



## **2018-19 Curriculum Report**

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### **Building a Community**

The curricular centerpiece of the first week of school is writing our Hopes and Dreams that we use to create class agreements on the second week. We also spend much of the week learning class routines (how do we respond to the chime? How do I make it known that I have something to share? How do I remove books from the classroom library?). Very few things are too small to teach, and when we can do these little things well and automatically we have a lot more time to devote to the bigger ideas.

A sample day in the 1-2 group:

- Morning Meeting with morning greeting and easel message; sharing, schedule review; improv or math game (What are you doing? Sparkle)
- Foundations phonics and Reading Workshop
- Snack choice
- Math Workshop in quarter groups and specialist
- Lunch choice
- Lunch
- Quiet time: read, write, or draw/tinkering
- Writing Workshop
- Readaloud
- Closing meeting

### **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.

For the first six weeks of school, we engaged in **Guided Discovery**, a practice developed by The Responsive Classroom Approach that promotes purposeful, responsible use and care of classroom materials and supplies. After modeling the ways to effectively use materials, we gave the children time to explore, become inspired, and experiment with their ideas. In this way, using specific resources purposefully and creatively benefits academic learning. A few weeks later, we opened a Tinkering Workshop that required the children to respond to the following challenge: *What can you make using three pieces of assorted paper remnants, tissue paper, tape, glue, scissors, and pencils?* After some brief modeling on how to begin, ideas simmered and flowed about the room, and the children worked independently on their constructions, experimenting and making adjustments as needed. Planning and problem solving for themselves, along with encouraging and helping their peers, can increase self-confidence in children. Also established are norms and routines for storing and clean-up of materials. The children are at the center of this process!

To begin sparking dialogue to support our school-wide focus questions, *What do you notice and what do you wonder?* we read aloud the following stories: *The Day You Begin*, by Jacqueline Woodson, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to School*, by Benjamin Chaud and Davide Cali, and Roald Dahl's short novelette, *The Minpins*.

In September we also introduced the children to **Turn & Talk**, where they worked in partnerships to discuss one of their favorite animals. After we modeled how effective and equitable sharing about a given topic can happen successfully, the children practiced listening carefully to their partners, using eye contact, and mutually contributing during the share for approximately 1 minute each. It's important to practice pair shares and Turn & Talk at the beginning of the year using nonacademic topics, such as favorite animals or meals, because Turn & Talk is integral to classroom culture. By using it regularly, students know the expectations of listening, wondering, and explaining their thinking. This year, as we explored big ideas in math, reading, and social studies, the children used Turn & Talk as another opportunity to synthesize ideas through productive discourse. Coming together as a group and asking the children to evaluate their experience promotes their independence with communicating: Did you take turns talking and listening? Did you stay on topic? Did you ask clarifying questions? Later that month, working in partnerships, we made collaborative drawings. The purpose of this exercise is to plan together, consider each other's ideas and perspectives, and work collaboratively within the same space. The children enthusiastically shared the stories that developed as they drew together.

## **Theme/Social Studies**

### **Identity: People, Places, and Environment**

*Essential Questions: What makes a neighborhood? What makes a community?*

To launch our social studies big idea of **Identity: People, Places, and Environment**, we noticed and wondered about our **personal identity**, which the children described as "your hair color, your skin

color...something that you have that nobody else has...your personality, what makes you you." After discovering that our identity conversation inspired some of the children to share the meaning and story of their first names ("My name means The Prayer." "My name means "Little Flame." "I was named after..."), we sent out formal requests to families to share their child's **name stories**, if the child was interested in sharing. We also completed our self-portrait (the first of three in the year). After we looked at a variety of self-portraits of several well-known artists, we noticed how they each had different styles and approaches to how they express their identity, like us. "Now I'm really excited to add more to my self-portrait," one of the children remarked. We incorporated our second self-portraits of the year with a class book project that paid homage to the storybook, *The Important Book*, by Margaret Wise Brown. To begin the drawing process, the children learned how to reproduce and enlarge their image from a photograph to a drawing, similar to the technique of artist Chuck Close. We used template viewfinders to help us match each square on the photo with the corresponding square on the grid of our drawing paper. This project allowed the children to practice counting rows and columns to figure out position and helps them visualize how many parts make a whole, even if they look like tiny abstract drawings in each square.

