

MONTCLAIR KIMBERLEY ACADEMY



2017-2018

PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM GUIDE

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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. Sitting together in a circle, 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 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 travel throughout the school for their "encore" classes with professionals who are subject-area specialists in world languages (French or Spanish), visual art, music, dance, physical education, and information literacy (library). Students in kindergarten through grade three travel to the science lab for classes with the science teacher. Pre-K teachers collaborate with the science teacher to incorporate scientific investigation into student-driven, project-based learning. 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. By the time students are in the third grade, they use their understanding of geometric shapes and forces and motion to design egg drop containers, respond in the target language during world language class, design original scenery for their class plays, choreograph their own dances for the Third Grade Dance Concert, perform on the handbells, and present their individual research during an inquiry project supported by their work with the librarians.

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 unique products. Technology applications often promote individual growth by maximizing student success and allowing both students and teachers to track progress. In each classroom, iPads often comprise a “station” for student work (a 2:1 ratio in kindergarten through grade 3), and all classes have access to additional iPads for individual student use. Students may choose to use iPads during choice time for exploration or learning extensions, or the teacher may structure an instructional activity around a small group, partner, or individual “station” to target content-specific skills. These experiences build students’ abilities to problem-solve, cooperate, and collaborate. Teachers plan varied learning activities for the whole class that incorporate technology tools to support student learning, curiosity and creativity, capture individual or small group thinking, and provide assessment, reflection, and feedback opportunities. Second and third grade students also have access to laptops with a variety of applications to promote their development of digital citizenship skills and to support individual work on content-specific projects that incorporate brainstorming, researching, and presentation skills.

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 their natural surroundings—a place to imagine, construct, create, uncover, share, 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, where students begin by sharing their work with invited guests and move to small groups and larger audiences. 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. Each class in kindergarten through third grade performs a play for the entire Primary School community. Acting in a play helps students develop their confidence on stage at the same time that it helps them discover their stage voices and the value of elocution—all foundations of effective leadership skills.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Weekly assemblies and special events provide students with many ways to engage with the curriculum outside of the classroom. Students often take an active part in Friday assemblies, and they also learn to be an attentive, participatory, and appreciative audience. Assemblies feature varied and enriching presentations that appeal to third grade as much as they engage Pre-K students. Outside presenters, theater troupes, school-wide concerts, and class plays fill the calendar. Presenters range from Franklin Institute scientists to magicians and performers who support the school’s “We Care” and anti-bullying initiatives. Speakers and performers often share their experiences or help students understand not only diverse holidays and celebrations, but also diverse traditions and customs. Additionally, Upper School students visit to share their talents and expertise.

Special MKA traditions include the whole-school Gathering at the Upper School, the Halloween parade, Thanksgiving Share (where students and faculty share a holiday meal), Grandparents’ and Special Friends’ Morning, Maypole dance (a tradition from the Kimberley School), the Primary School Art Show, Field Day, and the Moving Up Ceremony. The Book Fair, Scholastic’s largest in the country, attracts current children’s authors and illustrators, who speak with MKA students about how they approach their craft. One of the most heralded events of the year, the Book Fair is a whole-school celebration for MKA’s student authors and readers.

FIELD TRIPS

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 service learning experiences. 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. For example, Pre-K and third grade buddies visit a local farm together and gather food to donate to the local soup kitchen. This trip reflects the Primary School's commitment to Integrated Ethics, including service learning, diversity and inclusion, and sustainability, as students learn to understand local community needs and how service can help to address them.

POLICIES

HOMEWORK

Homework serves as a daily reinforcement of key concepts taught in the classroom. It also promotes confidence, responsibility, and independence through mastery, not just of the material, but of oneself. 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

Communication with parents is of the utmost importance, and the classroom teacher, who also serves as the student's advisor, is the parents' first line of communication. Teachers contact parents on a monthly basis to share students' successes and discuss any concerns about students' lives at school. In addition, two scheduled conference days, one in the fall and one in late spring, provide opportunities for more in-depth conversations about students' progress. Parents receive formal progress reports three times each year. Reporting takes the form of detailed narratives on students' academic and social-emotional growth in the classroom and in their "encore" classes. As part of the May progress report, second and third grade students also receive a report on their developing information research skills.

EXTENDED ABSENCE POLICY: HOME STUDY AND TUTORING

Should a student experience an extended absence from school, MKA faculty, under the supervision of the Head of Campus, provide assignments for the student. MKA faculty members complete the assessment of work assigned on a Home Study. The Head of Campus 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 Head of Campus 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.

Classroom space is intentionally designed to provoke inquiry, foster collaboration, and promote student learning. Two important, Reggio-Emilia-inspired classroom spaces are the *piazza* and the *atelier*. In these spaces, teachers provide provocations to inspire students, and students take initiative for their learning as teachers guide them. The *piazza* is a large space that offers a blank slate for creativity and innovation, so it reflects students' learning in ever-changing ways. For example, it may become an ocean during the fish unit and an African savannah during the study of *Anansi, the Spider*. It can also be a laboratory where students explore properties of light, shadow, and darkness during the light unit. The *atelier* is the “artist’s studio,” a quiet, separate place where students can work individually or with a small group of peers on a specific, innovative project. These flexible spaces provide limitless opportunities for students to imagine, explore, and create to learn.

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.

