gross-motor skills of jumping, galloping, skipping, and hopping and stretch them to become dance steps. Using imagery, they transform themselves into many things, including drifting leaves, kings, or frogs. They create interesting forms with their bodies while exploring their relationships to others and learn the difference between symmetrical and asymmetrical shapes. Students learn increasingly complex pathways, patterns, and sequences throughout the year. Creative movement engages the mind in ways that require innovative problem solving and analytical reasoning. Dance supports students' development of self-esteem and confidence in their ability to express themselves as they stretch their imagination and creativity. Striving for excellence, practicing discipline, and achieving self-confidence are part of every class.

FIRST GRADE

Students combine their movement skills with proper terminology. They learn modern dance vocabulary as they increase their skills and complete simple dance phrases of their own. Through study of *The Nutcracker Suite*, part of the MKA Core, students learn about Tchaikovsky and Balanchine and learn specific ballet steps and dances adapted from Balanchine's choreography. They learn to create their own dance phrases by learning "four sets of four." Initially, students learn a dance move that they associate with a chosen animal and become that animal for four counts. Then, they create a sequence of four different animals, each associated with its own dance move for four counts. Once they have mastered the sequence of movements, they plan how to use the space and their relationship to each other to choreograph a short dance phrase.

SECOND GRADE

Students continue to work on the fundamentals of dance movement with a focus on space, rhythm, energy, and line. They are exposed to Labanotation (a system of symbols for recording movement) and explore movement while working toward finding their own style. Students learn eight basic Laban symbols, including symbols for "travel," "freeze," "grow," "wiggle," "turn," and "twist." Students experiment with different movements and sequences, exchange ideas, and notate a short dance using these symbols. This new "language" not only allows students to create their own dance sequences that they can return to over time, but it also helps them to understand that their dances can be shared and performed by others.

THIRD GRADE

Students explore a variety of movement phrases throughout the year. In their “A Dancer to Know” study, students look for examples of canon, isolation, element of surprise, and dancing in unison when they view a few dances choreographed by Bob Fosse and Alvin Ailey. Inspired, students then create their own 16-count dance phrase incorporating two of the elements they identified, and eventually incorporate all four elements into a 32-count dance phrase. Throughout the year, students exchange ideas and compromise while choreographing their dances. As they work to achieve their goal, students use skills of cooperation, creative problem solving, and discipline. Their dances demonstrate their ability to take risks and present a cohesive dance piece with the skills they have mastered. Their final dances reflect increased confidence with movement and their own bodies.

MUSIC

Through their study of music, students develop an appreciation of many musical styles, learn songs from around the world, and learn to express themselves in multiple mediums. They learn to understand music, listen critically, and incorporate feedback into their performance. In music class, each student experiences both vocal (remotely) and instrumental music. Students explore the basic elements of music and rhythm using the approach of Carl Orff, who believed that “feeling precedes intellectual understanding.” The Kodaly method, complete with hand signals for pitch that students can follow, helps to focus instruction on particular pitches that are common to music from around the world and that children can hear and distinguish easily. Ringing the choirchimes and handbells not only helps students to learn to read music, but it also helps them to appreciate harmony and performing in a musical ensemble.

Students in first grade learn to develop music reading skills through playing xylophones and glockenspiels. Second and third grade students continue to develop music reading skills through ringing the choirchimes and handbells. Third grade students learn to read music through the study of Baroque recorders.

FIRST GRADE

First graders look forward to playing beginning handchime and handbell music. Playing primary-level xylophones, glockenspiels, and metallophones with the musical staff and a note in letter form printed on each bar reinforces note recognition. First grade students are introduced to reading music through musical games and learning to play their assigned handbell. Each handbell player has a partner who assists with reading the notes and provides feedback on appropriate entrances. Through the chords that they play collectively, students are exposed again to the concept of harmony.