**Welcoming the Grandparents and Special Friends** was certainly a high point of October, and their answers to several questions posed by the children were part of our **Identity study**. In the following weeks we sorted our collected data and compared it with our own responses and responses across more generations. Some of the questions included *Did you walk to school? What was your favorite food when you were little? How many siblings did you have? What was your favorite movie when you were little? What did you like to do when you were a kid?* Analyzing this data supported some essential questions of our study: How does my understanding of who I am change over time? How do our families explain who we are?

After reading *If I Were a Tree*, by Dar Hosta, we pondered what it means for a tree to have an identity. Inspired by Dar's narrative (What tree would you be? How would it be to be that tree?), we let the ideas flow. We displayed the many identi-trees, such as the pomegranate, the dead tree with red eyes, climbing and swinging trees, and the winter tree for the tomte and fairies.

Our identity study is interdisciplinary because how we make meaning of who we are can be layered with language arts, social relationships, math, science, visual art, and movement and dance, to name a few. Learning Specialist Rossana Zapf helped us explore an often big part of our identity, our hair. To expand our perspectives about hair and identity, Rossana read a vignette from Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* called, "Pellitos," in which Sandra describes how everyone in her family has something important and meaningful about their hair: *My Papa's hair is like a broom, all up in the air. And me, my hair is lazy. It never obeys barrettes or bands.* Someone shared, "All the color of the heads in the family are different." Thinking about the attributes and characteristics of our hair sparked lots of noticing and wondering as we wrote about our hair color, length, and texture on separate cards. "My hair is like the Milky Way." "My hair is short and curly and feels soft." Rossana made a Venn diagram using two hoops and placed one of our cards on the left side. "If you think your hair is wavy, place your name in this area." When she placed a card that said dark brown on the right side, some of us wondered where to place our names if our hair is wavy and dark brown. We figured out that the middle area of the diagram where the circles overlap shows that both sides apply to your hair identity. We placed our hair outside the circles if both of the attributes did not apply. The children discovered that even if we have noticeable differences, we also share many similarities. Using the Venn diagram helped us to see and understand the relationships between two characteristics and how our identities can intersect in exciting ways.

**Community Service:** At morning meeting in early December, we talked about how Face to Face, an organization in Germantown dedicated to the well-being of families and individuals, has a wish list of items. Some of the children spoke about the meaning of a wish list, sharing how they get excited about giving things to their family members. We talked about how we could help Face to Face with their wish list so that they can make meals for guests who are in need of good food and warmth in their dining hall. We read that Face to Face needs many ingredients such as spices, evaporated milk, coconut milk, and ground coffee. The children began to brainstorm what they might contribute. "Can we bring in cinnamon?" "How about pesto--is that a spice?" "Are we going to bring it to Face to Face?" We also made signs with the complete wish list that the kids eagerly sent to Miquon classrooms. The children enjoyed sorting and organizing the incoming wishlist items. Service learning promotes compassion and responsibility beyond our classroom community. Before Winter Break, some of us and our family members stopped by Face to Face in Germantown to deliver a trunk load of ingredients that our classroom, with the help of other classrooms, gathered for their community kitchen wishlist.

We sent Ben off to Dublin, Ireland, with our class Book of Questions (title inspired by The Book of Kells, which we wondered whether Ben and his family would see at Trinity College at the University). We each thought of questions to ask Ben to answer for us during his stay, such as *What is the name of your apartment? Will you go fishing? Are there dungeons and castles? Are there fairies? What kind of food are you eating? What are you drinking? Are there mountains?* Also, Dublin is 5 hours ahead of Philadelphia time, so we regularly focused on telling time to the hour, half hour, and quarter hour over this winter. **We welcomed Learning Specialist Jen Curyto to our classroom to join Celia while Ben was abroad!**

