



2017-18 Curriculum Report

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Social Emotional Learning

In January, we continued the foundational community building work we started in the fall. This evolved into giving children more responsibility during Good of the Group (GOTG) in the later months. When we met for bi-weekly for GOTG meetings, two of our students led the discussion, taking on a moderator role. By gradually increasing their responsibilities during this time, individuals became incredibly invested in this community building practice, and their peers took this opportunity seriously.

During this time, we often heard celebrations over class wide procedures, transitions, and taking responsibility for individual class jobs. There was also a reoccurring theme of difficulty during organized Choice time games, like football in the winter, and engaging in fair play when Gaga and Wiffle Ball became popular Choice time activities in the springtime. By having fellow peers moderate and run the GOTG meetings, our third and fourth graders were able to troubleshoot these community concerns together and practice some of the solutions they devised.

Choice was also a time for relationship building and connecting with new and old friends. We often saw children walking and talking, writing stories and poems together, creating plays and dance recitals on the playbarn, playing in the creek when the weather warmed up, and sometimes partaking in a weekly dance party in the room when the weather wasn't so great.

Going to specialists was also a popular Choice time activity; many kids enjoyed tinkering, experimenting, and building with Kate Shapero in Science. Some also enjoyed practicing a musical instrument or preparing for the talent show in Music with Diego Maugeri. Curling up with a good book or playing a game in the Library with Amy Vaccarella was always another popular option. The third and fourth graders here at Miquon were able to dive into their interests and spend their Choice time connecting with others all over the school who shared similar passions.

Language Arts

Reading

As the year progressed, our Language Arts program focused on furthering a love of reading and writing in the children of our group. The group continued to cherish its independent reading time and a daily class read-aloud. During these times, we explored habits of good readers, analyzed perspective and point of view, shared favorite characters, recommended books to each other, and identified new favorite vocabulary words.

When walking through our classroom, you could often find children cozying up in a camping chair and engaging deeply with a favorite book. Our group also met in small book clubs twice a week to work on targeted comprehension skills: making predictions; making text to self, text to text, or text to world connections; identifying character traits; and making inferences. Some favorite read aloud and book club readings were:

- *Pax*, by Sara Pennypacker
- *Bob*, Wendy Mass, Rebecca Stead
- *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, by Brian Selznick
- *Elijah of Buxton*, by Christopher Paul Curtis
- *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*, by Judy Blume
- *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry*, by Mildred D. Taylor
- *The Magic Treehouse: Twister on Tuesday*, by Mary Pope Osborne
- *The Arrow Over the Door*, by Joseph Bruchac

Writing

In January, we wrapped up our second larger writing project--Lenape journal entries. These entries were an immersive experience for the group because they wrote from the perspective of their own character in the Lenape village. Writers brought together what they learned about roles, responsibilities, and daily life in the Lenape village. Each member of the group wrote three journal entries from the perspective of their Lenape villager, taking into account hardships and struggles, customs and celebrations, and aspects of daily life of someone living in a Lenape village. We celebrated the hard work and growth of our writers by inviting families to an end of unit culminating publishing party.

In May and June, we connected our Language Arts and theme studies by writing small moment stories that took place during Colonial times. Before beginning our small moment writing unit, we used the mentor text, *A Different Pond*, to show how an author can pull a reader into one moment. Each day in Writing Workshop, teachers modeled how to use different parts of a "story mountain outline" as a guide while writing a small moment.

The group focused on a different part of their story during each writing period: the opening, build up, climax, resolution, and conclusion. By breaking down a story into small pieces, everyone in the group was able to spend all of their time and effort putting as much detail (sounds, smells, actions, dialogue) into each separate part of their own small moment. The writers in our group successfully implemented strategies to tell comprehensive, gripping stories, while seamlessly weaving in historical details coming from the point of view of someone growing up in Colonial America. The group was thrilled to share their small moments with families at our end of year play/potluck/publishing party.

In addition to the writing they've done during Writing Workshop, our writers also grew through morning journal prompts, poetry writing during conference week, and expository writing in response to *Time for Kids* magazines. The class continued to spend time each week on cursive writing practice through Handwriting Without Tears. Additionally, our word work groups met twice a week, getting tailored practice with specific spelling strategies in small groups.