SECOND GRADE

Through their work with handchimes and handbells, second grade students learn basic orchestration techniques at the same time that they continue to practice the MKA Character Standards in caring for their materials and collaborating with one another. As they explore harmony and chords, students develop more sophisticated music skills. They also learn performance strategies that build self-esteem and poise as confidence in their skills grows. In second grade, students focus on learning to read music on the staff. In addition, students learn the theory of written music and musical terms, such as treble clef, musical staff, whole note, quarter note, half note, eighth note, and rests.

THIRD GRADE

Handbell and handchime stations provide further opportunities for third grade students to develop communication and cooperation with their partners. Students expand their knowledge of musical terms as they learn more written music theory, including terms for dynamics, such as piano (soft) and forte (loud). In third grade, students continue to learn to play the Baroque recorder and incorporate fingering and breathing techniques as they reinforce their skills in reading recorder music. The program is supported by an interactive, digital version of *Be a Recorder Star* (www.bearecorderstar.com), the method book used in class. It features animations, play-along accompaniments, rhythm charts, music theory pages, and tempo buttons for the student to work at a comfortable pace. Recorder lessons are a starting point for learning the notes of the staff and preparation for playing instruments offered for study at the Middle School.

VISUAL ARTS

The art program is a continuous, sequential program related to design, beginning with simpler skills and understandings and progressing to the more complex. Students are prepared and challenged through a wide range of distinctive artistic experiences. Students begin to develop an understanding of the elements and principles of art through studio experiences that include drawing, painting and mixed media. Problem solving and risk taking promote successful, progressive development of self-awareness, self-esteem, self-discipline, cooperation, and motivation. The breadth of artistic methods and materials introduced during primary school offers the students a solid foundation for more specialized art endeavors. Projects and design problems are targeted to develop students' ability to think critically and communicate creatively at a developmentally appropriate level, including knowledge and skills related to the elements of art; the principles of organization; and the use of art vocabulary, materials, tools, and techniques. As students explore the nature of art as a means of communicating ideas, strategies for building visual literacy are continually brought into focus: looking closely, describing what is seen, making connections to prior knowledge, sharing new information using art vocabulary, and comparing and contrasting to deepen understanding.

FIRST GRADE

First grade students develop increasing flexibility with methods and materials that they encountered in kindergarten. Their comfort with basic media allows them to delve deeper into artistic concepts such as color, shape, and material. Students learn the difference between observation drawing and drawing from their imagination, and use this knowledge to expand on their understanding of different artistic styles and forms. Many of the units are integrated with science lessons, allowing students to strengthen and explore their understanding of scientific skills through creative expression and problem solving.

SECOND GRADE

Second grade art students hone their technical skills while discovering exciting new methods and media. They continue their study of color theory by learning how to mix and identify warm and cool colors. Students expand on prior knowledge as they learn to look, identify parts, describe, analyze, interpret, and judge artwork of their own and of others. The design elements and the principles of organization are reinforced through more challenging studio work geared to sensitize students to the intricacies of visual information.

THIRD GRADE

The third grade year offers challenging studio work wherein students are called upon to apply what they have learned over their Primary School years. Students consider how artists work and think as they discuss their work with others. They are introduced to a variety of artists, and explore the range of methods and materials that artists use for creative expression. Artistic concepts are reinforced and explored in greater detail. Students are expected to expand on skills developed throughout their time in Primary school and create works with ambitious conceptual frameworks.

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION: GRADES 1-3

Health and physical education at the Primary School provides students with the skills and knowledge to live a physically active, healthy life. Students look forward to physical education class and the exposure to the activities provided. All activities are designed to enhance each student's gross motor skills, dexterity, spatial awareness, and the ability to change direction. Areas of concentration include, but are not limited to: upper body development, core strength and development, lower body development, catching, throwing, dodging, fleeing, skipping, galloping, and hopping. Students learn to master these skills in many creative and engaging ways. In addition, students partake in activities to strengthen their balance and coordination. Endurance and lifetime exercise are foci in addition to distance running. Exercise breathing is a technique used to increase endurance and health.

Team concepts and team sports also have a place at the Primary School. Students learn the importance of working together to achieve a common goal. Emphasis is placed on good sportsmanship while students learn how to handle winning and losing games respectfully.

