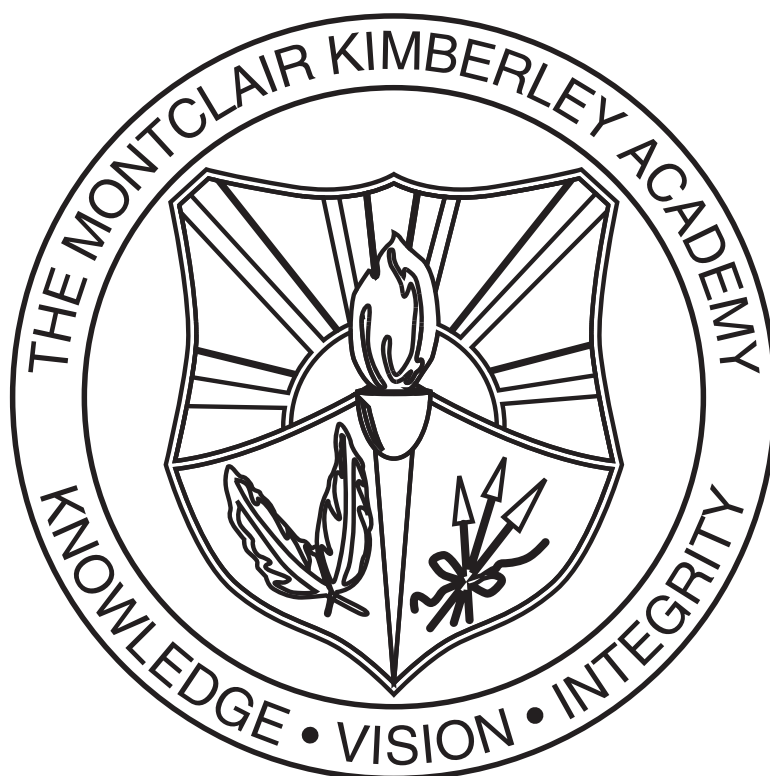


MONTCLAIR KIMBERLEY ACADEMY



2022-2023

PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM GUIDE

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MONTCLAIR KIMBERLEY ACADEMY

MISSION STATEMENT

MKA's challenging, engaging, and innovative academic program provides a vibrant and transformative education. Our faculty's deep and genuine understanding of our students as individuals and as learners fosters their ethical development, intellectual growth, and personal success. MKA's diverse, collaborative, and inclusive community inspires students to lead lives of noble character, purpose, and distinction.

Evidence of our mission is found in the Knowledge, Vision, and Integrity of our students and our alumni:

KNOWLEDGE:

- Academic excellence
- Intellectual independence
- Love of learning

VISION:

- Personal engagement with the world
- Understanding of human complexity
- A sense of humility and compassion

INTEGRITY:

- Strength of character
- Responsibility as a citizen and leader
- An honorable and generous life

MKA PRIMARY SCHOOL

BELIEF STATEMENTS

We believe that. . .

1. A love of learning is nurtured through opportunities for exploration, creative expression, risk-taking, self-discovery, and choice.
2. Children grow intellectually and meet or exceed increasing academic expectations when they are appropriately challenged and their efforts are celebrated.
3. Developing social and emotional skills is essential for building good character, problem-solving abilities, collaborative relationships, and community—and for intellectual and academic growth.
4. Teachers must cultivate a personal relationship with each child by respecting and honoring their students' diverse perspectives and needs.
5. Engaging and understanding the individual child as a learner requires ongoing assessment for growth to inform adjustments to instruction and learning strategies founded in current educational research.
6. Flexible, student-centered classrooms honor students' voice and choice, provide opportunities to discover and pursue passions, and support creativity.

THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Primary School curriculum fosters a joyful learning environment that both encourages and challenges students to develop not only their academic skills, but perhaps more essentially, their curiosity, ability to problem-solve, and love of learning. Always responsive to the continually growing body of research on how students learn best, faculty consciously craft the curriculum to promote students' academic growth and to ensure that students are able to take increasing responsibility for their learning as they grow. Because research indicates that well developed social and emotional skills are essential for both academic success and personal growth, students' work in the classroom not only stretches them academically, but also purposefully enables them to grow in confidence, trust, and independence. Students learn to understand themselves and one another and to build caring, supportive, and cooperative relationships. Children are actively encouraged to become intellectual risk-takers and lifelong learners in a community that values doing the right thing, guided by the MKA Character Standards.

MORNING MEETING

Students begin each day with a classroom Morning Meeting, one of the most important times of the school day for creating a sense of community and setting a positive tone for learning. Students and teachers interact with one another through four, purposeful Morning Meeting components: greeting, sharing, group activity, and morning message. In Morning Meetings, classes consider the MKA Character Standards, the Primary School Anti-Bullying Standards, and MKA's Social and Emotional Learning Competencies as they develop classroom expectations that form the basis of their social interactions and collaborative learning throughout the day. These expectations are set in keeping with the guiding Primary School slogan: "We Care. We Are Kind. We Are the Cougars." Since Primary School students spend most of their school day in their classrooms, special attention is placed on practicing the skills that foster community, such as establishing eye contact; using an audible, friendly tone of voice; demonstrating mutual respect; understanding emotions and using empathy; managing feelings; and fostering friendships. An integral part of the Responsive Classroom program that provides an effective, research-based framework for social and emotional learning, the Morning Meeting also targets academic skill development and reinforces routines that help students to initiate and structure their learning.

THE CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

In the classroom, students transform into practicing writers, readers, mathematicians, and social scientists. From their first days at the Primary School to their final days as third grade students, they learn to live the "writerly life." They invest themselves in daily Writing Workshop to become confident writers, able to select and expand on their ideas and communicate clearly with their readers. Through Reading Workshop, even the youngest Primary School students come to see themselves as avid readers who explore books. With teacher guidance, they select books of individual interest that promote their engagement, reading fluency, reading comprehension, and lifelong reading habits. Math lessons encourage students to understand not only the mechanics of mathematics, but also the concepts that inform mathematical computation, thinking, and problem-solving. Social studies additionally encourages students' inquiry, supported by the MKA Research Cycle, to wonder, ask questions, and find answers, and to synthesize, interpret, and present information for an audience.