THEMATIC CURRICULUM

The Pre-K curriculum is structured thematically in ways that allow students to explore their world through learning in the core curricular areas of reading, writing, social studies, mathematics, and science. Themes help to structure students' exploration of new materials and ideas. Pre-K themes that inspire students' inquiry and experimentation include social studies themes, such as “All about Me,” and community; science themes, such as fish, color and shape, light, and butterflies; literature themes, including fairy tales, *Anansi the Spider* (part of the MKA Core), and an Eric Carle author study.

The thematic, project-based experiences are Reggio-Emilia-based and thoughtfully planned to consider the age, development, and interests of Pre-K students, who often initiate projects through their excitement, natural curiosity, and questions. For example, the fish theme is fully integrated throughout the curriculum during that unit of study. Students begin by visiting Absolutely Fish, Inc., where they have the opportunity to explore the art and science of freshwater and marine fish and reef aquariums. Returning to the classroom, students use the information they gathered to look closely at a fish skeleton and replicate their observations in a picture depiction. Students' inspirations can determine both learning projects and avenues for research. Student interest in sharks may lead to investigating sharks' size and how many teeth sharks have in order to create a giant 3-D shark to hang from the ceiling. One shark can lead to turning the classroom into a coral reef of various sea creatures that students discover in their research. The classroom water table can also be turned into a fish environment with coral reefs, algae, and play fish that the students delight in exploring. This type of immersion in a thematic curriculum engages students with concepts and helps them to make connections across multiple disciplines.

WRITING WORKSHOP

Through daily Writing Workshop, students become the authors of their own stories and develop their writer's voice. Using illustration, letter strings, and environmental print, they learn to capture details from experiences that are important to them—from their own lives and from classroom inquiry and explorations. Students progress from writing a few words that accompany illustrations to writing three-page stories with a beginning, middle and end, involving characters, problems and solutions. Students' writing represents a growing knowledge of letter/sound representation. Children use their "best guess" spelling to capture their ideas on paper. In particular, students are encouraged to match their "words" to the illustrations that they depict. The teacher scribes the rich oral language and the author's detailed description of the event on the back of the writing piece to ensure that readers can understand the students' writing. As teachers confer with students about their writing to help them grow, students come to appreciate being the author of their own stories and often volunteer enthusiastically to share their writing pieces with an audience.

READING AND "HUG A BOOK" TIME

The developing literacy skills of the Pre-K student are enriched with the daily reading aloud of timeless picture books. Storylines, characters, and setting are explored as students gather on the carpet as a community of readers. 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. The reading aloud of "Big Books" 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. Reading the story repeatedly builds a repertoire of sight words that students recognize as they "read" independently. "Hug a Book" is a time when students select picture books or simple texts to read in a quiet area of the room. Teachers read with students and talk with them about their books. Students may retell the story using picture cues or recognize some of the familiar words in the text. During "Hug a Book," reading experiences may focus on reading print from left to right and understanding the concept of a word. The instruction matches the needs of the child beginning with alphabetic knowledge as the fundamental foundation for building reading skills.

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 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.

SERVICE LEARNING AND SUSTAINABILITY

Beyond the thematic units of study that have significant social studies ties (noted above), students explore social studies connections through service learning and sustainability. Each day, students make an effort to reuse classroom materials and recycle their juice boxes. To help people in need in the local community, they take a trip to a farm to pick vegetables for a Montclair soup kitchen with their third grade buddies. Through these efforts, students not only learn about how food grows, but they also learn about service to others. Past service learning projects for Pre-K and third grade buddies have included weaving baskets out of recycled T-shirts to raise money to benefit a project in their community. Through this effort, students also better understand why it is important to reuse materials, such as the T-shirts, and how their efforts can benefit others in their community. This year's service learning project for Pre-K and third grade buddies is based in nature. Students collect and paint rocks, write encouraging and positive messages on them, and leave them in local community places to bring cheer and smiles to those who discover them.

Pre-K/third grade buddies rotate through three curricular strands throughout the year. The rock project ties into a nature strand, which also includes a visit to Nishuane Park to observe changes in the natural environment. Buddies engage with a sustainability strand, which includes work that benefits the local community. In a seasonal strand, buddy pairs research a North American animal of their choice to understand how it lives in the season of study. They create related artwork and share their research findings with the group.

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, such as creative dramatics, sandbox, blocks, housekeeping and technology. Through these activities, students also develop the important social and academic skill of collaboration. 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 theme. Children may also work on projects of their choice collaboratively— in small groups or as a whole class.

In addition, students use iPads at different points in the day to reinforce skill development. Use of the iPad mobile lab allows each student to 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 that document their projects and creations.

WORLD LANGUAGE

Pre-K students are engaged in learning a world language and culture every day in a six-day cycle. Their world language teacher uses highly demonstrative gestures as well as props to ensure that students can comprehend the message being conveyed with the words and expressions they are hearing and practicing together. World language time is supported through puppet role play, storytelling, movement, games, and songs. Much of the content presented connects to and enriches the Pre-K curriculum.

LIBRARY

Students attend library class once every six days. Through the use of song, rhyme, read-alouds, and art, Pre-K students are immersed in a wonderful world of books. Throughout the year, students learn how to care for library books and how to distinguish between authors and illustrators, fiction and nonfiction. 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. Midway through the year, students are granted the much-anticipated privilege of selecting their own book to check out—sometimes to “read” themselves and sometimes for shared reading with an adult at home. When appropriate, the library curriculum connects with the major themes in 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.