In first through third grade health classes, students discuss the importance of nutrition and hygiene as well as social and emotional health. Students also take part in bullying prevention and awareness.

FIRST GRADE

Students develop personal fitness skills as they learn "exercise breathing" (in through the nose, out through the mouth) and build up to alternately running and walking for a quarter mile. They learn to jump rope (from one to five repetitions) and do multiple sit-ups. They practice jumping over a 12-inch hurdle and changing direction on the 8-inch balance beam. Ongoing emphasis on good sportsmanship focuses, in part, on inclusion in games and activities and supports students' recess play. First grade students love Beanbag Toss, a game that involves beanbags, bowling pins, and two teams divided by a center line. Students slide beanbags at the other team's feet or at the bowling pins that the other team is protecting. Targeting, dodging, and defending skills are the focus. Health topics include a continuing focus on basic hygiene and beginning conversations about healthy eating.

SECOND GRADE

Sportsmanship goals for second grade students include being a good teammate and working toward a common goal, as well as understanding how to win and lose graciously. To support the skills of game play, students work with perimeters and boundaries in sports games and focus on game skills, such as stopping and kicking a moving ball and developing proper throwing mechanics with balls, volleyballs, and Frisbees. Newcombe, the variation of volleyball that involves catching and throwing the ball, is a second grade favorite. With a focus on understanding the importance of lifetime fitness, students learn how to record a resting and active pulse as they increase their stamina to alternately run and walk a half mile. They skip rope for 20 seconds and learn to execute a push-up. Students explore the food pyramid as their health focus during physical education class.

THIRD GRADE

Students enjoy developing skills to support lifetime game play, including striking an object with a bat, hockey stick, or racquet; shooting a basketball; throwing small objects at targets; and passing a ball or object. They are encouraged to apply those skills in working well with teammates and encouraging all team members, regardless of their ability and the outcome of the game. In third grade, students' fitness goals include doing multiple sit-ups and push-ups, skipping rope for one minute, and developing the pacing and stamina to jog or run a quarter mile without stopping. Third grade students are proud of these fitness accomplishments. Understanding the importance of good nutrition is the health focus for the year.