SPECIALIST CLASSES

All students experience specialist classes with professionals who are subject-area specialists in world languages (French or Spanish), visual art, music, dance/theatre arts, physical education/health, and information literacy (library). Students in K-3 study science with our science specialist, while Pre-K students explore science in developmentally appropriate, hands-on ways within their classroom and outdoors. These opportunities for students to work with experts across their Primary School years provide them with targeted, developmentally appropriate immersion in areas that foster self-expression, as well as intellectual and physical growth.

TECHNOLOGY FOR LEARNING

Technology is integral to learning in the classroom. Teachers intentionally select technology tools that address specific learning objectives and provide varied opportunities for students to collaborate, practice skills, explore ideas, demonstrate their understanding, and create. Technology applications often promote individual growth, amplify student voice, and allow both students and teachers to track progress. To support ongoing teaching and learning needs during the pandemic, iPads are individually assigned to each student and kept in classrooms (a 1:1 ratio in Pre-K through third grade). The iPads are used intentionally to support teaching and learning goals. Teachers plan varied learning activities for individuals, small groups, or the whole class that incorporate technology tools to support student learning, curiosity, and creativity; capture students' thinking; and provide assessment, reflection, and feedback opportunities. The flexible use of a student-driven, digital portfolio tool helps teachers to gather data about students' learning, promotes student reflection and metacognition, and helps parents, students, and teachers to see progress and growth over time.

THE OUTDOOR CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

In keeping with current research on the importance of play to children's learning, all Primary School students have two recesses a day. Recess activities are varied and provide students with nearly limitless choice in how they will move and explore—as part of a team, a group, or individually. The Nature Explore Outdoor Classroom, located behind the Primary School building, provides a host of opportunities for students to explore and play in a garden-like setting with natural materials such as sand, soil, water, and tree trunks. The Outdoor Classroom is a place for children to imagine, construct, create, uncover, share, and ramble—with their classes and during recess.

STUDENT VOICE

Throughout their Primary School years, students develop their personal voices and the confidence that they have important things to share. They develop great poise in communicating to an audience—including during “sharing time” at daily Morning Meeting, when students can share aloud to the group in response to a given prompt, and during writing celebrations in kindergarten through third grade classrooms. In a typical year, students build performance skills through singing in at least one concert and sharing their developing skills with an audience through a class performance in grades K-2, culminating with a third grade, capstone experience. For more information about the dance/theatre arts and fine and performing arts curricula, please see those sections of this curriculum guide. Presenting and acting on stage helps students to develop confidence, take risks, and work together; and these opportunities help them to develop effective leadership skills.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Social-emotional learning and academic growth go hand in hand. Research shows that students who attend schools with strong social-emotional learning programs have higher academic achievement, better mental health, and fewer behavioral difficulties in school, and that benefits persist for them long into adulthood. At the Primary School, teachers help to set the stage for social-emotional learning by helping children every day to develop five social-emotional competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.

More information about the social-emotional learning competencies for the MKA community can be found on MKA's website and/or the Veracross parent portal.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

The Primary School provides the foundation for Diversity & Inclusion work at MKA. Students examine their own identities and share what makes them unique and special with our community, so that all students are known, seen, and honored for who they are. Students explore and appreciate differences and similarities, challenge stereotypes, and acknowledge the range of perspectives within and outside our community. In keeping with MKA's Mission Statement, to recognize complexity and value empathy, students and adults welcome, embrace, support, and encourage the entire community: its races, cultures, genders; its experiences and economics; its aspirations, abilities, and affiliations. In forming and affirming positive classroom communities, students celebrate and value the differences in one another.

As guided by MKA's Strategic Plan, MKA is committed to making its curriculum more multicultural. Multicultural education at MKA is a constant process of inquiry, reflection, and engagement that transforms students and faculty, school culture and curriculum, community and society. It is grounded in ideas of equity, anti-bias education, and social justice.

To create a truly multicultural curriculum that helps students reach their full potential as learners, MKA faculty at the Primary School:

- Honor their students' narratives;
- Provide multiple perspectives within their disciplines;
- Provide all students opportunities to understand themselves, other members of the MKA community, and the global society;
- Ensure that MKA is a safe environment in which to explore and discuss multiple perspectives, ask challenging questions, and create positive social change.

The social-emotional learning curriculum is taught hand-in-hand with our multicultural curriculum, instilling respect for all members of our community. Students are encouraged to speak confidently with their own genuine voices, encouraging everyone to examine life and history from a variety of perspectives.

FIELD TRIPS

Please note: The status of field trips for the 2022-2023 school year is at the school's discretion, based on current health and safety information. The information below pertains to a school year in which off-site field trips are possible.

Class trips are planned both to promote students' learning and to enhance their appreciation for the diverse world around them. Some trips allow students to explore and document their neighborhood surroundings on foot. Others explore the world beyond the local community. Trips to local environmental centers and historical sites provide context for students' learning. Some trips are designed to integrate community engagement experiences, such as visits to Toni's Kitchen, a Montclair community resource. Throughout the curriculum, the Primary School introduces children to the joys of giving and the responsibility we share in helping members of our immediate as well as our global communities.

POLICIES

HOMEWORK

Homework serves as a daily reinforcement of key concepts taught in the classroom. It also promotes organizational skills, responsibility, and independence. Teachers assign homework on weeknights in grades one through three; no homework is assigned on weekends or holidays. First grade students should spend approximately 20 minutes per night on their assignments; second grade should allow 35 minutes, and third grade approximately 45 minutes. These estimates include required independent reading in students' "just-right" books. Teachers encourage students to engage in additional, daily independent reading and to further explore subjects of individual interest.

Parents can help students with homework by designating a study spot where the student can work without distractions and stocking it with work materials (paper, pencils, erasers, etc.). Appropriate ways to provide homework support include listening, assisting with reading homework directions, and reviewing information when needed.

