



## 2017-18 Curriculum Report

### December 2017 Entry

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#### **Community and Daily Routines**

We began the year by inviting our learners to bring in a memento that they perceive as especially meaningful. Sharing artifacts from our lives generated a connectedness in our group as we asked questions, discovered commonalities, and recognized the importance of valuing our many varied personal experiences and perspectives. We placed each memento in a vintage suitcase until morning or closing meeting, which allowed for a communal space for one or two children to present and reflect on the meaningfulness of their memento and take questions or comments from their peers. Some of the artifacts were a rock from a beach, a drawing from circus camp, a finger-knitting, a pair of solar eclipse glasses, and a ceramic bird.

Every morning, to start the day, we gather for Morning Meeting, modeled after The Responsive Classroom approach, in our loft area where we engage in a morning greeting in a circle, which might be, for example, shaking hands and greeting a neighbor by name, passing around a treasure or rolling a ball to someone, the butterfly greeting, or the “closed eyes” greeting. Initially some children stopped to ask a neighbor, “What is your name again?” yet within weeks they knew each other by name and joined in conversations about choice time, their weekend, or family news with the group. Energizers in the form of songs, games, movement, and breathing exercises are often part of our meeting time. Morning Message is crafted with the intention of exploring an upcoming project or event happening that day, infused with literacy or math components. We might ask the group to help solve analogies, a shape and attribute riddle, or fill in the blanks to complete our message using word wall words or rhyme. We update our calendar wall and check the job chart. Our sense of classroom community is measured by the understanding that every voice is honored as we grow into empathetic listeners and advocates for equity and social justice. We asked the children to work together in establishing what we call “Circle Agreements,” which are commitments to follow for making our meeting space feel comfortable, safe, and collaborative.

We thought about what each of us hope and dream for as we embarked on a new year of school. Each child expressed a personal hope and dream in writing and drawing a depiction on a card that we reflected on as a group: “What can we do to help you come closer to your hope and dream?” Ranging from learning to read to climbing higher trees, their **hopes and dreams** nurture a sense of self-identity and the ability to envision a goal as exciting and attainable.

After Morning Meeting, we usually work for an hour on exploring math topics in small groups or collaboratively solving a problem and writing a number story; on Mondays we write our weekly news. After snack choice, the children break into half groups (two quarter groups) to go to the specialist of the day and to engage in phonics work along with math or writers' workshop. Our read-aloud time happens after lunch in the loft area of our room. Dialogic in nature, the picture book or chapter book read-alouds invite the children to respond to the story through text-to-self, text-to-world, and text-to-text connections. In *Reading to Live*, Lorraine Wilson notes that "Text participation (Luke and Freebody, 1999), or comprehension, or making meaning, occurs throughout a reading event." Through this process, the children make predictions, ask questions, empathize with characters, and analyze the text as they develop critical literacy skills. Readers' Workshop and Guided Reading follow our read-aloud time. Children bring the "just-right" leveled books from their homework folders to a quiet spot where they use strategies for reading independently as the teachers confer one-on-one with readers around the room.

No day feels complete without Tinkering time, a half hour during the last block of the day for the children to plan, create, and innovate with an exciting array of recycled materials such as cardboard, bottlecaps, pipe cleaners, boxes, fabric scraps, and corks. Glue guns, masking tape, and yarn are available as the children design with a purpose and a vision, inventing such items as a purse made of discarded CDs, a guitar made from a paper towel roll, tissue box, and rubber bands, a mini-playground made of craft sticks and container lids, and handmade books.

### **Social Emotional Learning**

Golden opportunities arise throughout the day that help every child to develop and practice skills in self-advocacy, independence, and self-regulation as we nurture relationships, engage in play, and participate in conflict resolution. We weave purposeful experiences into our classroom community to allow for growth in flexibility, risk taking, empathy, and seeing another point of view.