To talk with the children about how our classroom community expectations promote fairness and equity, we used age-appropriate curriculum resources from Teaching Tolerance and [blacklivesmatteratschool.com](http://blacklivesmatteratschool.com) to share how Black Lives Matter is made up of a community of people who want to make sure that everyone is treated fairly, regardless of the color of their skin. After listening to a story by Aya De Leon that she wrote for young children about Bree Newsome and why she took down the confederate flag, our kids engaged in honest, comfortable, highly perceptive dialogue. The story tells of pirates who treated people unkindly and unfairly. "There's no such thing as winning a war or losing a war...you can't really win it." "I think she [Bree Newsome] did what was right because no one likes it when people boss them around." "I agree. She had a right to take it down." "I'm not sure that I'm on anyone's side. The pirates stopped doing bad things and it's just a flag. That's their property." "I think they were right to take it down. It sounds like they were trying to forget the time when their family was treated unfairly."

As we read *Carmela Full of Wishes*, by Matt de la Peña and Christian Robinson, we asked the children to share things they noticed and wondered about Carmela's neighborhood. Their observations and connections led to a conversation about the definition of a neighborhood and a sharing of what see and do in our neighborhoods: *a group of houses next to each other; 11 or 12 streets put together with stores or restaurants; they can include a square with a cafe; a big street that goes to the city; sometimes not a lot so you have to ride a bike or drive to shops; people who are friends; you might not know a lot of people; people who say hi because they're probably grandparents whose children aren't living with them anymore; a corner store and lots of big spaces and gaps; near my grandparents.* The children noticed that Carmela and her brother lived in a neighborhood with a locksmith shop and laundromat, but they could also walk to the ocean. We also shared our perspectives and experiences about what it means to be a citizen: *You could live in many places. I'm a citizen of Costa Rica and the Poconos. Somebody who is from one country. I know that I'm a citizen from Philly. Everything can be a citizen somewhere. A person in a town. Citizens are inside a city. What do the authors mean when they say "A citizen is what you do?" That it's not all about you. Don't be selfish...you have to help, too. Help other people and do stuff for people.*

The children kept "community journals" for adding drawings and their observations about the various communities that they experience away from school. Rosanna shared some of her journal pages that included a community farm and a yoga studio. They reflected with Rossana earlier that a community is "people coming together, where people do things together, sometimes from different families; block parties, parks, gardens or farms; when people work together to make their place better, joining a group...being a part of what they're doing." Our goal for this journaling project was to deepen the children's understanding of how community extends beyond our classroom in so many special, important ways.

In April we made a collaborative repurposed assemblage inspired by the magic art of Tyree Guyton (*Magic Trash: A Story of Tyree Guyton and His Art*, by J.H. Shapiro and Vanessa Brantley-Newton) and the Heidelberg Project in Detroit, Michigan. Also, the children wrote opinion pieces that responded to the question: Do you think Tyree's Magic Trash helped the community? Why or Why not?

### **Combined 1-2 Play: "Hey, Wall."**

For this year's 1-2 play we chose to dramatize the picture book, Hey, Wall! We were drawn to this book because of its subject of community and specifically community-created art; and also because of its sparse but evocative text. The children could build fleshed-out scenes on the framework provided. We began by reading and discussing the book as a group. Teachers took notes to capture student thinking and use it to frame some of the work to come. In a session that followed we reread each scene from the book (rarely more than 5 lines of text), after which different groups of children improvised a performance based on that page or two. More notes were taken by teachers--ideas that came out, some specific dialogue, staging and prop thoughts the children had-- and from there children were assigned to a specific scene based on their interests. Then began a month of idea generation, organization, implementation,

Over the course of several weeks our students worked collaboratively with the other 1-2 classroom. In this work we sought to deepen the children's sense of story, provide them with an authentic purpose for rereading and developing fluency, help them develop confidence in front of an audience.

Both 1/2 rooms began to buzz with excitement the moment we announced that we were putting on a play and the buzz grew steadily louder as the performance date approached. We began rehearsing the scenes from our play during half group time and after approximately 1 week ran through it with all 37 children. It was wonderful to watch them take a script and move beyond it-- suggesting prop ideas, blocking revisions, and ad-libbing dashes of 7 and 8-year-old humor--they really worked to make it their own.