PROGRESS REPORTING AND ASSESSMENT

Reporting about students' progress, their successes/achievements, and their areas for growth is an ongoing process that reflects our faculty's deep and genuine understanding of students as individuals and as learners. Assessment occurs regularly on a formal and informal basis, providing evidence of each student's understanding and informing next steps. Communication with parents is of the utmost importance. The classroom teacher, who also serves as the student's advisor, is the parents' first line of communication. Advisors contact parents on a monthly basis to share students' successes and discuss any concerns about students' academic and social-emotional growth at school. In addition, two scheduled conference days, one in the fall and one in the spring, provide opportunities for more in-depth conversations about students' progress. Flexible use of a student-driven, digital portfolio tool for teaching, learning, feedback, and assessment gives parents another window into their child's work and growth over time. A formative, written comment from the child's advisor and comments from most Specialist teachers are available to parents through Veracross midyear (at the end of January). A summative, written comment from advisors is available to parents through Veracross at the end of the school year.

EXTENDED ABSENCE POLICY: HOME STUDY AND TUTORING

Should a student experience an extended absence from school, MKA faculty will provide assignments for students. The assessment of work assigned on a Home Study is completed by MKA faculty. Any exception to this policy must be approved by the Head of Primary School. In the event of a lengthy medical absence, generally exceeding 60 school days, or in aggregate, a series of leaves amounting to 60 days, a student may be asked to withdraw from MKA. Cases will be considered by the Head of Primary School on an individual basis.

EARLY CHILDHOOD: PRE-KINDERGARTEN

Pre-Kindergarten is a time for young students to explore, discover, theorize, and revise their thinking based on new experiences. Rooted in the Reggio Emilia philosophy of early childhood education, students' creativity and teachers' guidance make anything possible.

Students learn through a curriculum that develops creative and analytical thinking through hands-on projects and active discovery. Through wonder and observation, students are inspired to ask their own questions and form (and revise) their own hypotheses as they learn. The Pre-K program fosters the development of the child in a holistic sense—emotionally, socially, physically, and intellectually—and creates the foundations for children to view learning as an exciting journey through life.

MORNING MEETING

The Pre-K classroom is a vibrant setting that engages students, both socially and academically. Each day begins with a class Morning Meeting (see description in the Primary School overview). Focus on greeting one another respectfully includes using a friendly tone of voice and establishing eye contact, foundations for positive social relationships. Because Pre-K is students' first exposure to Morning Meeting, this routine is important for helping students to feel that they are part of a classroom community and have a voice within it, and it gives them practice with their listening and speaking skills. As students read and reflect on a morning news message and a question during Morning Meeting, they practice literacy skills, including sight words, letter-sound correlations, beginning word sounds, and rhymes. Teachers and student volunteers use a pointer to touch each word as the class reads the morning message in unison. Counting the number of days they have been in school reinforces math skills.

REGGIO EMILIA-INSPIRED PROGRAM

The MKA Pre-K program is inspired by the beliefs and practices of Reggio Emilia schools. The Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education originated in the town of Reggio Emilia, Italy after World War II. In this approach, young children are active meaning-makers who learn from hands-on experiences in their learning environments and express themselves in many different ways. The approach is student-centered; students ask questions, explore, and drive their own learning while teachers support their growth through provocations (asking questions and providing varied materials for students to explore and use). Children learn through relationships with one another, their teachers, and their environment. Relationships are the focal point around which curriculum develops as the children's ideas drive the direction of their learning.

The Pre-K classrooms each have their own *atelier* and *piazza* space for the students to work and play. These are important Reggio Emilia-inspired classroom spaces in which teachers provide provocations to inspire students, and students take initiative for their learning as teachers guide them. The *piazza* is a space that offers a blank slate for creativity and innovation, so it reflects students' learning in ever-changing ways. For example, it can be a laboratory where students explore light and shadow or a place where children construct and build. The *atelier* is the "artist's studio," a quiet, separate place where students can work individually on a specific, innovative project. These flexible spaces provide limitless opportunities for students to imagine, explore, and create to learn.

BALANCED LITERACY

The Pre-K language arts curriculum is designed to facilitate children's active involvement in meaningful language experiences, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing, with the overall goal of building positive attitudes toward self, language, and literacy. Our Pre-K literacy program is based on research from Teachers College, Columbia University, and sets the stage for children's literacy growth as they move through the Primary School.

ORAL LANGUAGE

Oral storytelling and the development of oral language are foundational skills for children's further development as readers and writers. The teachers model oral language by verbalizing their thought processes and, at the same time, gently challenging the children to explain their own thinking. The teachers also model appropriate social language, which helps children to build skills as they learn to negotiate peer relationships. Throughout their day, children build oral language skills as they play, speak in Morning Meetings, confer with teachers, narrate wordless picture books, and tell stories about themselves from photographs and drawings.

READING EXPERIENCES

Pre-K children engage daily in shared reading experiences with picture books, poetry, chants, songs, and rhymes. The reading aloud of big books and charts with enlarged, repeated text familiarizes students with left-to-right progression and establishes familiarity with repeated words and phrases. Students join the teacher in choral reading of the text over several readings, using pictures and words to make meaning. Reading the story, chart, or song repeatedly builds a repertoire of sight words that students recognize as they "read" independently.

"Hug a Book" time promotes a love of books and learning by encouraging students to choose picture books or simple texts to explore independently, with a friend, or within groups based on their interests. Teachers read with students and talk with them about their books. Students may retell the story using picture cues, gestures, and familiar phrases (as they have been taught to do in class), or by recognizing some of the familiar words in the text. During "Hug a Book," students may focus on learning how to handle books, use basic print features, and read pictures carefully. Rereading beloved texts builds fluency and children's identity as readers.

Daily read-aloud experiences of timeless picture books also develop children's love of stories and the written word. Students gather on the carpet as a community of readers to explore storylines, characters, and setting. Children learn various ways to interact with stories as teachers read aloud, and the stories provide a springboard for social-emotional learning and conversations. For example, through reading the picture book *Anansi the Spider*, a work from West African folklore and part of the MKA Core, students learn the importance of virtuous behavior, the value of making friendships, and the significance of making responsible choices. Comprehension and meaning-making are always at the forefront of children's early reading experiences. Children learn to make predictions and connections and to retell stories as they develop foundational skills for lifelong reading.