- Our Good of the Group meetings work as a space to listen to one another as we address a concern. The children problem solve by offering suggestions and connecting their personal experiences to a situation. They learn to use "I" messages, talk through problems, show empathy, and think of productive strategies.
- Conflict resolution can happen any time during the day, and our goal is for the children to become more confident, self-assured, and independent in solving differences after teacher modeling, role-play, and lots of practice. A small group of children participating in conflict resolution meets in a quiet, peaceful part of the room where each voice is equitably heard. The children use words to express why something felt hurtful and to ask what they can do to make something feel better--an apology of action, which could be, for example, "Next time, ask before you chase me." We've also practiced asking for "do-overs"--doing something over in a safer or kinder way.
- Collaborative work/partnerships began in September, where we asked children to work with an assigned partner to collaborate in creating one drawing on a 9 X 12 piece of paper that was folded into fourths. Each member of the partnership had to draw in each of the four quadrants. Children were partnered with people who were not frequent

playmates. Our goal was to see the pairs (and trios) engage in negotiation, compromise, and a willingness to consider another person's perspective. Here are their reflections. V: "We would focus on one part first and made sure that everyone drew there. Then we moved on to the next." J: "It was pretty easy to work together. It was fun." and E: "Working together was kind of hard at the beginning. We were trying to figure out if it was going to be real stuff or not real stuff." In December, we configured different partnerships to come up with building plans for making block structures for their two cork people. The pairs negotiated on features and amenities of their houses and on whether the cork people were friends or relatives or pets, engaging in dialogue as their cork people interacted with each other.

## Language Arts

### *Writers' Workshop*

Writers' Workshop meets three times a week in two half-groups and one whole group. The goals for this workshop time are for our writers to become comfortable and flexible in communicating their ideas in writing to others. We use strategies for task initiation and planning: We talk about how writers set a purpose for writing and how they organize, revise, and edit as part of the craft. The children focus on deciding what to communicate and learn to craft pieces that reflect an understanding of many genres. They apply phonics practice and use the word wall to spell high-frequency words and take the risk in spelling unfamiliar words. We are studying phonics and decoding and encoding work through Foundations. At times, after workshop, we gather for an informal author share to read from our stories and allow time for any questions or comments.

Through the following processes, the children are communicating a variety of ideas and stories to their readers:

**Weekly News:** Every Monday our learners report through writing and drawing all kinds of recent or upcoming events in their lives.

**Hike and Write:** Every Wednesday morning the class participates in Hike and Write. We remind ourselves that taking in fresh air, walking and skipping, and finding treasures outdoors energizes us and inspires us as writers. While some of our writers may find an object from nature will grow into a story or poetic narrative, we encourage our writers to return from the hike and engage in "free writing," where they can write about something that's especially important, exciting, and meaningful to them.

**Poetry Unit,** adapted from Lucy Calkins' *Powerful Thoughts in Tiny Packages*: The intention of this study is to look at something from the lens of a poet. We modeled this process by looking at some poems by Valerie Worth. First we described the physical attributes of an object using a scientist's lens, and then we shared imaginative, creative language to describe the same object. The children developed an understanding that *poets look with poet's eyes and see ordinary things in a new way*. We're beginning to create poetry to express meaningful small moments and experiment with the effect of line breaks. The children are discovering how poets find a big topic that gives them big, strong feelings, find a small object or moment or detail that holds the big feelings, and write about their topic and experiment with line breaks.

### *Readers' Workshop*

Our guiding principles of Readers' Workshop (based on an overview by *Growing Readers*, by Kathy Collins):

- Readers have time to read just-right books independently every day.
- Readers respect each other's reading time and reading lives.
- Readers have daily opportunities to talk about their books.
- Readers don't just read the words but understand the story.

The children read just-right books independently every day as we have reading conferences with individuals to offer strategies and instruction. Many of our readers have moved up at least one level in their just-right texts because they're reading with more accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. We also encourage the children to choose from a wide range of books in terms of topic and genre to support their emerging interests, such as bird and insect guide books, folktales, and How-To books as well as favorite picture book readalouds.

During reading workshop conferences and read-aloud time we demonstrate strategies through *guided reading*. We teach kids how to take a book walk: examine the cover; say the title out loud; make predictions about the story; wonder about the author; notice the end pages; notice the text; wonder and think out loud. The children are taught the following strategies: Look at the picture for clues; skip over the word, finish the sentence, then reread; think! (about the story) What makes sense? Additionally, our readers are getting practice with tracking print, noticing and holding patterns in text, saying the beginning, medial, and ending sounds of words, self-correcting, trying different strategies, improving fluency, and recalling details of the text. We help our readers become codebreakers (decoding the text), text participants (making meaning from text), and text analysts as they engage in critical literacy.