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. During their MKA Core study of Paul Klee, students are introduced to line as the recorded journey of making a mark from one point to another. They learn that, with practice, they can make a line do what they want it to do. This purposeful intent is the essence of art, which makes Klee’s “Taking a Line for a Walk” an auspicious beginning for Pre-K artists and their study of the elements of art.

MUSIC: In music class, students learn to clap and tap basic rhythms of music with instruments. They learn to perform simple vocal pieces as they develop a repertoire of songs that they will perform in the winter and spring concerts. Of equal importance for our youngest singers is learning the poise and confidence that they need to perform on the risers before a gymnasium full of adoring fans. Singing is also an integral part of classroom activities and full-school assemblies. These varied singing venues allow students to practice their songs as they work to memorize the lyrics and sing with heart.

DANCE: The Pre-K dance curriculum is Reggio-Emilia based 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. They dance with painted feet, in a bubble, in the rain, in the sand, and in the dark! Students also transform themselves into a variety of things—from leaves and frogs to kings and queens.

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Students look forward to physical education and the opportunities that it provides them for playing favorite games designed to enhance their gross motor skill development. 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. To develop spatial relations and to learn to change direction, stopping and starting as they run, students engage in favorite games such as Ultimate Freeze Tag, in which students move about the gym with one student freezer and one student unfreezer. The freezer is equipped with an oversized, foam hand, and the unfreezer has an orange, foam ball. The players learn to dodge and flee the freezer to avoid being caught and to relaunch when unfrozen. Developing good handwashing habits is the focus of health conversations in physical education class.

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 “on the carpet” 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 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, 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. Documentation of students’ thinking and learning is integral to both the learning process and assessing students’ growth.

COMMUNITY AND CHARACTER

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. In addition, *The Aesop for Children*, part of the MKA Core, provides an important curricular foundation for students to discuss, explore and role-play fables with moral messages. *The Little Engine that Could*, also from the MKA Core, provides an important focus on perseverance, one of the essential habits of good character that makes good students and good citizens.

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 on the rug at the end of the school day, teachers read a few love notes aloud to the class. By the end of the month, all students have received several love notes that celebrates anything from hard work on their writing to a favor they did that demonstrated friendship. In addition, each student is assigned a week to become the “Cougar of the Week,” the most anticipated week of a student’s kindergarten year. Students take great pride in preparing a poster that presents what is important to them to their classmates.

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?,” a guiding question that 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.

Because studying the world through the lens of belonging to a community is an important social studies concept for kindergarten students, the focus of the curriculum is the school as a community. Students meet with and learn about all of the people who work in the school and contribute to school life, including how each of them helps students. The physical environment of the school is explored in terms of locations and functions.

READING AND WRITING WORKSHOPS

Units of study in both Reading and Writing Workshops 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, poetry, and fables. They engage with print through read-alouds and shared reading. 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
- Bigger Books, Bigger Reading Muscles
- Growing Expertise in Little Books: Reading for Information
- Becoming Avid Readers
- Readers are Resourceful: Tackling Hard Words and Tricky Parts in Books

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:

- My World (Small Moments)
- True Stories
- Memory Books / Reflections
- How-To Books
- Persuasive Writing
- Nonfiction Research

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 to one another and other members of the school community on a regular basis. Perhaps the most active in the Wee Deliver Post Office program, kindergarten students write letters frequently.

MATHEMATICS

The mathematics curriculum is purposefully integrated throughout much of the school day. Kindergarten students begin each morning with “table time” 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* daily routines, students deepen math literacy skills within the context of maintaining a daily calendar, observing and graphing the weather, taking the temperature, telling time, 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 adding, subtracting, solving word problems, measurement, classification, and geometry. Careful and regular assessment allows the teachers to differentiate the math activities based on students’ understanding of concepts and development of skills. Reggio Emilia-based explorations allow for further opportunities for math learning.

SCIENCE

Kindergarten teachers collaborate with the science teacher to integrate science 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 (and people) are similar and different. They also explore some aspects of how the human body works. 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 meet with their world language teacher four days in a six-day cycle, and their class splits in two, so half of the class attends world language while the other half works closely on academic skill building with the classroom teachers. Students continue to engage in world language learning through storytelling, puppet role play, books, gestures, props, movement, games, songs, and rhymes that aid in the development of listening comprehension and communication skills. They review and expand on basic themes introduced in Pre-K, apply vocabulary knowledge in new contexts, and participate more individually. When appropriate, the world language curriculum connects with the major themes in the kindergarten curriculum.

LIBRARY

Kindergarten students continue to explore the world of literature through the use of songs, rhymes, read-alouds, and art. They begin the year with a review of library procedures and book care. Book selection of just-right books now 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. In addition, students work on a research project—both in their classrooms and the library. They explore the format of a nonfiction book, including the table of contents, glossary, and index; utilize new reading strategies to select a research topic; use print and digital resources to obtain new facts; and share their findings through illustrations, writing, and a multimedia presentation.

FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS

VISUAL ARTS: In art class, students consider purposeful arrangement of visual 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 learning to look, experience and notice when it “feels” right. Students complete a painting unit of study designed to reinforce particular color concepts (cool, hot, and neutrals) in mixing and applying paint. Students explore the properties of clay, as well as related processes, tools, and techniques. They make pinch pots and then write “How To Make a Pinch Pot,” much like the how-to book study in Writing Workshop. During a collage study, students look at the work of author/illustrator Eric Carle and discover the techniques that he employed to create his collages. They learn how to create patterned paper from textured materials and how to combine simple shapes to create a larger, cohesive whole. 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.