Our production also gave the children real world practice in helping to develop and manage a project. We all built executive functioning skills along the way as we made lists, gathered materials together, decided who would take up what technical aspects of the show, and weighed various priorities as the show fast approached. We think all the children would agree that it was 6 weeks meaningfully spent.

In May, the children's Self-Portrait #3 was inspired by *Crescent Moons and Pointed Minarets: A Muslim Book of Shapes*, by Hena Khan and Mehrdokht Amini. They painted a setting that was important to them that depicted a particular time of day, such as a sunset or rainy afternoon. The settings were combinations

of fantastic, imaginary places along with familiar neighborhoods or favorite places. The mixed media work included geometric shapes with collage and paper cut-outs that projected their identity. Some children chose to be dragons and other winged creatures; some decided to place themselves in places they know well, such as the city skyline, sitting on the clouds reading a book, or climbing a tree in a backyard in Sweden.

**Mentor texts that we read to support our study of identity and community:**

*The Day You Begin*, Jacqueline Woodson

*The Hen Who Dreamed She Could Fly*, Sun-mi Hwang

*Charlotte's Web*, E.B. White

*The Can Man*, Laura E. Williams and Craig Orback

*Starring Grace*, Mary Hoffman

*Dragons in a Bag*, Zetta Elliott

*Carmela Full of Wishes*, Matt de la Peña and Christian Robinson

*Magic Trash: A Story of Tyree Guyton and His Art*, J.H. Shapiro and Vanessa Brantley-Newton

*What Can a Citizen Do?* Dave Eggers and Shawn Harris

*Hey Wall: A Story of Art and Community*, Susan Verde and John Parra

*26 Fairmount Avenue*, Tomie dePaola

*Bears Make Rock Soup*, Lise Erdrich and Lisa Fifield

*Mina vs. the Monsoon*, Rukhsanna Guidroz and Debasmitta Dasgupta

*Crescent Moons and Pointed Minarets: A Muslim Book of Shapes*, Hena Khan and Mehrdokht Amini

*City Green*, DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan

*My Heart Is a Compass*, Deborah Marcero

**Math**

The 1-2 team used the TERC *Investigations* elementary mathematics curriculum that develops mathematics content to scaffold student thinking and understanding. “Making sense of mathematics is the heart of the work, for students and teachers.” We also used Cathy Fosnot’s *Landscape of Learning* that supports a growth trajectory through activities and context that are structured to facilitate development and guide children to new landmarks through strategies, big ideas, and models.

**These are the first grade *Investigations* main math ideas and goals that we studied this year:**

Number and Operations

- Understanding and extending the counting sequence, representing, and solving problems involving addition and subtraction, equivalence, using knowledge of place value to add and subtract

Geometry

- Describing, identifying, and comparing attributes of 2D shapes, composing and decomposing 2D shapes, relating 2-D shapes and 3-D shapes

Measurement

- Understanding length, using linear units, telling time by the hour and half hour

**These are the second grade *Investigations* main math ideas and goals that we studied this year:**

Number and Operations

- Understanding and extending the counting sequence, fluency within 20, representing and solving problems involving addition and subtraction, using knowledge of place value to add and subtract, visualizing equal groups in the structure of arrays, describing and representing equal groups as the foundation of multiplication

#### Geometry

- Describing, identifying, and comparing attributes of 2D shapes, visualizing the structure of arrays, visualizing equal groups in the structure of arrays

#### Fractions

- Understanding equal parts of a whole

#### Measurement

- Using linear units, measuring with standard units, telling time to the hour and minute

**Both grades as a whole group studied sorting and classifying, collecting and representing data, describing and interpreting data.**

### Setting up the math community

At the beginning of the year, we set up math talk norms and expectations to support a growth mindset: Mistakes will be valued at all times. When people make mistakes, their brains are growing. Questions are really important. We aimed to engage in number talks that value students' different ways of seeing math and solving problems. We asked learners to draw their solutions in their math journals and explain their thinking. Establishing working agreements generates more student ownership. Once social skills are secure, we can learn in a supportive environment.

"A graph keeps data." "It's a way of counting something." "Organize..." "The marks map out clues."