The children have shown a high level of curiosity about characters and sometimes an author's decision as we engaged in the following dialogic read-aloud picture books and chapter books, many of which focus on a character's or animal's point of view:

**Chapter books:** *Finn Family Moomintroll*, *Wolf Story*, *Stuart Little* (in progress).

**Picture books:** *Never Smile at a Monkey* (part of our Steve Jenkins author study), *Two Bad Ants*, *Raising Dragons*, *Juna's Jar*, *The Grasshopper and the Ant*, *Flotsam*, *The Beast of Monsieur Racine*, *The Tunnel*, *Voices in the Park*, *The Salamander Room*, *Sebastian and the Red Balloon*

### **Math**

Children in first and second grade are developing facility adding numbers together in number talks. Some are still most comfortable counting on from one to the another (e.g., to add  $18+13$  they begin at 18 and count 13 on, arriving eventually at 31), whereas others have gained the flexibility to pull the ones and tens apart, add them and then recombine (e.g.,  $10+10=20$ ,  $8+3=11$ ;  $20+11=31$ ). Children share their problem solving strategies with each other. All are therefore exposed to place value (tens and ones) to aid in their addition of numbers. The goal

being that each develops a sense of whole numbers and represents and uses them in flexible ways, including relating, composing, and decomposing numbers.

Key skills	Key concepts
Finding combinations of numbers that add together to reach a target number	Understanding that numbers are composed of smaller numbers added together
Compare and order whole numbers Counting numbers in sequential order Recognizing groups of ten Representing measurements and data in bar graphs	Understanding whole number relationships, including grouping in tens and ones
Combine figures to make shapes, recognizing different perspectives and describing geometric attributes and properties	Composing and decomposing geometric shapes

All students are working with Marcy Cook math tiles once/week. These largely self correcting task cards help children practice fundamental math facts and develop flexible math thinking. Children work on these card sets individually and the math concepts covered are targeted to each child's independent working level.

Children have also solved problems, including the chicken and cow problem, that require them to think about groups of the same number and repeated addition (a step toward multiplicative mathematical thinking). How many pockets? In which we add up all the pockets in the clothing of the group by representing them with snap cubes. We then make groups of ten to make the counting of the total easier. Children hide animals in foggy forest drawings, giving us the number of eyes and feet but nothing else and challenging us to find what could be lurking there. A fun activity that highlights how different combinations of animals can add up to the same number of eyes and feet.

The Haunted House project was truly an interdisciplinary project that required the children to use meaningful math strategies in designing layouts for the longest path through the haunted labyrinth using graph paper and Cuisenaire rods. Using Marilyn Burns' [Math Solutions](#), we modeled subtraction by asking the children to make number sentences after they began with 11 leaves on their tree, gently blew a breeze upon the trees, and counted the number of leaves left on the tree. Then they finished a number sentence, such as  $11 - \underline{\quad} = 5$  leaves left. Several children decided to begin with a larger amount of leaves, such as 23 and 40.

## Social Studies

Individual Development and Identity

People, Places, and Environment

What can we learn from taking the perspective of another living thing?

Our overarching theme is **Expanding our Perspectives**. The minute we walked into the classroom this year we were excited to share things about ourselves ranging from what we did over the summer to our hopes and dreams for this year. Through their emergent pursuits and questions, our learners help set the framework for meaningful exploration. Our lived experiences, interests, and passions influence our points of view. So far, this year, we've learned that some of us love to share how sharks are fierce and powerful while some of us prefer to study the quiet life of turtles and salamanders. Some of us seek the thrill of roller coasters and spinning on the tire swing, whereas some of us prefer a calmer, moderate ride.

Through group meetings and discussions about what we love, what we fear, and what we don't understand, we've learned a lot about each other. We're learning that recognizing and honoring our many perspectives help shape our classroom community, and, most powerfully, help us see and know the world with a deeper lens. We are working toward the **Enduring Understanding**: Living things use different approaches to respond to their needs, and the often disconcerting and fear-inducing process of perspective taking builds a deeper understanding, awareness, and empathy.

### *Essential Questions*

- What is a point of view?
- How is a point of view connected to identity and experiences?
- Can our points of view change?
- Why is it important to share with each other the many ways of ways of looking at something? (To understand and appreciate the multiplicity of perspectives?)
- How can we show a variety of perspectives through problem solving? Through role-play?
- How can we take the perspective of someone else or something else?
- What are some ways to expand our vision as readers, authors, scientists, artists, and mathematicians?
- How does it feel to see something from another perspective or standpoint?
- What can we do to share what we learned from taking new and different perspectives?