STORYTELLING AND WRITING

Through daily storytelling time, students develop their voices and become the authors of many different kinds of stories. Because children develop early writing skills at their own paces, maintaining their confidence and love of writing is the ultimate goal. In the Pre-K program, children first learn to illustrate stories with increasing amounts of detail and describe their illustrations with rich, oral language. They progress through well documented, developmental stages of writing development: from writing scribbles and letter-like formations, to labeling pictures, to writing in phrases and eventually sentences as they progress through the Primary School. Teachers guide and support children's growth as writers by coaching them to progress individually through these developmental stages. Students' writing also represents a growing knowledge of letter/sound representation. As they are ready to do so and through teacher modeling, children begin to label their drawings with letters corresponding to the initial sounds they hear, and they add final consonant sounds when they are developmentally ready. Children are encouraged to match the oral stories they tell to the illustrations they depict. As teachers confer with students about their writing to help them grow, students come to appreciate being the authors of their own stories and often volunteer enthusiastically to share their drawings and writing pieces with an audience.

NAME STUDY

This part of the balanced literacy program in Pre-K sets the foundation for reading and writing in a playful way. It is an organic, personal way to learn about each other while also learning the letters of the alphabet, noticing their shapes and sounds, and building an awareness of syllables. The name study unit, called “Making Friends with Letters,” engages students joyfully with learning and with one another. Students become personally invested in learning about what they notice in the letters and sounds of their names and their classmates’ names. This unit also serves as a warm-up for the literacy work students will later do in kindergarten.

MATHEMATICS

As they begin the *Everyday Mathematics 4* curriculum, Pre-K students investigate a variety of materials and manipulatives as they engage in concrete, hands-on experiences at learning centers and in small group activities. By providing a stimulating environment and encouraging students to ask questions, teachers help students to discover mathematical relationships and practice problem-solving in classroom situations. Continuously developed and reinforced through the class’s thematic studies, targeted math skills include number recognition and beginning numeracy, including one-to-one correspondence, beginning addition concepts, shapes, patterns, and graphing. In addition to hands-on and integrated math learning, students also use iPads to practice math concepts through games that track their skills and development and provide teachers with important assessment feedback.

SOCIAL STUDIES AND PRE-K / THIRD GRADE BUDDIES

Students explore social studies connections in many ways, including experiences in social-emotional learning and diversity and inclusion, community engagement projects, and sustainability. For example, students make an effort to reuse classroom materials and recycle when possible, helping them to care for the planet and to develop individual responsibility.

In a typical school year not affected by a pandemic, each Pre-K child is assigned a third grade buddy. Pre-K children enjoy the opportunity to learn from third grade role models, and third grade students develop leadership and mentoring skills as they work with younger students. Possibilities for engaging in the Pre-K and third grade buddy program in 2022-2023 will continue to be evaluated and are contingent upon health and safety factors.

CHOICE

The layout of the Pre-K classroom complements the curriculum and invites students to make choices and pursue interests that promote their learning. Students have the opportunity to explore a variety of materials, organized into centers, sensory tables, blocks, and technology. Focus tables that present new activities include exercises in letter recognition and sound-letter correspondence, science explorations, book center, and other specific materials to explore in connection with their interests.

In addition, students use iPads at different points in the day to reinforce skill development. Students can choose from a variety of iPad applications that allow them to practice targeted literacy and math skills. In addition, students can use the iPads generatively to take pictures and videos that document their projects and creations.

WORLD LANGUAGE

Pre-K students are engaged in an age-appropriate language experience, and acquire the Spanish language by first and foremost listening to their world language teacher. The teacher provides input that is comprehensible to the students, using high frequency words and expressions with demonstrative gestures, as well as visuals and props, to tell students a variety of stories. The stories are based on books, videos, and on the students themselves. Students also acquire the Spanish language throughout the year through a variety of songs and a lot of TPR (Total Physical Response).

LIBRARY

Through the use of song, rhyme, read-alouds, and art, Pre-K students are immersed in a wonderful world of books. Students learn how to care for library books and how to distinguish between authors and illustrators, and fiction and nonfiction texts. Students further develop literacy skills by making predictions, adding text to wordless picture books, retelling stories, evaluating illustrations, creating their own stories, and comparing and contrasting similar picture books. They are also challenged to make personal connections to characters in books. When appropriate, the library curriculum connects with the Pre-K curriculum to help reinforce the skills being learned in the classroom.

FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS

A wide range of developmentally appropriate fine and performing arts opportunities promotes development of self-awareness, self-esteem, self-discipline, confidence, cooperation, and motivation for our youngest artists.

DANCE/THEATRE ARTS

The Pre-K dance/theatre arts curriculum is Reggio Emilia-inspired and integrated with the classroom curriculum. Students use the Reggio language of dance to explore pathways, patterns, relationships, and shape. In Pre-K dance/theatre arts, students have an opportunity not only to develop gross motor skills and to explore movement, but also to develop social and emotional skills and self-expression. In keeping with the MKA Primary School Belief Statements, students learn by inspiring creativity and risk-taking, and they explore their limitless potential. Students in Pre-K enjoy collaborating and exploring imaginatively with one another in dance/theatre arts class.

MUSIC

Students learn music through the Kodaly and Orff methods. They learn to clap and tap basic rhythms of music with instruments. Pre-K students also learn to chant simple rhythmic lyrics. Students listen critically to music and become adept at identifying instruments and genres of music to perpetuate a lifetime love of music.

VISUAL ARTS

In art class, Pre-K students are challenged to observe the world around them: to look closely and to identify parts, including lines, shapes, colors, and textures. They learn technical skill, design knowledge, and personal expression while exploring the inner world of self, and the world of others, through their artworks.

HEALTH, WELLNESS, AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The primary goals of Pre-K Health, Wellness, and Physical Education are developing gross motor skills and non-locomotor and locomotor movements. At this grade level, students are introduced to basic spatial relations and awareness. To better develop an understanding of spatial relations, students learn to change direction, dodge and flee, and stop and start in multiple directions.

Students practice skipping, galloping, and hopping in many creative and engaging ways. They work on balance and on tracking and catching large objects, such as scarves and yarn balls.