The children were highly intrigued by graphs. Charting the daily temperature on our weather graph and measuring the amount of names by their initial letter have sparked new questions: What if it's really cold in November? When will it dip below the freezing line? What is freezing? Could the line go up again? What if we graph the names of everyone in the entire school? What beginning letter is in most names? Am I the only one with A at the beginning of my name? Does anyone's name begin with a Y at Miquon? (Our next step was to chart the first letter of every name at Miquon!) As they graphed data and engaged in number talks within the context of classroom routines and real-life situations, the children investigated big ideas such as part-whole relationships and even unitizing

In the fall, **the first graders agreed to make a book documenting how they problem solved for a grocer who needed two kinds of apples in a box of five and then in a box of ten.** They preferred to title the book *Apples for Mr. Gomez or An Adventure of Some Mistakes* after several children shared that "Mistakes make adventures. Because you'll try it a different way. Like scientists. Fail and try again." The children decided to challenge themselves with different numbers after they noticed that "the number of combinations is always one less the number of apples." Should we try other numbers to make sure of this? They tried 24 apples, 70 apples, and began finding the combinations for 100 apples! As they graphed their possible combinations into a staircase pattern, they mathematized that as one apple is gained, one is lost, **demonstrating an understanding of equivalence and compensation.** To celebrate the end of this unit, we played Part-Whole Bingo! **The second graders began to develop addition strategies to support their mental computation of double-digit numbers,** and their thinking was represented on a measuring strip across the chalkboard as leaps on an open number line. They played the game of Leapfrog, which promotes the strategy of **keeping one number whole and taking leaps of ten,** using the place value pattern.

In the winter, **the first grade developed an understanding of length by knowing when to start and stop measuring, how units must be lined up without gaps or overlap, and how to measure in a**

**straight line from point to point.** As they investigated linear measurement, they used cubes, paper clips, and inch tiles as units. This work provides the context for solving the differences in length in comparison problems. They also worked in partnerships to solve the missing (covered) numbers on the 100 chart. They worked carefully as they listed the five numbers that they found missing, and they played four rounds! **The second grade identified more complex equivalencies involving different combinations of coins, which aligns with the unit's focus of counting by groups and using one number to stand for a collection of objects.** They played Collect \$2.00, where each player rolls dice and collects the number rolled in cents until the group makes the total amount, such as \$2.00. The challenge begins as the players count by 5s and 10s to see what they have so far and how much more money they need to collect. They also decide what combination of coins to collect, using the least amount of coins for efficiency. **They completed their Counting by Equal Groups unit where they (1) investigated numbers that can and cannot be made into groups of two or two equal groups (through Partners and Teams stories); (2) characterized even and odd numbers as those that do or do not make groups of two; and (3) considered whether observations about even or odd numbers apply to all even or odd numbers by sharing what they discovered on chart paper.** "Doubles always give us an even number." "They can always be split into two equal parts." They also shared strategies of counting sets of objects and considered the relationship between skip counting and grouping: *How many legs are in a classroom of 18 students? 29 students?*

**In the spring, the first grade worked on finding equivalent equations.** They discussed how they understood that  $7+6 = 10+3$ , for example. Their discussions and activities focus on addition and subtraction strategies, using what they learned about the combinations of 10 over the course of this year. **The second grade used real-world problems to review the following focus points: They used tables to represent and predict change and worked with numeric sequences as they constructed, described, and extended patterns.** If we make a structure with three rooms on one floor, and then keep adding a floor with the same number of rooms, how can we complete and extend a table to match this situation? If each floor has 5 rooms, how many rooms would there be if there were six floors? If a floor has 5 rooms, what is the total number of rooms if there were 21 floors? **They also focused on using a place-value model and expanded form to represent 3-digit numbers as hundreds, tens, and ones and adding and subtracting 3-digit numbers accurately. In May and June they investigated the many ways fractions can be represented and used.**

