



2017-18 Curriculum Report

June 2018 Entry

Marea Palmer-Loh and Rich Murray

Daily Routines

We began each day greeting each other in Morning Meeting. This is a time when we come together as a group to acknowledge each child as part of our community. This group has been particularly interested in different languages and cultures, and this spring they learned how to greet each other and respond with how they are feeling in Spanish. We are also learning the days of the week, how to count, and other common phrases in Spanish.

After greeting, children were given the opportunity to share, and each child had an assigned day to make sure they have this opportunity every week. We learned about that day's schedule and study the calendar, often using it to teach a math mini-lesson. Before sitting to read and write, we often did a short activity that allowed our body to move so that we're able to focus on our morning message. The morning message tied in language arts, math, or social studies learning goals, and will often ask students to write in their journal or think about a concept we recently taught or will introduce. Our morning meeting routine finished with a riddle of the day, encouraging children to think critically about words and their meaning.

Each morning after choice, we worked with the class in quarter groups for word study and math instruction. These times allowed us to focus on specific children and make sure everyone's needs were met.

Most days were finished with 20-30 minutes of "tinkering." This is a time when children could choose how they want to direct their learning through discovery, collaboration, and innovation. This year the children have written, rehearsed, and performed multiple plays, created elaborate and imaginative structures with blocks, legos, and other building supplies, used up countless rolls of tape building intricate cardboard creations, and written and illustrated entire books, all during Tinkering Time.

Daily Schedule	
8:25-9:00	Morning Meeting: Greet, Share, Activity, Message
9:00-10:00	Math
10:00-10:30	Snack Choice
10:30-10:45	Picture Book Read aloud or Word Wall Study
10:45-12:15	Word Study and Reader's Workshop (Specialists, Half Group)
12:15-12:45	Lunch Choice
12:45-1:10	Lunch
1:10-1:20	Read Aloud
1:20-1:50	Social Studies Theme study
1:50-2:20	Writer's Workshop
2:15-2:45	Tinkering Time
2:45-2:55	Closing Meeting

Language Arts

At Miquon we offer a comprehensive language arts program that supports each child in their journey of becoming a reader, writer, listener, speaker and *thinker*.

Miquon's emergent curriculum is built on student interest, and we also had the opportunity this winter to hold class for a week in the library. The students were focused and excited about reading, writing, and literature! Taking advantage of our literature-rich environment, we read multiple books a day, focusing on past Caldecott winners, and potential winners for 2017. We read picture books about forests and habitats, making connections with our theme study. We read books about small moments, continuing to broaden our exposure to model texts which we drew from as we wrote our own small moment stories. And we read stories about math, and wrote our own math story problems. We were so grateful we were able to enjoy a whole week immersed in the reading and writing experience!

Readers' Workshop

This year children were introduced to the format of readers workshop, where they worked to read independently or with a partner to practice good reading habits. During this time, they selected books at their independent reading level, where they could decode the words fairly easily. This allowed them to build fluency and self-monitor for meaning and understanding.

Word Study/Phonics/Handwriting

All 1st graders and most 2nd graders in our group participated in *Foundations*, a multisensory program that provided a foundation for reading and spelling. The program emphasizes systematic phonics and study of word structure. Children also engaged in "word wall" activities to solidify knowledge of high frequency sight words. The *Foundations* program also integrated handwriting of lower and uppercase letters. This winter and spring the first grade group learned all 5 digraphs (th, ch, sh, wh, and ck) and were introduced to the sounds that other letter groups make, like -ung, -ink, -old, -all, -ay, and more. The second grade group has also learned about the vowel-consonant-e pattern like in "make" and "like" and vowels teams like "oi," "ai," "ow," "oo," and many more!

Some second grade readers worked with words in more complex ways using a mix of the *Sitton Spelling* program and/or *Words their Way* curriculum. They met in a small groups along with a few students from Ben and Celia's class.

Read Aloud

We read picture books and/or chapter books aloud *every day*. Books are often curricularly connected to a broader theme, and/or writing, reading, and math investigations. Throughout the read aloud children are invited to make predictions, raise questions and respond to one another's emerging understandings. These skills help children build higher-level reading comprehension and create the foundation for making deeper meaning from texts. This spring we enjoyed numerous picture books, as well as the chapter books, *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, *Poppy*, and *Juana and Lucas*.

This spring we also studied fairy tales, and read stories from Japan, Germany, South Africa, Mexico, France, and India, among others. This was a cross-curricular unit that provided ample opportunities to incorporate theater, writing, and even math! For example, the tale of *One Grain of Rice* by Demi tells the story of a young woman who saves her starving country by outsmarting their greedy raja. She tricks him into promising her a boon, and she asks him for one grain of rice today, and then for double the amount of rice each day for thirty days (1, 2, 4, 8, 16, etc). As a class, we added up the amount of rice on the board, and then tried to write and read the very large numbers that we came up with. Once 30 days passed and the girl had received over a million grains of rice, we looked back through the numbers of rice from each day and found patterns and made predictions. The class loved the story, and asked for it to be read again the next day!