Health is taught in four units in Pre-K. Unit One is Healthy Body/Body Awareness; Unit Two is All About Me: Healthy Mind and Feelings; Unit Three is All Around Me: My Family, Friends and Community; and Unit Four is All Around Me: My Environment.

EARLY CHILDHOOD: KINDERGARTEN

In kindergarten, students build on their Pre-K experiences and continue to learn through exploration and creativity as well as through Reading, Writing and Math Workshops. Academic and social and emotional learning are equally important cornerstones of the curriculum, each providing essential opportunities for students to flourish. Learning is an inviting and collaborative process in the kindergarten classrooms, whether students are gathered for a mini-lesson or working with partners. Students continue to ask their own questions and to revise their thinking as they encounter new ideas and develop the confidence and skills to express them—orally, in pictures, and in writing. They continue to cultivate their content knowledge and their own interests as they explore their classroom environment, rich in materials and manipulatives that encourage experimentation and learning.

The Reggio Emilia-inspired approach to teaching and learning that begins in Pre-K is an integral influence and inspiration in the kindergarten, early childhood experience. Kindergarten “classrooms” utilize flexible indoor and outdoor spaces for students to explore materials, notice details, hypothesize, wonder, and question. Project-based learning is designed to reflect children’s curiosity and interests and provides opportunities for passionate, interdisciplinary, and in-depth learning as students develop as readers, writers, mathematicians, and citizens.

COMMUNITY, CHARACTER, AND SOCIAL STUDIES

Students enthusiastically begin each day with a class Morning Meeting (see description in the Primary School overview). As part of their Morning Meeting routines, they practice good communication skills, including making eye contact, speaking clearly for others to understand, demonstrating mutual respect, and fostering friendships. Morning Meetings support one of the main goals in kindergarten: to place each child on a path toward becoming an independent learner and ethical citizen who is part of a learning community.

Developing good character is a primary focus of Morning Meeting and is carried throughout the school day. With MKA’s Character Standards and Social and Emotional Learning Competencies as a guide, students discuss how to be responsible for belongings and classroom materials, respectful of one another and their environment, and friendly to all. Through these conversations, teachers partner with students to help them develop the habits of good character.

Integral to the fabric of the kindergarten classroom community, teachers write students “love notes” to recognize them for something special that they did or accomplished during the school day. When students gather at the end of the school day, teachers read a few love notes aloud to the class. Over the course of the year, all students receive several love notes that celebrate anything from hard work on their writing to a favor they did that demonstrated friendship.

Kindergarten students begin the year with an emphasis on establishing their classroom as a collaborative, interdependent community. The small and large group activities that are woven throughout the day offer opportunities for students to get to know their classmates as they collaborate on projects and engage in activities that develop mutual respect.

Throughout the year, students ask “What makes me, me?” This guiding question both shapes the social studies curriculum and integrates all disciplines. Repeated inquiry and varied exploration to answer this question help children express uniqueness, appreciate differences, and see themselves within their home environment, their school community, and the world around them. Throughout the year, each student will be showcased as “Cougar of the Week.” This is an opportunity for the students to share unique qualities about themselves and their family and to celebrate the individuality of each child.

In social studies, kindergarten students explore elements of the MKA community that bond the members of MKA’s three campuses. Using the Primary School belief statements as their guide, teachers help students to understand the core values, themes, symbols, and language that are common threads throughout the tri-campus community. First, students learn about the Primary School campus through a name study of both the campus itself and its mascot. A guided tour of the Primary School reveals the people and places that are important to this campus. The second half of the year is dedicated to learning about the physical characteristics of the three campuses. Students explore how the Primary School fits into the MKA community and how the MKA community fits into the Primary School. The curriculum is supported through exploration and reflection times and links closely and intertwines with writing and reading lessons.

READING AND WRITING WORKSHOPS AND PHONICS

Units of study in both Reading and Writing Workshops, as well as formal instruction in phonics, begin in kindergarten. Students engage in reading and writing through read-aloud, shared reading, interactive writing, word study, literacy centers, and Reading and Writing Workshops. Students develop their literacy skills as they encounter literature from a wide range of genres, including fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Songs, charts, rhymes, and word play provide a variety of skill development opportunities for students to learn about phonemic and linguistic patterns. Students explore spelling patterns and help to create a word wall that they can reference.

Reading Workshop or literacy centers involve half of the class at one time for focused reading instruction and students conferring about their reading with their two classroom teachers. Formats include a short, teacher-focused lesson and students working on their reading individually or with a partner. This time may also be allocated to a read-aloud or word study. Students have individual book bins that they stock with short texts that match their reading level—typically texts with easily recognized words, repeated words, picture support, and simple storylines. As students read, teachers assess individual progress and offer small-group or individualized instruction based on needs.

The units of study in reading are:

- We Are Readers!
- Readers Use Superpowers: Reading with Print Strategies and Sight Word Power
- Bigger Books, Bigger Reading Muscles
- Becoming Avid Readers
- Nonfiction Reading

By year's end, students have developed the stamina to read or spend quiet time with a book for more than 15 minutes.

During Writing Workshop, students explore many purposes for writing and use their writing process to better understand themselves and their world. They plan their writing, experiment with many genres and styles of writing, build upon what they already know, strengthen their individual voice in their writing, and see themselves as writers in a writing community. Students share and celebrate their writing in group meetings and in informal and formal gatherings.

The units of study in writing are:

- Launching Writing Workshop—Labels, Pictures, and Storytelling Language
- Show and Tell: From Labels to Pattern Books
- Writing for Readers
- How-To Books: Writing to Teach Others
- Persuasive Writing of All Kinds
- “All About” Writing

Students also learn to add explanations, stories, directions, or other written text to their projects and choice time discoveries. Clipboards are placed strategically around the classroom to encourage students' writing for their own purposes. Students may display this writing for others to see and can return to it to revise or extend their written work.

In addition to the units of study, kindergarten students write responses to literature and also write notes and letters to one another and members of the school community on a regular basis.