The [Art of Math Challenge](#) was an inquiry-based, student-led experiential process that invited students from schools from Philadelphia and surrounding areas to design and build a 3D scale model of one of three paintings selected by the Barnes Foundation. The children explored the following math concepts during this : (1) number, (2) shape, (3) space, and (4) size. The Challenge required a written statement to accompany each model that presented our students' thinking using math language appropriate to their level of study that reflects their selected math strategies in solving problems during the design and building process. One group, The Ancients, designed and constructed Interior Scene, Unidentified artist, late 18th or 19th century. Another group collaborated in making a scale model of The Raft, by William Glackens, 1915. Both groups used a similar strategy of using the height of one of their constructed figures to calculate the measurement of everything else in relation to that figure, such as furniture and boats. Students had to troubleshoot and readjust sizes when they confronted unexpected problems during the investigation. "Wait, the smallest person has to be taller because look how the two stools are so much bigger." "Is the bed longer than the smallest person? How many Unifix cubes more should it be?"



## Language Arts

### Reading

In September, we reflected on Our Special Reading Memories and turned them into a class book. We completed most of our children's reading assessments, and we shared with the group that decoding is just a "sliver" of the reading process pie. The pie mostly consists of comprehension, or meaning making, which is the richest, tastiest part of the pie! Kathy Collins, author of *Growing Readers*, notes that "a way to uncover the reading identities of our students is to have them sketch their favorite reading memories."

The children began learning how **readers use strategies to figure out words** in Reading Workshop. Through one-on-one teacher conferences, minilessons, Foundation phonics instruction, and weekly Guided Reading groups led by Learning Specialist Jen Curyto, they worked on acquisition of print strategies, such as picture clues and meaning clues and figuring out words by noticing the beginning letters and ends of the words. Each child browsed in our bins weekly to select a few books with our guidance from our leveled library plus a few unleveled books that also feel "just right." These teaching points support the following goals for our readers: **use a variety of print strategies; check for sense; self-correct; develop an ear for fluent reading and ways for making their own reading fluent; and choose books that support their work with print.**

We held many Book-Tasting events. Batches of recently delivered books were displayed for "tasting" and for writing or drawing a recommendation about a selected book. The bright yellow Post-it notes made it even more special!

### Writing Workshop

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.

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

**Hike and Write:** Twice monthly the class participated in Hike and Write. Spending time walking and skipping in fresh air and "noticing and wondering" energizes us and inspires us as writers. Think about what looks, sounds, feels, smells like a treasure. 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.

In October, we began our **Information Writing unit of study**. The learning progressions for Information Writing focus on Structure, Development, and Language Conventions. Through small-group conferences and mini-lessons, the writer learns to (1) teach readers about a subject; (2) tell different parts about their topic on different pages; (3) put facts in their writing to teach about a topic; (4) use different kinds of information in their writing such as facts, definitions, details, steps, and tips; (5) use labels and words that showed they were an expert on the subject; (6) use what they know about spelling patterns to help them spell; (7) use the word wall to help them figure out words; and (8) end sentences with punctuation and use capital letters and quotation marks appropriately.

After finishing the first draft of her How-to book, a student pondered, "I'm thinking that my next How-To will be *How to Make a How-to Book*." As writers, the children understood how to plan and add important steps for their readers during the revision process. We provided a mini-lesson that demonstrated how our readers might need more information while following the steps in our books. Partnership peer review helped our writers find out if anything seemed unclear or if more steps could be added. We reminded everyone that when we read a How-to book, the author usually isn't present to explain anything that seems questionable. We published our How-To books in early December with a celebration that included our older buddies who came to hear the How To books and write comments. It was such a sweet time and left our kids feeling empowered and proud.

In March, we launched our **"All About" unit of study** in Writing Workshop, looking at ways to organize a Table of Contents and examining the different features that are included in information books. The children selected their topics of avid interest or expertise including All About Sports, All About Sweden, All About New York City, All About Norse Mythology, All About Bees, All About Basketball, to name a few. Our writers created their Table of Contents and began first drafts of their chapters. As we conferred with small groups, we referred back to minilessons where we modeled mapping out a chapter. The children learned to revise their work as they asked "How can I say more and teach more in my book?"

**Open Writers' Studio** gave families an opportunity to see the writing process up close. Our writers explained what they're doing in the revision stage of the writing cycle of their informational books. During a Q & A session, several writers described what happens when they confer with a partner and with a teacher. "The partner gives feedback." "With a compliment." "We also think of different ways to say something's amazing."