Writer's Workshop

During Writer's Workshop, to set a purpose for writing, I modeled to the class what writers *do*. Students engaged in the writing process, working individually or collaboratively with a writing partner, while we conferenced with individual students. At the end of the writing session, students reconvene as a whole group to recap and reflect upon the experience.

This winter we learned about the genre, "Small Moments." We read many model texts that focused on expanding on a small moment for children to practice writing descriptive details and emotions. Some examples were *Owl Moon*, *Yard Sale* (this one was a big hit), *The Relatives Came*, and *The Magical Do-Nothing Day*. Using our experiences over winter break as "story seeds," the students planned their retelling orally before writing and illustrating it in 5-page booklets. Every student drafted multiple small moment stories before we choose one to revise and publish. Reflection and editing writing is critical for building the skill of self-assessment and writing for clarity so that our readers can better understand our ideas. Then we held a publishing party for our finished small moment texts for the parents and siblings.

This spring we completed our Poetry Genre study in Writer's Workshop. We discussed how poets describe the world differently, and discussed how we could make observations like a poet. Each child spent 15-20 minutes describing a rock or a stick, working to get beyond purely literal observations, into the imaginative. After two sessions, we then returned to our objects, but instead we became ants. What would an ant observe about the stick? What would be the same and what would be different? The following week we started writing poetry, using our observations of simple objects to guide us in writing poetry about animals and from the perspective of different animals. The selections from our poetry genre study were highlighted in another publishing party, and many students decided to use their poems as their submission in *Miquon Grass*, our whole-school book.

Math

Investigations is the math program we based our math work on this year, and we followed this program as our scope and sequence. Many lessons, games, and investigative work were from this program. We developed math activity centers to allow for smaller group instruction, and to practice the concepts we have learned.

A typical math lesson included teaching the topic or concept in a small group, using manipulatives to get a hands on view of the concept, and then processing the activity. We ensure that the children are able to learn and process the information through a multi-sensory approach of oral, visual, and kinesthetic experiences. Math topics this spring included number sense, numeration, operations (addition and subtraction), time, and graphing.

This winter, we introduced Math Cards, popularized by the educator Marcy Cook, and the students were very excited! Using logic and mathematical reasoning, the children filled the card with exactly 10 rubber tiles of each digit (like a Sudoku) as they built mathematical skills in a variety of areas--computation, money, time, early algebraic thinking, etc. When a child felt they

had completed a card correctly, a teacher marked it off, and they worked toward completing a whole set of 20 cards.

Over the Lunar New Year we were able to tie the celebration into many of our curricular areas. First, I told the children an oral version of the legend of the Chinese Zodiac, about the great race of animals and why cat and rat are enemies. Then we consulted a chart to determine which year we were born in. The children built a number line of the past 100 years and worked to find out which year was attributed to which of the 12 animals. They discovered many different patterns in our number line, and discussed how to calculate which year a person was born in based on how old they are now.

Periodically we had a "data day." On one day we collected the data of how many letters are in our names, and then discussed how best to display the data. We chose to make a bar graph. Many children reflected that this was a challenging chart to make since we needed to differentiate and label the axes in order to tell the difference between the number of letters in our names and the number of people.

In addition to these projects, we worked on telling time to the minute, used a hundreds chart to add and subtract groups of double digit numbers, solved story problems with addition and subtraction, learned about geometry and how to construct and deconstruct 2-d and 3-d shapes, and expanded number sense by developing strategies to add double digit numbers and determine place value.

Social Studies and Theme Studies

This winter we continued expanding our study of habitats. From their time in Kindergarten, the children knew what a habitat was, but we made a long list of questions about habitats they wanted to explore more thoroughly--which led us to a larger, deeper exploration, building upon what they learned in previous years. Some examples were: Can a habitat be in the air? Does a habitat change? Does the same animal always have the same kind of habitat? What animals have habitats at Miquon? Does everything have a habitat? Can a habitat have more than one animal in it? A few days later, when it snowed, we were provided with an exciting opportunity to begin to answer one of our questions: "What animals have habitats at Miquon?" The children noted that one way we can find evidence of animals is to look for tracks. So, we learned about different track shapes and went on a track-detective hike. We found many different tracks, including deer, rabbit, and fox.

We incorporated art and writing into our study, drawing a habitat, then adding animals living together, and finally writing about how they interacted. Afterwards, every child built a habitat in a box, using a variety of materials. Then they sculpted animals out of clay and wrote a story about their creatures.

