



2018-19 Curriculum Report

June 2019

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Community and Daily Routines

This year, Wendy & Rich's group is composed of 10 third and 8 fourth graders. They are an energetic and curious group of children who have been such fun to get to know. 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 a theme of "Noticing and Wondering" throughout the 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.

Here is a sample day in the 3/4:

- Morning work: writing or math journals, handwriting, board games
- 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 or Literacy Centers
- Whole group work, often in Theme studies, and class read-aloud
- Outdoor Choice and Lunch
- Half group time: Specialists for one group, Math groups 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. We gathered monthly 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.

Favorite games to play in the winter included games like Zeus on the Loose and Sleeping Queens indoors, and tag, soccer, or basketball outdoors. Spring brought the resurgence of baseball and wiffle ball games, and many members of the 3/4 were faithful daily participants. Others loved monkey bars, Red Rover, or four-square. Both tag and four square gave us chances this year to talk through what it looks like for games to feel both respectful and competitive, how to balance your own excitement in a game while remaining kind. We also spent time as a group working on explicit teaching of kindness practices, and recognizing the impact of comparisons and teasing on others' feelings. The importance of speaking up and taking risks to be an "upstander" is a big part of growing in the 3/4.

Buddies

Our partnership with the Kindergarten as a buddy class was once again a beautiful opportunity to practice being older mentors. For the entering third graders, it is the first time they are the “older” buddy to a younger child, and a time to focus on nurturing and being a role model. We met weekly throughout the whole year, usually to read picture books to our Kindergarten buddies. Other times we gathered were to mark special days in the year, play outside on the playground, or to share the fruits of our hard work with one another -- including books they made, the Mexican fiesta songs, and the 3/4 play. The most poignant experience of all, though, was sharing with our dear Kindergarten friends and their teachers, as they said goodbye to teacher Sherry following her death in January. This difficult moment for the whole school was also an opportunity to learn about loss and grief and celebrating our memories of someone who was so beloved by the whole Miquon community.

Reading Workshop

Our language arts time this year 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.

During the first month of school, we established expectations for our time in Reading Workshop. Oftentimes it looked like this:

1. Selecting just right books, often together with a teacher, that are a good match for reading level and interest
2. Hearing one or two guiding questions for our independent reading time
3. Finding a comfortable spot to read in the room for about 30 minutes
4. Sharing responses to the guiding questions, either with a partner or with the group

From there, we often moved into our shared class Read Aloud book, which was a further time to explore a chapter book together in greater detail. As Rich or I read, we often stopped to examine some of the writer's moves, like literary devices or figures of speech, or we modeled comprehension strategies like making predictions and connections between the text and ourselves. In 3rd and 4th grade children are deepening our sense of ourselves as readers who can enjoy more complex stories, talk together about what we read, and take chances with new genres.

Book Groups

During the winter, Wendy, Rich, and Rossana each worked with a group of children reading the same book, and exploring its writing style and themes. These book groups were a time to practice fluency reading aloud, listen to others' questions, ask about unfamiliar vocabulary, and learn new explicit comprehension strategies. The books we read this year were part of a winter dive into the Mystery genre:

- *The Meg Mackintosh Mysteries*, Book 1-2 by Lucinda Landon
- *Clubhouse Mysteries* Book 1 by Sharon Draper
- *The Book Scavenger* by Jennifer Chambliss Bertman
- *Chasing Vermeer* by Blue Balliet

Read Alouds

Some favorite chapter book read alouds included:

Ruby Goldberg's Bright Idea by Anna Humphreys

Where the Mountain Meets the Moon by Grace Lin

The Time Bike by Jane Langton

Because of the Rabbit by Cynthia Lord

Writing Workshop

Free Writing Fiction

Our first writing piece this fall was a fiction short story on a topic of each child's choice, based in a mostly true personal moment. These gave each child a way to share something of their own lives with flexing their writer's voice and creativity. Our new group members were also introduced to the expectations for drafting, revising, and editing in the 3/4.

Historical Fiction

In the winter, our writing work centered around our Egyptian Journal entries, described below. We spent several weeks after our Egyptian Journal project working through each entry, using peer editing, conferencing with teachers, and editing with a mechanics checklist. For our third graders, this was often the first time typing their own writing, and with much support everyone was able to learn the basics of touch typing and correcting errors with a keyboard. Our Unit Celebration in February was a time to share our published journals with families, such an exciting time for our young writers who were very proud of their work. They were thrilled to share what they had learned both in their study of Egyptian history and in their writing development.

Poetry

In March and April we explored various forms of poetry writing, and the children all practiced different styles of poems both to read and to write themselves. Rich and I shared some of our favorite poems with the group and encouraged them to explore our classroom poetry book collection for inspiration. Many children chose to use some of their poems to create their page for the Miquon *Grass* literary magazine this spring.

Small Moment Stories

Our spring short stories centered around choosing one small moments from our own lives to explore in greater depth. We decided this writing piece would overlap with our social emotional work in the 3/4 on kindness and empathy. The brainstorming process began with a generation of ideas of times when each child had been a helper to someone else. Then each child created a short story and practiced the process of peer and teacher feedback to clarify their writing for an audience.