In May and June, the children eagerly created stories in our **Narrative Fiction unit of study**. The book *Ralph Tells a Story*, by Abby Hanlon, generated an empathetic response from the children about Ralph's frustration with finding an idea for a story. We introduced them to the story map and 5-finger retelling chart, which helps writers choose a way to start a story, chose the action, talk, or setting, bring characters to life with details, and choose words that would help readers picture the story. We provided them with a small booklet of stapled pages that they used to begin their story and as it outgrows the pages we give them another. These "signatures" (book-binding term) can be bound together to create a longer book. Everyone had an idea of what they wanted to write about and were excited to get to work. Some dove right into their first chapter; some wrote a prologue; others began with illustrations.

## **Field Trips**

Production of *Charlotte's Web* at the Arden Theatre, December 18, 2018

The Barnes Foundation: Delivering our Art of Math models; viewing the collection and the original paintings depicted in our scaled models; Moore College of Art Gallery, and Mural Walk, February 22, 2019

Wyck Garden and Farm/Mural Walk, June 5, 2019

As part of our community study we were joined by Marea and Sara's 1/2 class to visit the working farm in Germantown. We weeded, planted, and mulched to prepare the garden for summer harvesting, which prompted the children to make connections to the story, *City Green*, by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan. We also saw how murals can transform a site into awe-inspiring art, which reminded us of *Hey, Wall*.

### **Mini--mini-courses**

In the fall, our Wednesday afternoon mini--mini-courses were wonderful opportunities to bond with our friends from Marea and Sara's group and with our four 1-2 teachers and science teachers Kate and Arielle as we explored curious interests or favorite pursuits. Some of the workshops featured wire sculpting, slime & potions, friendship bracelets, fort building, and circuitry. Later, other courses included paper folding, creek study, leaf hikes and leaf pressing, fairy, tomten, and gnome houses, woodshop, forts, and making clay animals.

**Fall Conference Week:** Led by Science Specialist Kate Shapero and Aubrey DiSanto, the children explored the ideas of gratitude and harvest celebrations. They blended literature, song, science, art, and math to create a week that focuses on both personal and global meanings of appreciation. Some focus questions included What does gratitude mean in daily life? How do we cultivate it? How do different cultures make space for it? What is ripe at this time of year? How do seasonal cycles nourish us? How do we prepare and appreciate food?.

**Spring Conference Week:** Led by Jen Curyto and Art Specialist Nicole Batchelor, the children explored the stories and illustrations created by Patricia Polacco. Some of the essential questions guiding our discoveries included:

- How do an author/illustrator's personal journey and identity inform their writing and art?
- How are the shared experiences of the characters in stories influenced by relationships with people from different cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds?
- What kinds of bias do individuals and groups experience because of their race, orientation, or religion?
- What can one person's art and stories inspire us to create?

Surrounding this very profound exploration, much time was spent journaling, doodling, baking (and eating!), quilting, collaging, dancing with Mariama O'Brien, and of course, playing together.

### **Cross-grade "Buddy" Partnerships**

We built solid, endearing friendships with our 5th-6th grade buddies this year. We met weekly or biweekly to share time reading with each other, hiking together to the neighboring horse farm, and gathering leaves and dried flowers to make autumn centerpieces and sprays. The groups created memorable bonds as they played Town Ball on the woodchip field, collaborated on expansive Lego structures, and played games on the playground. The 1-2 group hosted a publishing party for our buddies to join us to read or listen to our How-To books. We really appreciated their thoughtful, positive, and enthusiastic feedback.

**In Closing:** During the last week of school, we watched a slideshow of 650 pictures that spanned our 10 months together. The room was filled with sentimental reflection in between exclamations of "There I am! There I am! That's me!" Most importantly, along with the laughter and even some teary eyes, there was a strong sense of belonging. Later, the children revisited their hopes and dreams from the beginning of the year. Many of them came into fruition, while others might wonderfully take more time, such as catching lots of caterpillars and snow tubing. Thank you, Families. We're grateful for learning alongside your children!