Math

In addition to Jo Boaler's *Mathematical Mindsets*, and her *Positive Norms to Encourage a Math Class*, the 3/4 team used the *Focal Points* from the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics as a guide. The goal of these Focal Points is to assist schools with focusing on essential topics for each grade level and to go into greater depth exploring and extending these concepts, rather than simply "touching on" every possible math skill (www.nctm.org).

These are the third grade Focal Points:

Number and Operations and Algebra: Developing understandings of multiplication and division and strategies for basic multiplication facts and related division facts
Number and Operations: Developing an understanding of fractions and fraction equivalence
Geometry: Describing and analyzing properties of two-dimensional shapes

These are the fourth grade Focal Points, which relate well to those above but take them further:

Number and Operations and Algebra: Developing quick recall of multiplication facts and related division facts and fluency with whole number multiplication
Number and Operations: Developing an understanding of decimals, including the connections between fractions and decimals
Measurement: Developing an understanding of area and determining the areas of two-dimensional shapes

The concepts explored during the second half of the year centered around several units of study:

- Factors, multiples, and arrays; applying multiplication and division
- Parts and wholes: understanding and using fractions
- Measurement and Geometry

Our mathematical work overlapped regularly with Language Arts through math-themed picture books and stories, or writing our own story problems. Trying to explain one's thinking in written words encourages children to think about math as a discipline that connects to others, while also solidifying concepts. Math journals and games encouraged a different way of thinking how math can be used. One favorite time each week in both rooms was when we used Marcy Cook math centers - tile activities that included many different topics and allowed kids to enter at different levels and work independently in a fun and relaxed setting. This spring we introduced several challenging new centers to further explore fractions and division.

Whenever possible, we incorporated Miqon's natural environment into our math explorations. For instance, when reviewing measurement, children in Rachel and Marie's room went outside in small groups to measure areas of campus. They brought their findings back to the group and

built three-dimensional models, to scale. Meanwhile, children in Wendy and Sara's group used a 10-foot string to estimate and measure the height of familiar locations on campus, and incorporated their study of map scale into the fairy tale world maps they created.

The mix of active outdoor and indoor math work was another way we reached a range of students and integrated our bodies and brains. For some children, the geometry work extended into calculating area and perimeter, and an exploration of properties of three-dimensional solids.

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?

Winter and Spring Theme Study

Following on the three months spent learning about the daily lives of the Lenape people of the region where we live, we continued to study the region's environment and the changes for local people in the 1600 and 1700's.

We started in March with a close look at maps and how to understand place through geography study. Our groups looked at historical maps of Philadelphia, as we tried to understand both the establishment of what became modern day Center City and the impact of the European's arrival on landscape and lives of the Lenape.

We took a close look at a historical account of life along the Wissahickon Creek today. Children were dismayed to learn about the multiple factors that led to the drastic decline in the Lenape population between 1500 and 1700, from violence between tribes, sickness introduced by Europeans, and displacement from their land by the colonists. These facts had deeper meaning for them after months of learning about Lenape family and communities life. We explored other topics like history of mills all along the local creeks and rivers in the 1600's, and how these dramatically changed life for the fish and wildlife.

Perspectives

As we read a wide variety of picture and chapter books about the history of colonial America, the children learned to be "history detectives." When we read an article that took on a white European-dominant perspective of the early explorers and their experiences arriving in "the New World," we focused on helping the group to become "history detectives," encouraging them to ask who is telling the story, whose voices are left out, and what is the author trying to convey about history? We asked how we could rewrite this article to make it more historically accurate and to reflect multiple perspectives.

To further our discussion of perspective, we added a historical simulation activity in both 3/4 classrooms. Each child chose a name, age, and a role or trade for their character, many time creating elaborate backstories based on what they had learned about why the English of the 1600's in particular chose to come to this region to establish new communities. Many children studied a trade and created a project for their end-of-year potluck event.