Expository Essays

The year ended with a practice in essays (one paragraph for third graders, or multi-paragraph for fourth graders), with a main idea and details. Building on our study of problems that need solutions in our home, neighborhood, or Miquon's campus, children chose one possible invention and solution into a short essay. Each child developed a connection between problem and invention through writing, and practiced their skills at writing complete sentences and paragraphs with main ideas. We really enjoyed the imaginative inventions (complete with design drawings!) that each person created, and we displayed them at our end of year potluck.

Throughout the year, we conducted word work groups twice a week, and in these small groups the children received tailored practice with spelling strategies and reading comprehension skills. Children practiced writing with morning journal prompts, responses to *Time for Kids* magazines, and free-write activities. The class also spent time each week on cursive writing practice (Handwriting Without Tears) and an introduction to touch typing.

Mathematics

The philosophy of our math work is influenced by Jo Boeler'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

In addition, we 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 “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

Our overall goals for these growing eight, nine, and ten year-old mathematicians included:

- Developing their inherent curiosity for puzzling, conjecturing, and wondering.
- Building confidence and a sense of competence and possibility, a “growth mindset” and an understanding that wrestling with questions has a value beyond correct answers.
- Growing fluency with computational skills, which by this age, for most children, will include secure skills with addition and subtraction and developing fluency with multiplication and division.
- Building our skills at working together in groups and partnerships to solve problems and discuss ideas respectfully.
- Making connections across curricular areas, as numerical understanding was woven into our Theme work and overlapped with explorations of graphs, maps, ancient number systems, and money-related problem solving.
- Growing development of a vocabulary for mathematical concepts, including math discussion and journals.

The concepts explored during this year centered around six units of study:

- Review of number strategies, addition, subtraction, place value
- Factors, multiples, and arrays
- Reading graphs and interpreting data
- Parts and wholes: understanding and using fractions and decimals

- Applying multiplication and division, multi-digit operations
- Measurement and 3D-Geometry

Throughout the year, we primarily used the *Investigations* curriculum by TERC. We also made regular use of a range of math games, puzzles, manipulatives and building materials. These sparked the children’s interest and creativity while engaging a variety of learning styles. One favorite time each week 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. Additionally, students in our room enjoyed grappling with puzzles, or playing Ka-Ching, Set, 24, and Flip 4.

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 uses a whole other part of the brain while also solidifying concepts. Math journals and games encouraged a different way of thinking about how math can be used.

Social Studies

Essential Questions

- Why do we study the past?
- How am I connected to those in the past? How is the past about me?
- How does geography affect where people live and how they live?
- How do the resources available in a place impact a cultures’ needs and lead to new inventions?
- Why did ancient people develop some similar inventions in different places over time?
- In what ways can history be biased? Is it always the story told by the “winners”?

Integration of Studies

At Miquon, we attempt to connect learning across the traditional boundaries of “subjects” wherever we can, just as work in the real world tends to do. Our Theme studies this year had a few threads which connected across the whole year, but the units of study took on a different look in the two classrooms. In both groups, the work we did involved reading, writing, research, computer skills, mathematical thinking, and often overlapped with projects using drama, art or science. The common thread across this year was the question of how innovations were affected by geography and culture in ancient times. We were introducing the third and fourth graders to thinking of themselves as historians, understanding what it means to look at times “long ago.”

Fall Invention Study: Timekeepers

We started off the year looking at timelines and trying to grapple with the idea of people living together and building villages and cities two or three thousand years ago. We used books, short videos, storytelling, and a study of museum artifacts to consider how different life might have been in ancient cities. We played games like *Timeline* and used skit performances to develop an understanding of some of the early inventions of these peoples.

We took one broad category of inventions to study in depth, and that was methods of tracking or keeping time. For many of us today, clocks, calendars, watches or smartphones are so common that we don’t imagine how life would be changed in their absence. The children had a great time thinking of problems that would develop without ways to meet up with a friend at the same time, or to know how long something had been cooking. Children experimented with designing their own versions of early timekeepers such as sundials and sand timers.

Writing Systems

Our next topic was the development of various systems of writing in civilizations around the world. The children thought about why communities would have a need for written language, and how they first began to record events and then thoughts onto materials available. We looked into cave painting, stone etching, and the making of early papyrus in Egypt and paper in China. The children were intrigued to practice for themselves some of the first forms of writing, from the cuneiform of Sumeria to Chinese bone script and Egyptian hieroglyphs. Both 3/4 groups visited the Penn Museum (University of Pennsylvania's Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology) in December, and the children were able to see up close some amazing examples of artifacts from the cultures we had been discussing.