This year we created a number of self portraits, and our final portrait tied in with our theme of habitats. We brainstormed all the different habitats we knew of, and I asked the children to

choose a habitat that they would most want to be in, real or imaginary, and then place themselves there. Kids sketched themselves at the beach, in their bedroom, on Platform 9 ¾ on the way to Hogwarts, and in Rainbow Unicorn Land, among others.

This spring, we followed students' interests and began incorporating more opportunities for dramatic play and performance. Many of our children put on plays and skits, both independently during Tinkering Time, or through guided Reader's Theater where we acted out the different characters as we read to the group. To continue to explore this interest, the 1/2 groups invited the organization, Story Up, to come and visit our classroom this for a workshop where we worked to write fairy tales, then used their costumes, props, and (with a little artistic direction) were able to put our stories "up" on stage!

At Miquon, we often are inspired by books we read, and work to dramatize and perform our favorites. One week, along with our fairy tales, we read "The Jolly Postman, or Other People's Letters" by Allan and Janet Ahlberg. Along with Ben and Celia's class, we developed and rehearsed a play based on the book. Over the course of this project and unit of study our students worked collaboratively between the two 1-2 classrooms. Our learners were able to:

- Deepen their sense of story
- Have an authentic purpose for rereading and developing fluency
- Develop confidence in front of an audience
- Know how to communicate in front of an audience

Our play was performed and enjoyed at our end of the year potluck for all first and second grade families.

Conference Week with Rich and Diego

For the spring conference week our group had the pleasure of working with Diego, our Music teacher. The kids were very excited to have Diego with us for conference week. Our study was based on a variety of literature with a music theme, and also focused on three artists--John Lennon, Bob Marley, and Bob Dylan. We completed a variety of writing projects, art projects, and even wrote our own song. The week culminated with a trip to Strath Haven High School in Wallingford, Pennsylvania, to visit their Music Department and meet some high school age musicians and their instruments.

We started our week by reading *The Music in Me* by Jane Pinczuk, which was a story about a young boy whose sister, brother, and parents were all musicians, and he wondered why he was not, and only later he discovered how he could make music in his own way. We then had a group discussion based on the questions, "What do you like about music?" and "What kind of music do you like?"

Later, the children and Diego went to the music room in half groups to read about and discuss our artist of the day, John Lennon, and read his book, *Imagine*. In the classroom, we read the story *88 Instruments* by Chris Barton, which was the story of a child who could not determine what instrument they wanted to play, and then discovered the piano, which has 88 instruments!

Rich found decks of playing cards that showed musical instruments and information about the various instruments. The children chose an instrument of interest, drew a picture of the instrument, and wrote about why they chose it. In the afternoon, we read the story *Zoola Palooza* by Gene Barretta, which contained many examples of homographs, words that are spelled the same, but have different meanings. We ended our day with a group sing of *Imagine* by John Lennon.

We then ventured into writing our own class song. To begin, we read the story *Home on the Range* by Steven Anderson. We discussed the steps in writing a song, first, determining a topic to write about, then figuring out a melody for the song, writing a chorus for between verses, and then actually writing a few verses for the song. All of this was done with the underlying idea of "What is the purpose for writing our song?" The final version of our song was titled *The Forest is Wild and Deep*, and talked a lot about the Miquon campus.

Again, Diego read about and discussed our artist of the day, Bob Marley, and read his book, *Every Little Thing*. In the classroom, we read *Harold Finds A Voice* by Courtney Dicmas. With this story, we completed a lesson about homonyms, where words sound the same, but may be spelled differently, and mean different things. The children got into pairs and wrote sentences together that contained examples of homonyms, after which, we shared our sentences.

In the afternoon, we read the story *Never Play Music Right Next to the Zoo* by John Lithgow. We had a book discussion with this story, we recalled the instruments seen in the story, and talked about the main character, what he did at the concert, and what constituted good concert etiquette. As a response to the book, we drew and labelled a picture of our favorite instrument from the story.

Old man winter helped to make the rest of conference week a little crazy. School was closed Wednesday, and we had a delayed opening on Thursday, so we had to postpone our field trip until after spring break. When we did finally get our chance to go to Strath Haven High School, the children had a really great time. Rich's son, Pat, is a music teacher and band director at Strath Haven, and he invited our group to come and talk with some of his students. His students performed for the children, and talked about how being involved in music helped them as students. The highlight of our trip, though, was the "instrument petting zoo," where several of Pat's students demonstrated their instruments for the children, and let them touch and even try to make music on them. The tuba and French horn were particularly favorites among the kids, and pardon the pun, but they got a "bang" out of the xylophones and bass drum, too. The trip was a great culmination of our week, and the children took from the week a greater appreciation for music.