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 performance. 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.

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. Dancing with ribbons and scarves allows students to experiment with a full range of motion.

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Games in physical education class not only generate excitement for physical activity, but they also provide opportunities for students to engage both as individuals and as members of a team. One of the favorite games in kindergarten is Dog Catcher. Spots on both sides of the gym represent the “dog houses,” the marked destinations. Students must avoid the dog catcher, who tries to tag them as they carefully navigate across the “yard.” This game reinforces students’ ability to dodge, flee, move spatially, and change direction while running; it enhances their ability to “mark” a specific destination as they navigate. Students enhance balance skills by practicing changing direction on the balance beam and use their balance as they practice kicking a stationary ball. Kindergarten students also begin team games, such as soccer, and develop habits of good sportsmanship. Health conversations in physical education class reinforce good handwashing habits and extend the conversation to basic hygiene.

LANGUAGE ARTS

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, participate in a skill-building game, or view a short lesson on BrainPop. 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 reading rate, 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 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 Developmental Reading Assessment 2 (DRA2) provides information on students’ growth in comprehension, fluency, and reading rate. Teachers also use miscue analysis as a formal assessment tool to measure decoding skills and comprehension on a short reading passage. In the winter, third grade students take the Gates-MacGinitie standardized reading assessment, which measures reading vocabulary knowledge and reading 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 piece, students complete a full cycle 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.

Through the Primary School’s yearlong Wee Deliver program, an in-school postal system with the third grade students as the Postmasters, students also practice writing letters using appropriate letter format and “post” their letters to important people in their lives.

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. *Words Their Way* is the research-based spelling and phonics program that informs classroom instruction in kindergarten, first and second grades, and *Sitton Spelling and Word Skills* provides 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. Using the results of spelling assessments helps 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

At each grade level, students participate in the staging and performance of a class play, a highlight of the students' year. They contribute to interpreting the script beginning in kindergarten, and in-depth character analysis provides the foundation for dramatization. Music and dance are integral parts of the performance and help students to tell the story. Frequently, students take creative license as they insert their own voices, perspectives and interpretations into their adaptation. For students, this is an exciting and authentic application of their reading and collaboration skills, and they work hard to bring their story to life in ways that will capture their audience. The skills of listening and speaking confidently for an audience—as well as acting, dancing and singing—are developed through students' involvement in role playing and in shaping the production. With the support of the art teacher and the classroom teacher, students design their own sets and costumes. Students and the teachers who work with them provide each other with continual feedback as they stage the production. A dress rehearsal provides additional audience feedback that students use to adjust the production before performing for the entire Primary School and special guests.

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.

Students occasionally use the laptop computers to assist with planning their writing pieces. Beginning in second grade, students' typing skills grow through practice in *Typing Training*, an online program that provides immediate feedback through exercises and games, and where students and teachers can track progress. Because students enjoy playing the typing games, they get consistent reinforcement for hand positioning, posture and initial key recognition. 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 decoding, which unlocks the world of early readers. Immersion in a literate environment allows students the opportunity to dive into books and to explore a wide range of literary genres, including fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Students enjoy daily read-alouds, which include picture books, chapter books and “big books” with enlarged print that students can follow as the teacher reads. In addition, teachers read *Charlotte’s Web* aloud (part of the MKA Core), and students discuss the complexities of friendship. These shared reading experiences give students the opportunity to get lost in the world of books 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.)

Through Reading Workshop, first grade students develop word recognition and decoding fluency that enables them to comprehend increasingly complex texts in a variety of genres. Specific instruction in phonics occurs during both Reading and Writing Workshops and also as an explicit part of word study. Big books provide first grade readers with a contextual framework for developing phonemic awareness, decoding skills and comprehension. Mini-lessons focus on comprehension strategies involving the major elements of each genre studied—such as setting, plot and character—to provide students with a framework for making predictions and revising or refining their predictions as they read.

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 fluency and comprehension increase, students progress from easy readers to simple and then more complex chapter books. Students grow in their ability to read aloud smoothly and to comprehend what they read silently. By mid-year, students are expected to have developed the stamina to read for at least 20 minutes in their just-right books during Reading Workshop.

Students confer individually with their teachers about their reading; these conversations help to reveal students’ thinking, opinions, reading preferences and challenges. Teachers might ask students to read a small section of their just-right book aloud to monitor reading fluency and to inform recommendations for appropriately leveled books. To promote students’ talking about their reading, teachers might also ask them to retell a section of the text by explaining setting, plot, and/or character; predict what might happen next; or make a personal connection to the text. Students’ answers help the teacher to determine the next instructional steps for each first grade reader.

Small, guided reading groups—formed as the result of conferring with and assessing students as they read—target specific reading skills based on students’ immediate needs. These are flexible groups that change, depending on students’ needs and the skills to be addressed. In first grade, teachers meet frequently with small, guided reading groups to focus on developing specific skills as needed.