Calendars and Traditions

During December the group studied two related ideas: calendars and traditions. We began asking about the invention of calendars to track the passing of time. With picture books and videos, we explored lunar and solar based calendars from around the world over these weeks. Children created skits which asked, "What problems might you have had in a time before calendars? How you could have solved these?" Problem scenarios invented by the children included when to observe one's birthday, what day a feast was taking place on, finding the right time to tend to crops, and building animal shelters before winter. Solutions included watching for migratory geese flying south, meeting up at the next full moon, and noticing the first leaf fall for a time to prepare for winter. We culminated our study by sharing a special annual tradition of any kind from our own families, in a special "Traditions Museum."

Egypt study

To understand the development of one culture more deeply, we participated in an Egyptian village simulation. Each person chose a name, age, and role in society, and in many cases imagined they were related to one another. Then as a weaver, scribe, or soldier, they wrote a series of journal entries which began with a shared event (like the Nile flooding) but would be filled with imagined details of what his or her character would wear, eat, and do each day.

Before we ask the children to "time travel" back over 4000 years, it was important that they have some sense of the context of modern day northern Africa, and how modern Egypt is different from the popular images some may have of ancient Egyptian. We asked the question, "How is modern Egypt different from ancient Egypt?" and looked at the lives of three children living in Egypt today, one in the big city of Cairo and two in small town or rural settings. Each child wrote to an imaginary pen-pal letter to a child in Cairo in modern times.

With much excitement, we then moved from inquiry and research about life in modern and ancient Egypt to our next phase -- beginning our simulation, based in part on the Storypath model. This project included:

- Working together to build a wall frieze of the Nile River Delta region, showing the natural environment
- Studying societal roles, then choosing characters for each of us in an imagined small town near the ancient city of Memphis, along the river . Each child chose their name, age, and role within family units
- Drafting journal entries about the daily life of our character
- Creating drama skits inspired by our stories
- Revising journal entries, typing them, then editing and illustrating to prepare for publishing

Inventor and Invention Study

Our next unit looked at a few of history's lesser known inventors and innovators. We began today asking why certain stories are often told more often in the history books than others. We looked at a library book called "Great Lives" which profiled over two dozen men, mostly white and from Western cultures, and asking whose stories get remembered and why. Then we looked at several other lists of great inventors and scientists from traditionally marginalized groups. Then children read biographies and profiles of inventors that include more stories of women,

people of color, and LGBTQ+ people. Each child then chose one inventor and invention to research in greater depth. They wrote a paragraph on the life of their inventor, and then had a terrific couple of weeks to construct a 3D replica of the invention they studied. The group was so enthusiastic to think about design, materials, and construction as they built a version of their own. It was so exciting to have their inventions ready to display as part of the Art & Science Showcase.

After studying how people lived during ancient times and solved problems in their communities through inventions, in the spring, our group surveyed their own communities to identify problems that could be solved with inventions. To get inspired, they read articles and stories about other children around the world who were able to make a difference in their communities through inventions and new ideas. After brainstorming problems and possible solutions, the kids got to work on creating solutions and inventions of their own. Students then wrote an expository essay, describing the problem they noticed, how they planned to address it, and why they hoped their invention solved that problem. The group showcased their essays and invention designs for parents at our culminating celebration.

3/4 End of Year Play

A highlight of the year for both groups was the combined play which we performed at the end of the spring. The children split into 4 smaller groups to prepare skits for a play about tracing the development of some famous invention through the centuries. This was a more child-created and led process than in some years and the result was a wonderfully creative and funny performance which reflected some great understanding of the history of: flight, land travel, forms of communication, and money. Their work included choosing and learning roles, practicing several times a week, and making their own props and costumes. The process of preparing for the play provided many opportunities for learning, from the group work skills of collaboration and compromise to the public speaking skills of fluency and clarity. The final performances for the school and then for the families were a perfect culmination of our Theme studies together.

Field Trips

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

- University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology
- American Jewish History Museum for their exhibit on the artist and inventor Rube Goldberg.
- Plymouth Meeting Friends School's 4th grade circus
- Philadelphia Water Department's Belmont Reservoir as part of the science unit of study on the water cycle
- Miles Park for a playground visit with our Kindergarten buddies

In Summary

This has been a wonderful year of growth together in Wendy and Rich's group. We saw each child grow in so many ways, learning about themselves as learners and as friends. We loved exploring ancient times as history detectives, and hearing their terrific ideas about how they would work to improve problems in their own neighborhoods. Along with all the small moments that make up morning circles, lunch time storytelling, or appreciations at closing circle, these were experiences that brought this group together and made for a great year.

I am grateful to all of the parent support we have received this year, especially from our class parents, Sabrina and Nick Faith and Olivia Prud'homme and Stef Parisi, as well as all the chaperones and volunteers, as well as to each of you who offered your support to the kids and to teachers in so many ways this year. We've benefited so much from our collaboration with Rachel and Marie as a 3/4 team, enriching our own teaching with their great ideas. Working alongside Rich for the first time this year has been such a wonderful experience for me, as we found our complementary strengths to match so well. He brought his whole self as a calm, focused, inquisitive, and dedicated

teacher to our group, and we are already excited for our new plans for next year! Thank you for sharing your fabulous children with us for their third or fourth grade year. Wishing all of you a very happy summer with them!