The kindergarten phonics curriculum follows the *From Sounds to Spelling* program. This program was explicitly designed to help students learn the alphabet, letter sounds, and beginning words. Research-based, multisensory phonics instruction addresses phonics patterns, phonological awareness, spelling, and high frequency words. Through teacher-directed and independent practice activities, students are able to develop the strong foundation necessary to pave the way for future reading and writing success.

The units for kindergarten are:

- Meet the Alphabet
- Short Vowels and Digraphs
- CVC Words and Word Families
- Blends and Long Vowels

MATHEMATICS

Elements of the *Everyday Math 4* curriculum are purposefully integrated throughout much of the school day. Kindergarten students participate in differentiated, extension activities, including guided math explorations, ongoing assessments of skills development, and practice with the previous day's concepts. Guided explorations allow students to experience hands-on practice of math skills and numeracy concepts that prepare them for first grade mathematics. Students are exposed to math skills and concepts through meaningful Morning Meeting shares, activities, and messages. Students begin to recognize patterns by learning about the daily routines: Students deepen math literacy skills within the context of maintaining a daily calendar, observing and graphing the weather, taking the temperature, understanding schedules, and conducting surveys. Students also learn methods of data collection and how to interpret data. Targeted math skills and concepts are presented through whole group mini-lessons followed by partner work and independent practice. Mini-lessons provide instruction and hands-on learning experiences with addition, subtraction, word problems, measurement, classification, and geometry. Careful and regular teacher observations help guide teachers to differentiate the math activities based on students' understanding of concepts and development of skills.

SCIENCE

Students visit the science room where they are immersed in an environment that nurtures their curiosity and sense of wonder. They develop an awareness that science involves a continuous process of discovery to generate solutions for everyday life and to find answers to the great mysteries of the universe. Students' observations and experiences with everyday phenomena comprise a foundation for understanding scientific concepts. Building off the kindergarten guiding question of "What makes me, me?," students explore their relationship with their environment, focusing especially on trees and their importance. Students consider answers to the question "How can I explore my world?" as they learn about and use their senses and discover some of the many tools scientists use in their work. They also learn about the parts and different systems of the human body.

WORLD LANGUAGE

Students continue to acquire the French language through comprehensible input in an environment where the language is used during 90% or more of the class time. The world language teacher continues to provide input using high frequency words and expressions, storytelling based on books and videos, a variety of songs, and a lot of TPR (Total Physical Response). New students joining students who have had a previous world language experience in Pre-K have no trouble in the world language classroom as the teacher provides input that is comprehended by all students at all times. In kindergarten, students start to develop their speaking skills at their own pace.

LIBRARY

Kindergarten students continue to explore the world of literature through the use of songs, rhymes, read-alouds, and art. Students review library procedures and book care, and the selection of just-right books expands to include students' self-assessment of their purpose for reading. Read-alouds reinforce students' exploration of literary elements, such as character, plot, and setting. In-depth study of the works of celebrated authors and illustrators serves as inspiration for students to create their own stories. Students consider how they can find credible answers to their questions and begin to learn the tools of research.

FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS

DANCE/THEATRE ARTS

The dance and theatre arts classes are integrated, affording students access to both disciplines and culminating in a performance in which kindergarten students share their developing skills with an audience.

Students focus on patterns, spatial awareness, and pathways as they develop their movement skills and begin to understand dance and theatre arts sequences. Students work to create patterns, using shapes and “space stations” that mark locations on the floor, and then dance the pathway that they have created. Dance supports gross motor skill development through work on gallops and skips as well as jumping and hopping. Theatre arts instills confidence, self-expression, and communication skills. Through a variety of collaborative exercises, students explore emotional intelligence and empathy for others. They share their progress in a workshop performance.

MUSIC

In music class, students expand their understanding of basic rhythms using “ta” and “titi” for quarter and eighth notes. The rhythms are printed on flash cards with symbols that represent notes. The students clap and tap the rhythms, which are also written on charts to accompany vocal pieces. Students continue to learn simple vocal pieces for in-tune singing, mastery, and performance. As part of the MKA Core, students explore Camille Saint-Saëns’ *Carnival of the Animals*, a musical suite that portrays the movement and idiosyncrasies of animals in a zoo through orchestral instrumentation. Through their study, students hear classical music, learn to listen critically, and begin to develop a lifetime appreciation and love of music. Kindergarten students also play the xylophones and are exposed to a simple musical scale to develop their music reading skills.

VISUAL ARTS

In art class, students are introduced to a range of artistic methods and materials. Students are encouraged to approach each assignment with imagination and creative interpretation. They are taught to consider purposeful arrangement of elements to create visual order in their work. Through experimentation, students learn that good design does not depend on adhering to a formula, but rather on observation and experience. Formal principles of organization (balance, contrast, unity, pattern, rhythm) are emphasized. Expectations for skillful execution and the proper use and care of tools and materials help to ensure the success of all work.

HEALTH, WELLNESS, AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Kindergarten students develop the fundamental motor skills and knowledge that form the foundation for later sports, games, and physical activity. The physical education curriculum has a strong emphasis on the development of fundamental motor skills and movement concepts, such as throwing, catching, running, and jumping, are an essential part of class time. The development of these skills is critical to enable students to progress in sports and games.

Kindergarten Health is taught in four units. Unit One is Healthy Body/Body Awareness; Unit Two is All About Me: Healthy Mind and Feelings; Unit Three is All Around Me: My Family, Friends and Community; Unit Four is All Around Me: My Environment.

LANGUAGE ARTS: GRADES 1-3

Through the language arts curriculum, students learn to read for meaning and to communicate effectively in written and oral discourse on their way to becoming lifelong readers and writers. They engage daily in the foundational processes of reading, writing, speaking, and listening through a workshop approach, devised and refined from decades of educational research at Teachers College, Columbia University. This approach allows teachers to focus on individual growth and address students' immediate needs through targeted skill development. The classroom environment fosters not only the development of good reading and writing habits, but it also helps to nurture students' love of both reading and writing. Through conferring on their work, students receive immediate feedback from the teacher and one another to guide their skill development and to improve as readers and writers.