PRIMARY SCHOOL FACULTY

Thomas W. Nammack

Head of School

B.A., Brown University

M.S. Ed., University of Pennsylvania

Karen Newman

Assistant Head of School for Curriculum and Professional Development

B.A., Swarthmore College

M.A., University of Chicago

Ben Goodrich

Associate Director of Curriculum and Professional Development

Director of Educational Technology

B.S., Brown University

M.Ed., Harvard University

Margaret Gonzales

Co-Director, Primary School

B.A., M.F.A., University of Michigan

M.A., Teachers College, Columbia University

Maureen Bates

Co-Director, Primary School

B.A., Boston College

M.S.Ed., University of Pennsylvania

Meg Arcadia

Grade 2

B.A., Sweet Briar College

M.A.T., Manhattanville College

Patricia Bartolomeo

Learning Specialist

B.A., M.A., William Paterson University

Melanie Bieber

Counselor

B.S., University of Maryland

M.Ed., Harvard University

M.Phil., University of Pennsylvania

Grace Bourbon

Full-Time Substitute

B.A., Rutgers University

M.A., Oral Roberts University

Ed.D., Nova Southeastern University

Katherine Caro

Grade 3, Grade-Level Team Leader

B.A., Bucknell University

M.A., New York University

Breanna Conley

Pre-Kindergarten

B.Ed., Boston College

M.Ed., Lesley University

Erica DeTrollo

Pre-Kindergarten

B.A., Providence College

M.A., Bank Street College of Education

Jocelyn Fine

Visual Arts, Fine & Performing Arts Chair

B.A., B.F.A., University of Vermont

M.S., Columbia University

Suzanne Giarrusso

Pre-Kindergarten

B.S., Bucknell University

Crystal Glynn

Library

B.A., University of Denver

J.D., University of Minnesota

M.L.I.S., Rutgers University

Gretchen Ievers

Grade 1

B.S., Bucknell University

M.S., Walden University

Alex Langbein

Kindergarten

B.S., M.A., Springfield College

Jennifer MacQuarrie

Grade 1, Grade-Level Team Leader

B.A., Hobart and William Smith Colleges

M.A.T., M.A., Teachers College,

Columbia University

Caylie Marden

Pre-Kindergarten

B.A., Smith College

M.S., Wheelock College

Erin McMenamin

Grade 2, Grade-Level Team Leader

B.A., Bloomsburg University

M.A., Bank Street College of Education

Huma Niazi

Science

B.S., B.Ed, Jamia University

M.Ed., University of Delhi

Helen Noble

Administrative Team Member & Primary School Educational Technology Coordinator

B.A., Seton Hall University

M.A., Teachers College, Columbia University

John Odell

Pre-Kindergarten, Grade-Level Team Leader

B.A., Syracuse University

Ralph Pacifico

Physical Education/Director of the Children's Sports Program

B.A., University of New Haven

Spencer Pyke

Kindergarten

B.A., Lynchburg College

M.S., Montclair State University

Pablo Rincón

Spanish

B.A., Jersey City University

Dana Rose

Grade 3

B.A., Brandeis University

M.Ed., Cabrini College

Anne-Sophie Roure

French

M.A., University of Strasbourg, France

M.S., Columbia University

Jessica Sarfati

Kindergarten, Grade-Level Team Leader

B.A., Bates College

M.A.T., Montclair State University

Kathy Sasena

Grade 1

B.A., Marymount Manhattan College

M.A., Bank Street College of Education

Michael Sasso

Student Life Associate

B.A., William Paterson University

Karen Schifferdecker

Library/Technology

B.A., Drew University

M.L.I.S., Florida State University

Jane Smith

Music

B.A., M.A., Montclair State University

Sheila Smith

Grade 2

B.A., Roanoke College

Daniela Vespucci

Grade 3

B.A., M.A., Quinnipiac University

Kristen Weaver

Dance, Drama

B.A., SUNY at New Paltz

Jill Wimmer

Reading Specialist

B.A., Brown University

M.A., University of California, Berkeley

Ed.M., Bank Street College of Education



CHARACTER STANDARDS FOR THE MKA COMMUNITY

ALL MEMBERS OF THE MKA COMMUNITY STRIVE TO
ACT, SPEAK AND THINK IN WAYS THAT ARE:

RESPECTFUL

We act with civility in our relations with others while still valuing ourselves. We are conscious of the world around us, and we recognize the worth of all we have and treat it accordingly.

FRIENDLY

We demonstrate good will and compassion in our relationships with others. We understand that in order to have friends we must be friends and treat all with understanding, loyalty and respect.

RESPONSIBLE

We fulfill obligations and complete tasks to the fullest of our ability, and we are accountable members of our community. We volunteer our assistance when called upon and budget our time, efforts and resources sensibly.

CONFIDENT

We uphold a positive image of ourselves regardless of the way others perceive us. We recognize our potential and challenge ourselves to improve the talents and skills we possess. We are able to take pride in our work, while remaining humble and accepting criticism. We express our opinions freely without fear of the judgment of others and always speak up when we see acts of injustice.

TEMPERATE

We balance all aspects of our lives. By devoting personal attention to academics and personal commitments, we maintain moderation. While welcoming relaxation, we exert self-control and strength of will when faced with temptation and challenge.

FAIR

We cultivate an environment where all students may act and speak without the fear of prejudice, intolerance or judgment. We recognize and seek to understand the differences between individuals in the community. While recognizing these differences, we also value the inherent equality among all.

INFORMED

We rely not only on our own experiences to make decisions, but we also actively seek a more thorough understanding of the world. With our knowledge, we envision a more peaceful and empathetic society.

HONEST

We understand the value and necessity of being true to ourselves, as well as others, and we are sincere in words and actions. We take pride in the authenticity of our own work and ideas, and we have the courage and integrity to take responsibility for all of our actions.