In Rachel and Marie's room, small groups collaborated on buildings and artifacts for a specific piece of Colonial village life. In Wendy and Sara's room, partners worked together on buildings to house the life or work of their Colonial characters, including a gristmill, milliner's shop, blacksmith forge, and farmhouse. The spring study of three dimensional geometry was incorporated into the buildings that all the children designed.

Through the activities of this year, we looked at the actions of the new villagers from the perspective of their Lenape characters from the fall simulation, considering how vastly the telling of historical events will change based on the point of view of the one who is speaking.

Field Trips

Several field trips this year enriched our work in the classroom and created great memories for the children:

- **Cradles to Crayons** - We continued our longstanding service learning connection with this local nonprofit in Conshohocken, which "provides children living in homeless or low-income situations with the essential items they need to thrive." First there was a school-wide collection drive, followed by a sorting of the items as part of our Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service event. Each 3/4 group then traveled to the Cradles to Crayons warehouse on a field trip, to deliver the collected supplies and help with a project at the facility.
- **Independence Seaport Museum** - This trip was a chance for each 3/4 group to connect with their science work around boat design and the water cycle, as well as our studies of the ways people long ago lived on the waterways of the region. It was good to travel downtown and see the Delaware River in person, and think about how it might have looked before the 1600's. At the museum, we were able to learn more about the early explorers, why they traveled over, what their journey was like, and what life was like when they arrived. We also toured a fascinating boat building workshop.
- **Pennsbury Manor** - In April we traveled with the entire 3/4 on a yellow school bus to visit this recreated of the 1686 country home of William Penn, his family, servants, and enslaved people. We were able to experience first hand what daily life would have been like on the Manor. Both of our groups were able to practice daily chores, they tried writing with a quill, and explored the rooms within Pennsbury Manor. Many of the children's questions on the trip surrounded the disconnect between Penn's expressed opposition to the institution of slavery and the presence of enslaved people on his own property.

The Play

A highlight of the year for both groups was the combined play, which we performed at the end of the year. We always look forward to producing a cumulative play for the 3/4. It is a great opportunity for kids to practice fluency and expression, to connect with other children across the grade band, and it encourages children to step outside of their comfort zone as they learn to communicate in front of a larger audience.

This year, instead of one longer play, we chose to split it up into four smaller skits. About ten kids from both 3/4 groups met regularly with one teacher to go choose their roles, go over lines,

make their own props and costumes, paint beautiful sets, and to practice working together on stage with a different mix of children. The scripts, which were read to the whole $\frac{3}{4}$ grouping prior play practice, were adapted from Native American folktales. The culminating play included adaptations of *Mother Corn and the Lenape*, *Ant and Bear*, *The Gift of the Maple Tree*, and *Dinner with the Bears*. Together, these folktales taught the group lessons about Lenape daily life and how customs came to be. The children were often captivated by the clarity of their explanations. The final performances for families and then for the school were a perfect culmination of our Theme studies together.

In Closing

This has been a wonderful year of growth together in Rachel and Marie's group. We were amazed at how each child really grew--not only physically, but emotionally and intellectually, as well. We saw each child make new friends, discover new interest and deepen existing ones, and form a stronger understanding of him or herself as a learner. The year included some very memorable moments: our Lenape village simulation, writing Colonial small moments, creating a Colonial village, and making a relief map of the Miquon campus. By the end of the year, they got to know one another really well and shared a love of tinkering, building, creating, and performing. Not only that, but they were all members of a dynamic community of learners, creators, explorers, and adventurers. They learned so much from one another and that really made for a year of significant growth for each of the members of our group.

Thank you for all of the parent support we have received this year, especially from our class parents, chaperones, and occasional classroom volunteers, as well as to each of you who offered your encouragement and gratitude in various ways this year. I felt a lot of love and support from each of you, especially during the beginning of the school year. Coming to Miquon everyday and having the opportunity to teach alongside Marie, with all of your children, was a true gift for me. I'll be forever grateful for your warmth, understanding, and generosity during a difficult time.

On another note, we were thrilled to collaborate so closely and deeply with Wendy and Sara for another year; we have all deepened our understanding of progressive education and practice, and benefited from each of our interests and expertise. I want to thank you for a wonderful year; we learned so much from your children. I hope you all have a wonderful and restful summer break!