READING WORKSHOP

During daily Reading Workshop, students learn through the modeling and practice of literacy skills, such as analyzing word and text structure, questioning to comprehend, and predicting and revising thinking. Students self-select books of different fiction and nonfiction genres at their developmental reading level; read individually, with a partner, or in flexible groups; and discuss what they have read during conferences with teachers and peers. Students keep track of the books they read, which helps teachers monitor reading progress and set reading goals.

The rich format of daily Reading Workshop includes a variety of structures to support students' development of reading stamina, reading rate, and application of comprehension strategies in both fiction and nonfiction. Reading Workshop time begins with a focused mini-lesson on a specific skill or strategy, often to address a particular genre of text (e.g., biography or mystery). Students then practice the skill in their independent reading and draw on everything else they know as readers. As students read, teachers circulate around the classroom, observe, confer with students, and record observations that can help to inform the feedback they give each student to guide next steps. At times, students engage in partner reading—a favorite time that provides the opportunity to buddy with a classmate, read together, and discuss the reading. Reading partnerships enrich conversation and ideas about the elements of the genre students are reading and allow teachers to understand more about students' growing comprehension as they listen to students' conversations. Small-group, teacher-guided reading offers students additional, targeted skill development in a flexible group setting based on a particular, identified need. Reading Workshop comes to a close with the class gathering together to reflect on their reading as they raise questions, share thoughts, or note observations. At times, students may work in centers during Reading Workshop to reinforce fluency skills, using the classroom iPads to record and replay their reading, or participate in a skill-building game.

To grow as a reader, a student must read books at the appropriate independent level. Teachers partner with students to help them select just-right books of high personal interest, that can be read with few mistakes at an appropriate reading rate, and that a student can retell with appropriate details from the storyline. Students seek books that inspire them, with characters that they care about and themes they can relate to and learn from. Teachers may ask students to keep track of their reading through a variety of methods, including reading logs in the older grades, which can help students to build reading stamina or to notebooks they have enjoyed recently that they can recommend to friends. Through continual observation of students while they are reading and frequent individual conferences to better understand their preferences and skill development, teachers guide students to books that they can engage with and that will help them grow as readers. Sometimes, teachers encourage students to experiment with authors or genres that they would not have explored on their own. In addition, periodic, specific assessments of each student's growth in accuracy, reading comprehension, and fluency help teachers to tailor their book recommendations for students. Over time, students develop independence in the use of the classroom library, make independent book selections, and read in a variety of genres. As the students' fluency and comprehension increase, students progress from easy readers to simple chapter books and then to more complex material.

READ-ALOUD

Reading aloud to students is an integral part of the daily curriculum that exposes students to beautiful, rich language and storylines at text levels beyond those they can read independently. The read-aloud selection may be a picture book or a chapter book, both of which provide shared opportunities for students to learn about story structure, character development, and setting. Discussions of the author’s craft influence students’ independent reading selections and experimentation with their own writing. Reading aloud also provides essential opportunities to model fluent reading and develop background knowledge and listening comprehension. In addition, the shared experience of listening to a read-aloud helps to foster classroom community.

READING ASSESSMENT

Informal and formal assessment takes place throughout the year and directly informs reading instruction, both individually and in physically distanced groups. Teachers’ targeted conferring with students takes place during daily Reading Workshops and immediately informs not only tailored instruction but also developmentally appropriate goals for individual students. In kindergarten through third grade, the Teachers College Benchmark Assessments provide information on students’ growth in accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. All assessments help to identify each student’s reading needs and next steps as a developing reader.

WRITING WORKSHOP

The goal for Writing Workshop is for students to develop both their voices and their writing skills as they learn to express themselves and communicate through writing in different genres and formats, both fiction and nonfiction. During each unit of study, students choose their own, genre-appropriate topic and develop their own voice for multiple writing pieces. For example, students engage their imaginations as they write realistic fiction pieces; they reflect and “zoom in on small moments” as they write personal narratives about little things that have been important in their lives; they learn to apply specific writing strategies to persuade readers to see their point of view; and they act as experts when they write nonfiction pieces about something they know well. As practicing writers and editors, students also develop a command of the mechanics of language, including grammar, syntax, and spelling. For each writing genre, students engage iteratively with the writing process. They gather, nurture, and develop ideas; plan their writing; write multiple drafts—revising each time; and edit, with ongoing feedback from peers and teachers that is essential to their growth. During writing celebrations two times per year in kindergarten through second grade and once per year in third grade, students share reflections on their process and celebrate their writing skills in a particular genre with an audience of peers and special friends.

Each day, Writing Workshop begins with a mini-lesson that focuses on the elements of a given writing genre and models a related strategy or skill. Teachers draw upon read-alouds and other shared reading experiences to model and celebrate the craft of writing for their students—often targeting a specific element of the text or a specific skill for students to develop. Together, the class might examine the elements of a story (from beginning, middle, and end to character and conflict development) or the elements of a how-to book with an emphasis on breaking down instructions and writing for an audience of novices. Once they have been exposed to such a targeted lesson, students immediately set to work applying that understanding or skill in their work on their own writing piece. Students confer with their teacher and their peers throughout Writing Workshop to receive feedback on their piece in progress and then work diligently to incorporate that feedback into their writing. Teachers use these conferring opportunities to assess individual needs and guide students to improve their writing skills. Students learn to self-assess their work and partner with their teachers in setting goals for revision.

Integral to students’ development of their writing is the Writer’s Notebook. A tool for leading a “writerly life,” the notebook is a place for students to gather ideas, observations, memories, and dreams. Students sometimes share their notebook entries with their teachers and peers. Students may choose an entry as a seed or a catalyst for a piece of writing that they will develop during Writing Workshop. Sample work collected in a writing folder demonstrates the student’s development as a writer. The teacher and the student assess the folder together, and students learn to understand their own growth and define goals for future writing pieces.