Throughout the year, first grade students participate in different units of study in reading, which may include:

- Building Good Reading Habits
- 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
- Poetry

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. The wide variety of read-alouds provide first grade students with immersion in a literature-rich environment that helps them develop voice and craft in their own writing. Students grow in their ability to write fluently as they become more skilled readers who understand the elements of a story and how to convey their ideas with structure, focus, and guiding transitions. As they develop longer drafts and learn to revise their work, they develop editing strategies, including using sentence strips, carets, and rubrics. These techniques encourage students to make significant changes to their writing to help clarify for and engage an audience.

Units of study in writing may include:

- Small Moments: Writing with Focus, Detail and Dialogue
- Nonfiction Chapter Books
- Writing Reviews
- From Scenes to Series: Writing Fiction

Word study is a yearlong focus in first grade. Students use *Words Their Way* to support spelling and phonics skills development and learn to apply spelling strategies (see Language Arts overview). 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. (See the description of word study in the Language Arts section overview.)

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. When reading fiction, second grade readers focus on following setting changes in place and time, character motivation and plot development; and when reading nonfiction, they focus on text format, including subtitles and headers, labels and captions, and strategies for making meaning of topic-specific vocabulary. 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 authors' 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 reading rate. Reading rate is a particularly important measure for second grade readers because it ensures that students are reading at a level that is appropriate for gaining stamina and reading for 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.

Paired reading provides students with opportunities to share their interpretations of the books they are reading and motivates readers to deepen their thinking through conversation. Flexible, guided-reading groups provide additional support on targeted skills as students become independent readers.

Units of study in the second grade reading curriculum include:

- Reading Like Grown Ups: Routines, Goal Setting, Assessments and Partner Work
- Tackling Trouble: Decoding, Comprehension, and Stamina
- Reading with Fluency
- Character Analysis, Role Play, and Play Process
- Reading Like Researchers: Nonfiction Reading
- Retelling to Comprehend: Retelling, Inferring, and Predicting to Build Comprehension
- Readers Become Experts about Series They Love

Independent reading is a part of both Reading Workshop and nightly homework. During Reading Workshop, students build their stamina to read for 30 minutes by the end of the year. Students read for a minimum of 15 minutes every night as part of their homework assignment. 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, persuasive writing, and fiction. Second grade units of study deepen students' understanding of how to further develop their thinking and writing in these genres.

The second grade writing units of study are:

- Launching Small Moments: Establishing Routines, Goal Setting, Exploring Elements of a Personal Narrative
- Authors as Mentors: Raising the Level of Personal Narratives
- Persuasive Writing
- Realistic Fiction
- Poetry
- Writer's Choice: Empowering Students to Apply All of Their Writing Process Knowledge

To become effective readers and writers, second grade students engage in word study to further enhance their phonetic development, applying it 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.

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 and "thinkmarks," 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. Students strive to move from summary to synthesis as they generate and write about their own ideas, based on their reading.

Students' ongoing work as readers informs teachers about their progress and potential next steps. Students maintain reading logs to record their progress, which provides 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. Students' engagement in book clubs, where several students opt to read a book together, provide different opportunities for "book talk" that allow the teacher to better understand students' reading lives. 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 20 minutes per weeknight, in addition to completing a reading log entry.

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
- Biography and Ethics
- Agents of Change: Exploring Social Issues, Both Historical and Fictional

Units of study in reading encourage students to better understand themselves as readers and to develop reading strategies that can be used in various genres. The study of biography, for instance, requires a different understanding of character, and students connect that understanding to their exploration of American tall tales, part of the MKA Core. Reading about social issues is a significant focus of the Agents of Change unit that supports the social studies curriculum and informs students' individual research projects.

Formal and informal assessment takes place throughout the year and directly informs reading instruction, both individually and in groups. In addition to daily, targeted conferring with students on their independent reading during Reading Workshop, the Developmental Reading Assessment 2 (DRA2) provides information on students' growth in comprehension, fluency, and reading rate. In the winter, third grade students also take the Gates-MacGinitie standardized reading assessment, which measures vocabulary and reading comprehension. Parents or guardians receive a copy of their child's results, and teachers use the results to continue to identify students' reading needs and next steps for supporting and challenging each student.

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. Writing partnerships between peers provide feedback and additional opportunities to better understand audience and the effect of voice. When students edit their final drafts, they use the classroom Word Wall, their personal word study lists, and dictionaries (hard copy or online) to become increasingly independent editors.

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:

- Launching Writing Workshop
- The Art of Persuasion
- Crafting True Stories
- Take Action Research
- Writer's Choice

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.

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 prefixes, suffixes, and nonstandard spelling patterns. Students are expected to know and be able to spell correctly in their writing a significant number of high-frequency words and their personal spelling 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

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 a study of family and local communities and culminate in grade three by examining a social issue of importance to them in a research- and writing-based Take Action Project. As students learn more from a historical perspective, they often focus on the development of community in varied contexts. Students explore social studies themes of individual development and identity, 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 and among various communities and cultures, students develop an appreciation for what it means to be a citizen in a global community. As caring citizens, students consider their responsibilities and their impact in their school community in contexts such as service and sustainability and make connections to how their actions can affect the wider world. In presidential election years, the Primary School holds an election for students to exercise their right and privilege to vote on something of relevance to their school community. 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.

Students develop information research skills through the use of: the Internet; databases of online resources; reference books; primary sources, such as maps and diaries; a variety of literature, including historical fiction and nonfiction; periodicals; and artifacts. Throughout their Primary School years, students work on developing note-taking, paraphrasing, and citation skills as a foundation for analyzing and synthesizing varied information.