### *Text Set*

**Animals and Creatures:** Steve Jenkins Author Study (*Eye to Eye: How Animals See the World; Never Smile at a Monkey; Actual Size; What Do You Do When Something Wants to Eat You?*); *Two Bad Ants* (Chris Van Allsburg); *Raising Dragons* (Jerdine Nolen); *Life* (Rylant); *Kickle Sniffers and Other Fearsome Creatures* (Schwartz); *Ashley Bryan's Puppets: Making Something From Everything, Stuart Little* (E.B. White).

**“Unexpected” perspectives:** *Finn Family Moomintroll* (chapter book read-aloud); *Sebastian and the Red Balloon* (Stead); *Rollercoaster* (Marla Frazee); *Matthew’s Dream*; *How It Feels to be a Boat* (James Kwan).

**Perspective and identity, Family:** *Tar Beach*; excerpts from *House on Mango Street* (eg, “My Hair”); *Luke’s Way of Looking* (Wheatley); *This Land Is My Land* (George Littlechild), *My Name Is Yoon*; *Uptown* (Bryan Collier).

**Advocating for others, being an upstander/ally, seeing another’s perspective:** *Voices in the Park* (Anthony Browne), *A Chair for My Mother*, *Last Stop on Market Street*, *Child of the Civil Rights Movement*, *Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table*, *Preaching to the Chickens: The Story of Young John Lewis*, *Those Shoes* (Boelts and Jones); *A Different Pond* (Bao Phi); *The Curious Garden* (Peter Brown); *Draw the Line* (Kathryn Otoshi), *One* (Kathryn Otoshi).

*Fall 2017*

**Memento share, collaborative drawing in pairs, poetry unit:** How can we describe things using a poet’s lens--in a new, fresh way?

**Via micro-hike:** Looking at our surroundings from a different perspective in a physical sense: From atop of treehouse, from an insect’s point of view. How can we describe this new perspective?

**Self-Portrait 1:** How do I see myself? (pencil on paper)

**Construction of a haunted house:** We asked the children to consider many perspectives as we began plans for our haunted house: What might seem thrilling to one person could be too scary for another person. What can we design that will be enjoyable for everyone? Visitors could choose whether they preferred a “lights-on” tour, a moderately scary tour, or a very dark and scary tour. The children created sound effects, designed bats and ghosts and made giant creatures made from recycled materials. This was truly an interdisciplinary project that required the children to use meaningful math strategies in designing layouts for the longest path through haunted labyrinth. We blacked out the windows of the loft and put trash bag barriers between the loft and the first floor. “It’s so dark!” many said. It is truly amazing to see a space so thoroughly transformed and a revelation all over again to see it transform back into its original style.

**Shadow puppet theatre:** After constructing a theatre using a box, tape, and paper, the children problem solved on how to project their paper puppet images onto the paper screen by capturing the sunlight through the windows at the right angle.

**Role-Play for problem solving-**The children share some challenging situations with friendships or strong feelings, and they take roles in reenacting the situation. The children offer feedback and suggestions for how to solve the problem.

**Stories in a jar perspective stories (in process):** After creating two figures or objects out of Sculpey, each with their own point of view, the figures are placed in small jars filled with water, glycerin, and glitter. Literacy component: What are the different points of view of each of your figures?

### *Upcoming Activities*

**Writers' Workshop:** After the winter break we will begin small moment writing where rather than the typical breakfast to bed stories where children recount all the events of a day "and then...and then...and then..." they are shown how to dive deeply into a moment and mine it for smaller, richer details. January Publishing Party to celebrate our poetry unit.

**Social Studies: Community Service Project** (possible ideas: Donate favorite books to Mighty Writers, Cradles to Crayons, generate ideas with the group).

**Self-Portrait 2:** How do I see myself in relation to where I live (collage)? with narrative based of Bryan Collier's book *Uptown*.

**Constructing/Sewing Creatures** with a point of view--in conjunction with Writers' Workshop.

**In the spring: Community Service Project** (generated from ideas inspired by *Last Stop on Market Street* and *The Curious Garden*); possible field trip to Dixon's Meadow and Bartram's Gardens or Mill Creek Farm.