



2017-18 Curriculum Report

December 2017

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Community and Daily Routines

This year, Wendy & Sara's group is composed of 9 third and 12 fourth graders. They are a kind and funny group of children who have thrown themselves fully into both learning and play. Only eight of the children were returning to our room for a second year, so we spent the early weeks learning the daily rhythms. The work of community included finding out about each child's home, family, traditions, and interests, building deeper awareness of connections and differences. With the whole school, we immersed ourselves in questions of "How to... and Why?" throughout of early weeks. We incorporated elements from the Responsive Classroom model in our community building. Children love the predictable structure of Morning Meeting, greeting each other by name, sharing stories from home, making announcements about things they would like to do at Choice time.

A sample day in the 3/4:

- Morning work: writing or math journals, handwriting, board games, fix and finish
- Morning meeting: greeting, sharing, announcements
- Half group time: Specialists (Science, Music, Art, Library or P.E.) for one group
Reading or Writing Workshop for the others, then switch
- Snack and Choice time, nearly always outside
- Independent Reading Time, also individual work with a teacher
- Whole group work, often in Theme studies and read aloud.
- Choice and Lunch
- Half group time: Specialists for one group, Math for the other
- Closing circle

Social Emotional Learning

Along with the intentional work of building community, our fall included focus on what it means that we "take care of each other" at Miquon and in our room. We built awareness of our connections through whole class discussions, modeling and role playing, picture book talks, and spontaneous examinations of problems that arose. This year Sara made us a "peace wheel" based on a version our colleague Rich has used in his room, for explicit teaching of independent problem solving skills. We also gathered bi-weekly for Good of the Group meetings similar to the

all school monthly assemblies. This is a chance for the children to discuss problems that have arisen and generate potential solutions together, focusing on building empathy and awareness. Picture books we have read together about social emotional growth have included:

When No One is Watching by Eileen Spinelli

Zero and One by Kathryn Otoshi

I Don't Want to Go Back to School by Marisambina Russo

The Fantastic Elastic Brain by JoAnn Deak

Language Arts

Our language arts time this fall worked towards furthering a love of reading and writing in the children of our group. We have so many avid readers, listeners, and storytellers, and we try to support their existing interests, expose them to new genres, and hone their skills to grow as readers and authors. The group has daily independent reading time, and a class read-aloud time, in which we explore habits of good readers and writers, share favorite characters, recommend books to each other, and identify new favorite vocabulary words.

We conducted word work groups twice a week, and in these small groups the children get tailored practice with spelling strategies and reading comprehension skills. Their own writing has grown through morning journal prompts, theme activities, responses to *Time for Kids* magazines, and free-write activities. The class also spent time each week on cursive writing practice (through Handwriting Without Tears) and an introduction to touch typing.

Our first writing piece this fall was about a topic that each child would choose to teach others in a "How to" essay. This dovetailed well with the all-school theme of "How To... And Why," and gave each person a way to share an area of expertise, while also being introduced to the expectations for drafting, revising, and editing in the 3/4.

As we enter the winter, our Lenape journal project is drawing to a close, and these writing pieces will be used for a revision unit in December and January (a chance to practice peer editing, conferencing with teachers, and editing for mechanics). They have been wonderful to read because they bring together what we learned about Lenape daily life with the unique writing voice of each of children in choice of tone, use of humor, and dialogue. Once the journals are printed, we are planning a culminating Unit Celebration in January for families, sharing our published journals, making some traditional foods, and displaying beautiful art the children created with Nicole, including Lenape style clay pots and Mesingw masks.

Math

The philosophy of our math work was influenced this fall by a book our staff read this summer, Jo Boaler's Mathematical Mindsets, and her Positive Norms to Encourage a Math Class:

1. Everyone can learn math to the highest level
2. Mistakes are valuable
3. Questions are really important
4. Math is about creativity and making sense
5. Math is about communicating and connecting
6. Depth is much more important than speed
7. Math is about learning not performing

Our mathematicians began the year with a unit on data collection. Both third and fourth graders collected data around campus and practiced representing that data in both bar and line graphs. Individuals and pairs developed their own survey questions, for example: *If we got a class pet, what should it be? What would you like Miquon to provide for snack? What's your favorite thing to do during Choice?* After groups conducted their surveys, they organized and represented it, then began to make inferences based on their data collected. For example, they may have found a trend between age groups and where they played during Choice. From this information they were encouraged to make a decision. Should we add more play equipment to a certain area? Should we rethink our snack options? If we got a class pet, how would that impact our learning community? Our group really enjoyed the practical aspect of data collection, specifically how collecting data could inform everyday decisions.

As fall progressed, we turned our attention to number sense and operations, focusing on addition and multiplication. We also spent time learning about how mistakes can be extremely valuable. We encouraged our students to become more comfortable with mistakes through game and puzzle work, such as Marcy Cook math centers, Ken Ken puzzles, or the games 24, Flip 4, and Set. As students gained a stronger conceptual understanding of complex math operations, they also experimented with how numbers work together in puzzles. Our students began to welcome the extra time they got to dive into more complex puzzles and brain teasers. Through this work, they increased their stamina for a challenge, while practicing the conceptual foundation of multiplication and addition.

Social Studies

Essential Questions

- How do we learn about the past?
- Why is the past important to us today?
- How do perspectives about the past differ depending on who is telling the story?
- How does the natural environment impact how communities use resources to survive?

Fall Theme Study: Living on this land 500 years ago - Daily life of the Lenni Lenape

In the 3/4 grade band we have been asking the question, "How did people live here long ago?" Looking at the region around Miquon, we asked how the land and waterways have changed over since the early 1500's. The children became immediately engaged in the study of daily life without modern tools or conveniences. In the first weeks, we explored a range of books about Native American cultures. Of special interest were a set of videos from *Lenape Lifeways* detailing the Lenape customs around use of food, music, hunting, shelter and tools. These captivated the children's attention right away and were followed by two interactive field trips: One was to Awbury Arboretum, focusing on the use of native plants for food and medicine. The other trip was to Churchville Nature Center's recreated Lenape village, where we practiced braiding grass rope, starting fire, using traditional hunting and gardening implements, and sculpting clay beads. We also had a visit from storyteller Rob Aptaker, examining artifacts and

listening to early Lenape legends. In library class, Amy shared stories from contemporary Native American authors and made connections with the wide variety of modern day Native cultures.

As part of this study, the children created for themselves a character which was a member of a Lenape village in the 1500's, taking on a different name, age, and role. We held village meetings and wrote journal entries based on both our factual research and our imaginations. This unit merged beautifully with the children's active play outside, which including making string from plant fibers, crushing black walnuts found on campus for walnut milk, dyeing fabric with nuts and berries, and planning for building a wigwam together.

Books we explored in this unit included:

Dickon Among the Lenape by M.R. Harrington

When the Shadbush Blooms by Carla Messinger

Encounter by Jane Yolen

Keepers of the Night: Native American Stories by Michael Caduto

Corn is Maize: The Gift of the Indians by Aliki

The Trail of Tears by Joseph Bruchac

Native American Rock Art: Messages from the Past by Yvette LaPierre

Native Homes by Bobbie Kalman

Looking Ahead

Moving into the winter, we will explore more Pennsylvania history, and the impact of the arrival of European colonists on Native American communities and the Lenape in particular. We will learn about the daily life for new settlers and how their communities' settlement impacted the land and waterways around this region. Our study of life on rivers, streams and coasts may take us in a variety of directions based on children's interests, which can be explored in new read alouds, writing units, and field trips in the spring. Next math units have already begun working in multiplication and division word problems, moving then into fraction and decimals.