FIRST GRADE

Social studies in the first grade focuses on a yearlong study of food. Because they grow from student interests, themes are different each year. For example, students may want to explore farms, restaurants, or international foods. These interests guide choices of literature, hands-on projects, and other learning experiences.

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. In addition, as holidays and traditions occur throughout our diverse community, teachers encourage students to share their cultures and help students grow in awareness of the celebrations of others.

SECOND GRADE

Students begin the year by exploring the classroom as a community of learners who share a common value system. They collaborate to write their own classroom rules as they consider how the actions of the individual affect the community. Students learn about and review MKA's Character Standards and are introduced to the values of knowledge, vision and integrity that are identified on our school seal. Discussions about friendship and respect are integral to this unit of study. Through their study of *Those Shoes*, part of the MKA Core, students explore the concepts of needs vs. wants, generosity, empathy, and kindness. In *The Rough-Face Girl*, another Core Work, they additionally encounter themes of honesty, equity, and respect. These literary studies provide new contexts for revisiting and better understanding the MKA Character Standards and what it means to be part of a thriving community.

After establishing a classroom community, students focus on the development of their neighborhoods and communities into towns. They learn that a community shares resources, institutions, and services that meet the needs of the people, and that geographical factors influence the decision to settle in a particular area. They investigate what forces cause towns to change over time, including economic, population and transportation changes that affect a town's infrastructure. Using Montclair as a case study, they examine the historical town and compare it to the town as it has developed. As their final performance task, students collaboratively plan, design, and construct a model of a town. Students choose appropriate tools and technologies to create their town representations and share their thought processes regarding the elements they include.

THIRD GRADE

The overarching themes for third grade Social Studies are citizenship, community building 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. As students examine the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States, part of the MKA Core, they write a class constitution. This early focus on cooperation and creating a democratic classroom prepares students to understand community building from both historic and current perspectives.

As an extension of their understanding of American national identity and westward expansion, third grade students study American tall tales and the specific values they embody. In addition, geography concepts are integral to every topic studied. Analysis includes the five themes of geography: movement, location, place, regions, and human-environmental interactions. Through examining the themes of many American tall tales, students gain insight into the American drive to expand and to form new communities. Students also see how settlers, adapting to the natural environment, helped create regional differences.

Weekly *Time for Kids* magazines are used as springboards for age-appropriate current events discussions. Students read the magazines and analyze content either collaboratively or independently.

An inquiry project provides students with the opportunity to individually research a social issue about which they are passionate. During the Agents of Change unit, students learn to make decisions that demonstrate an understanding of their natural environment and human communities and an awareness of how their personal and collective actions create change. They analyze their roles and responsibilities to improve quality of life in their school and the greater community. Through this inquiry, they apply all of the research skills they have developed throughout their Primary School years. They refer to the MKA Research Cycle as they develop their own guiding questions, engage in research, take notes, and synthesize the information they gather from classroom and library resources. For the final Take Action Project, each student creates a persuasive project to be shared with an authentic audience (e.g., a member of the MKA, Montclair, or greater community).

MATHEMATICS

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. At the beginning of each new unit of study, teachers send a letter home that describes the key skills and concepts students will explore.

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 problem solving. 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 Reengagements 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.

Everyday Math 4 Home Links, assigned as weeknight homework, provide students with practice and review of the concepts introduced during class. 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 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.

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). Students extend the use of measuring tools through observing the weather and using and maintaining a first grade weather station, located in the first grade wing. They use data collected from the weather station to create and interpret graphs and tables, make predictions, and reinforce numeracy skills.

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 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

First grade students also work in a Math Journal for the first time to practice skills and reinforce mathematical understanding. Nightly math homework gives students the opportunity to review what they have learned in class. Homework also provides practice in following directions, writing numbers neatly to enhance the ability to communicate using math, and taking responsibility for completing and returning homework to school each day.

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. 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 units of study addressed 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 regular 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 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
- Multidigit 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

Science classes meet in the science room, where students develop an awareness that science involves a continuous process of discovery. Students' observations and experiences with everyday phenomena comprise a foundation for understanding science 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 science. 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, such as designing containers to protect eggs dropped from the Primary School's roof and coding a computer program to animate a Lego creation.

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 engage in hands-on 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, 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 hands-on 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. Students explore balance and motion and are exposed to basic programming concepts through the use of Lego robotics.

THIRD GRADE

As they explore Earth science, students learn the skills to identify a "mystery rock" and study the forces at work within the Earth. 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. They learn about forces and changing motion and apply their discoveries and knowledge to the design and construction of egg containers for the end-of-year egg drop. In addition, a study of the invention process and some inventions from around the world informs the design process for the egg drop project. Students test and judge their successful application of science concepts when their container is launched from the rooftop of the Primary School. They analyze the results and make suggestions for improvements to their design.

WORLD LANGUAGES

Introduced to either French or Spanish in Pre-K, students continue their study through third grade. Focusing on listening comprehension and oral production in the target language, students increase proficiency through activities such as games, songs, rhymes, movement, storytelling, role playing, manipulatives, puppets, and educational technology. They acquire knowledge of cultural traditions and artifacts and engage in geography, food, music, dance, art, and craft activities from the French- and Spanish-speaking worlds. High-frequency vocabulary and structures introduced in earlier grades are reinforced and expanded upon, and instruction integrates grade-level themes when appropriate. In world language class, students further develop cross-curricular skills, such as concentration, listening, oral expression, vocabulary development, logical thinking, classifying, predicting, and problem solving. From Pre-K through third grade, students use their developing world language skills to engage in authentic communication in the target language. Students also sing in their target world language during various school performances throughout the year.

FIRST GRADE

First grade students are engaged in developing listening comprehension and speaking skills through the use of songs, rhymes, storytelling, games, and educational technology. Students are frequently exposed to text containing familiar material, often in the form of labels and charts, and they begin to copy selected words and phrases. They review and expand their previous content knowledge, and in a grade-level specific theme such as the farm unit in social studies, children learn related vocabulary structures and practice with them in books and videos. Shared reading experiences help students to deepen their understanding by examining illustrations and seeing the text while hearing the words in the target language.

SECOND GRADE

Students focus on developing the skills of listening comprehension and speaking, while increasing proficiency with reading and writing skills. Through games, songs, role playing, and educational technology, students practice new vocabulary and expressions. Mirroring some Morning Meeting activities, students use routines to reinforce their learning. Students use learned familiar expressions to make requests and statements. They learn to read material that they first learned orally as they examine familiar phrases and song lyrics. Read-alouds in the target language help students to hear the language in different contexts and recognize words in print. In addition, students gain confidence with writing familiar words as they complete sentence templates using a word bank. A Word Wall assists in students' acquisition of reading, writing, and speaking skills with target language vocabulary. In keeping with their study of the town in social studies, students learn expressions related to their communities and the people who work in them.

THIRD GRADE

As students work continuously to strengthen their listening comprehension and speaking skills in the target language, they practice reading and writing material emphasized in earlier years. A Word Wall is used to support student learning of high-frequency vocabulary and structures needed for authentic communication. New content is first introduced orally, and proficiency is developed through games, songs, storytelling, role playing, and educational technology before vocabulary structures are presented in books and videos. Students experience culturally authentic food at a world language picnic, where they practice making requests and stating preferences. This year, concepts of multicultural diversity, racism, and social justice are introduced through storytelling and linked to the third grade curriculum when possible. Students sing in their target world language for school concerts and the Third Grade Closing Exercises.

LIBRARY

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 iPads and computers, students access information from many different sources, 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. In anticipation of welcoming visiting authors to the annual MKA Book Fair, students participate in author studies to learn more about the crafts of writing and illustrating stories. 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. For example, using the MKA Research Cycle, Pre-K through third grade students combine strategic methods of research to question, explore, evaluate, reflect, solve problems collaboratively, and share their findings using technology.

FIRST GRADE

First grade students explore story elements as they focus on the components of a myth in an interdisciplinary storytelling unit. As students create clay storytelling dolls in art class, they study a Native American Pueblo tribe in library class and use iPads to create original myths. Engaging with the MKA Research Cycle, students reinforce nonfiction reading skills as they identify, evaluate, and use new information effectively.

As students grow as readers, an emphasis is placed on identifying books that are a good fit for each student. To help with this, first grade students each take a turn bringing home a toy animal reading buddy that they read to for one week. Students make note of the places they read together, rate the book they read and share their experiences with other students.

SECOND GRADE

Students begin using MKA's online library catalog to independently identify appropriate library materials to take home. They discover and explore a variety of literary genres. Critical thinking skills are further honed through participating in a national contest, the Irma Black Award, to help select an outstanding book for young children. Students learn how illustrations support the meaning in texts as they evaluate four picture books and articulate an argument for why their choice should win the award. Students continue to build upon their research skills by completing a collaborative, interdisciplinary unit during both library and classroom time. Students brainstorm and choose a historical figure that they find interesting, research appropriate resources, record notes, synthesize new information, and consider how their subject embodies the MKA Character Standards.

THIRD GRADE

Third grade students "adopt" their own bookshelves in the library. In this leadership role, they are responsible for keeping the books on their adopted shelves in the proper order and for recommending favorite books to peers. Students continue their examination of literary elements, including characterization, plot, and setting, while creating collaborative, digital stories. Students continue to develop research skills during a collaborative project with classroom teachers where students learn how to persuade others to make a change they feel is important in their community. Through this project, students further develop their information literacy skills of questioning, searching, evaluating, recording, and synthesizing new information.

FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS

Students gain interpersonal skills and self-confidence as well as an appreciation of the arts from their earliest years at MKA. Through their engagement with the arts program, students develop their means of self-expression and avenues for understanding others. MKA's encompassing arts curriculum, focusing on both content and skills, cultivates an independent and lifelong curiosity and a love of learning. Promoting student capacity for developing original ideas supports a great potential for creative thinking and problem solving across the disciplines. 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 and begin learning choreography for the dance they incorporate into their class play. 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," "wobble," "turn," and "twist." In small, collaborative groups, 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. The second grade year culminates in the traditional Maypole dance, a Kimberley School tradition, which students perform for the Primary School community and special guests.

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. 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. This creative process culminates in choreographing a complete dance to perform for the Third Grade Dance Concert. 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 dance performances 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 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. The music program focuses on helping students build the skills to sing melody and partner songs with harmony in a varied repertoire. Ringing the handchimes 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 work with both the music teacher and their classroom teacher to prepare to sing in weekly assemblies, class plays, winter and spring concerts, and Grandparents’ and Special Friends’ Day. Music classes include physical and vocal warm-up exercises to increase the ability to sing and perform confidently. “Singing by heart” is a goal—both memorizing lyrics for English and world language songs and singing from the heart with enthusiasm and passion. Through both their singing and their handchime and handbell practice, students develop performance skills, such as following the conductor, stage presence, and stamina for standing on the risers and performing. These skills prepare students to feel comfortable performing for a large audience.

FIRST GRADE

First grade students sing a variety of music, including favorite seasonal songs that they request. They look forward to playing beginning handchime and handbell music. Their music repertoire is focused on the minor-third interval, which enhances pitch matching and confidence in musical performance. Beginning use of written lyrics underscores literacy lessons as students follow the text as they sing. 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. They are introduced to the recorder and learn fingering and breathing techniques as they reinforce their skills in reading recorder music. 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

In addition to their regular concert appearances, third grade students perform on the handbells and handchimes for the all-school Gathering at the beginning of the year and the Third Grade Closing Exercises at the end of the year. Handbell and handchime stations provide further opportunities for third grade students to develop communication and cooperation with their partners. 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 professional accompaniments on compact discs that students can use to guide their practice at home. 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).

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, clay work, graphics, two- and three- dimensional design, printmaking, and multimedia work. Problem solving and risk taking promote successful, progressive development of self-awareness, self-esteem, self-discipline, cooperation, and motivation. Though different types of art experiences receive varied degrees of emphasis each year, every activity contributes to students' gaining the fundamentals 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

As first grade students examine art as a process of seeing, thinking, and exploring ideas, they continue to explore the elements of art, prompted by studio work and problem solving to strengthen their understanding and skills. As they are introduced to the life and work of Van Gogh, students make observational drawings of sunflowers, with an emphasis on learning to look, to identify parts, and to select lines and shapes that make up an organized whole. Taking size, point of view, and color into consideration, students are expected to create two interpretations—one representational and one abstract.

A visit to the farm and a classroom study of farm animals build new experiences in art. Using photographs of their farm trip, students learn drawing techniques that center on sketching simple, juxtaposed shapes that together create a larger, organized whole. Related contour line drawing and painting exercises challenge students as they build their visual literacy and skills. To support their understanding of form, students extend their animal study by creating three-dimensional animal toys from wood.

An interdisciplinary unit of study with the library brings together images of the pottery storyteller of the Cochiti Pueblo with authentic Native American stories. In library class, students develop skills in composing and relating their own stories; while in art, the storyteller doll serves as a model in motivating students to create imaginative dolls as vehicles for their own storytelling. Students' understanding is layered with meaning as they explore the geographical and cultural contexts introduced through story, books, art reproductions, videos, and technology.

SECOND GRADE

A concentrated study of design extends through the second grade year. Students continue to build 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. The life and work of graffiti artist Keith Haring provides inspiration and understanding as students create works of art in his style. Placement and awareness of the body parts are essentials, so students look closely at the human body in terms of structure, parts, and proportion. Through instruction and drawing exercises that include gesture and use of mannequins, students complete a painting of a body in motion. Focus is placed on the importance of line, compositional balance, movement, economy of color, and value.

Students consider needs and wants regarding shelter and what influences decisions in building a house, as well as the defining features of various styles of houses. Then they complete watercolor renderings of the front facades of their homes. Three interrelated projects conclude the year's architectural study: a layout of overlapping structures to form a dynamic, city skyline; a design for a tree house that shows depth in space; and finally, with the MKA Core unit on the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright and *Falling Water*, a wooden model that incorporates Wright's design concepts of cantilever, asymmetry/symmetry, rhythm, horizontal emphasis and unity.

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. In conjunction with Reading Workshop and the classroom unit on biography and ethics, students are introduced to the art and life of Pablo Picasso through his vast repertoire of self-portraits. Students are encouraged to look and reflect on the ways in which he explored portraiture. They look at his work and the multitude of ways he interpreted faces using a variety of materials. The unit begins with students carefully observing themselves in a mirror and paying special attention to the lines and shapes unique to their own face. Taking size, proportion, and relationship of parts into consideration, students follow up with an abstract, cubist interpretation of themselves using paper collage.

Picasso also serves as a launchpad for the MKA Core study of African masks. Because African masks were a central influence for early modern painters, studying Picasso provides the context for the exploration and understanding of this significant art form. Masks were the central feature of ceremonial and social life in many African countries. Students examine complex and varied functions and beliefs associated with masks, including their cultural context. They conclude the unit by creating their own spirit mask.

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Health and physical education at the Primary School provide students with the skills and knowledge to live a physically active, healthy life. In physical education, students learn to understand and appreciate their bodies, develop motor and coordination skills, improve their personal fitness, and enjoy physical activities. Instruction honors the different maturational levels within each class and is carefully designed to encourage and reward individual growth. The physical education program has five main goals: the development of efficient and effective motor skills; the stimulation of interest in physical, recreational activity; the encouragement of the highest level of personal performance; the fostering of a positive self-image; and the promotion of constructive interaction with others. From their participation, students develop a high level of interest in physical education as they develop essential skills such as communication, resiliency and coping, and movement competence to participate in a range of physical activities. Health topics are taught during physical education class in ways that are relevant and developmentally appropriate for students. Through health education, students develop an understanding of how to take responsibility for living an active and healthy life.

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.

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B.A., SUNY at New Paltz



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.