PHONICS AND WORD STUDY

During phonics instruction, students engage in a research-based, multi-sensory program designed to address phonological awareness, phonics patterns, spelling, and high frequency words. Students are encouraged to apply their knowledge of spelling patterns and rules in their writing. The vocabulary and spelling derived from students' daily reading and writing are woven into all writing activities within the classroom. As a class, students are encouraged to play with phonics patterns to build both spelling and vocabulary skills; they systematically engage with a well-researched sequence of phonics patterns to improve their independent decoding and encoding abilities. Word games also inform their understanding of spelling patterns. Lists of high-frequency words are integrated into classroom routines and serve as resources for students as they write. As students encounter them, high-frequency words and pattern words are added to the lists throughout the year. Teachers evaluate students' spelling for continuous growth through regular phonics assessments, including dictations, and through students' writing. The results of these assessments help teachers differentiate instruction to meet the current needs of all students. Of course, word study also helps students to increase their reading fluency as it supports growth in recognizing and independently decoding words in context.

Phonics instruction also provides a foundation for students to examine and apply their developing knowledge of grammar and spelling in their writing. As students focus on word patterns, they also address patterns of language. As they proofread for spelling using their decoding skills, they learn to edit for grammar and syntax, as well. This close attention to phonics, syntax, and semantics develops students as creative and polished writers. Students' writing increasingly incorporates longer and more varied sentences that use word choice and punctuation to guide the reader and support voice. At the same time, these skills help students to become more engaged and careful readers, who are able to interpret the author's voice and make a more nuanced interpretation of their reading.

CLASS PERFORMANCES

Performing on stage helps students to develop confidence, take risks, and work together; and these opportunities help them develop effective leadership skills. Every student in kindergarten through second grade participates in a classroom performance each year.

Students collaborate to create a developmentally appropriate class performance. The creation and production of the class performance in kindergarten, first, and second grade is under the direction of the dance/theatre arts teacher and is performed on the Primary School stage. Students use their voice, body, imagination, and interactions with others as they progress through the learning process in developmentally appropriate ways to create believable characters and tell a story. Beginning in kindergarten, students share their evolving skills through the presentation of theatre exercises. First and second grade students continue to refine performance skills through co-creating complex storylines. Movement and song are included in the performance.

By third grade, students use their performance skills when they share their Capstone Project with parents and the community. The third grade year also culminates with a formal Dance Concert.

HANDWRITING

Students develop their handwriting skills in conjunction with their *From Sounds to Spelling* work. Because Primary School students still write most of their pieces by hand, handwriting is practiced through the act of writing on a daily basis. Third grade students use a practice book to learn cursive handwriting.

FIRST GRADE

READING WORKSHOP

First grade is an exciting year for students as they gain competency in reading. Immersion in a literate environment allows students the opportunity to dive into books and to explore a wide range of literary genres. Students enjoy daily read-alouds, including picture books, chapter books, and books projected on a screen so the words are easily visible for students. Sharing books with enlarged print invites students to read along with the teacher and encourages risk-taking. These shared reading experiences give students the opportunity to get lost in the world of stories and to develop their own passion for independent reading in books of their choice. (See the Reading Workshop description in the Language Arts section overview.)

During Reading Workshop, mini-lessons focus on the major elements of each genre studied. In a whole group setting, mini-lessons highlight a specific skill and strategy, and students are then asked to practice the skill in their just-right books independently. Through these mini-lessons, students increase sight word recognition, develop decoding skills, and improve fluency, all of which empower students on the journey to comprehending increasingly complex texts.

The classroom library is a welcoming feature of each classroom. Students explore the classroom library to “shop” for just-right books with teacher guidance. They hold five or more just-right books in their personal book bins on a weekly basis, as well as personal book choices of varying levels. Students confer individually and in small groups with their teacher about their reading and are coached while they read their just-right books. During a conference, teachers might ask students to read a small section of their just-right book aloud to monitor reading fluency, sight-word growth, and phonics knowledge and to gather data to inform instruction. Additionally, one-on-one conversations and conferences promote students’ talking about their reading and help to reveal students’ growth, thinking, opinions, reading preferences, and challenges. By mid-year, students are expected to have developed the stamina to read quietly for at least 20 minutes in their just-right books.

Intended first grade units of study in reading include:

- Building Good Reading Habits
- Word Detectives
- Learning About the World: Reading Nonfiction
- Readers Have Big Jobs to Do: Fluency, Phonics, and Comprehension
- Meeting Characters and Learning Lessons: A Study of Story Elements

WRITING WORKSHOP

In first grade, Writing Workshop focuses on both the craft and the mechanics of writing. As first grade students craft their own writing pieces, they often start with pictures and simple text and progress to more complex and lengthy writing with illustrations. A wide variety of read-alouds provides first grade students with immersion in a literature-rich environment. Students grow in their ability to write fluently as they become more skilled readers who understand the elements of a story. Children’s literature is often used to examine story development. Established authors and familiar stories are used to support students as they develop voice and craft their own writing. These mentor texts provide students with examples of how to convey a story with structure, focus, and guiding transitions. As students develop longer drafts, they learn to revise their work and how to use editing strategies, such as revision strips and carets. These techniques encourage students to make significant changes to their writing that help to clarify ideas and engage an audience.

Intended first grade units of study in writing include:

- Small Moments: Writing with Focus, Detail, and Dialogue
- How-To Writing
- Nonfiction Chapter Books / “All About” Writing
- Writing Reviews
- From Scenes to Series: Writing Fiction

PHONICS

The first grade phonics curriculum follows the *From Sounds to Spelling* program. This research-based, multisensory phonics instruction addresses phonics patterns, phonological awareness, spelling, and high frequency words. Through teacher-directed and independent practice activities, students are able to develop the strong foundation necessary to pave the way for future reading and writing success. Lessons include direct multisensory instruction, engaging activities, games, and decodable texts; so students practice concepts in a variety of ways.

First grade units cover:

- Review of Letter Sounds, Short Vowels, Digraphs
- Blends and Glued Sounds with Short Vowels
- Plurals, Contractions, Simple R-Controlled Vowels, Introduction to Long Vowels (CVCe), Open/Closed Syllables
- Vowel Teams and More Long Vowel Patterns

SECOND GRADE

READING WORKSHOP

In addition to ensuring that students acquire the appropriate reading skills and strategies, the goals of reading instruction in the second grade classroom are to make reading an enjoyable part of students' lives and encourage students to become lifelong readers.

Reading instruction in second grade builds on skills and strategies taught in first grade to further develop reading comprehension, phonics mastery, and critical thinking skills through reading both fiction and nonfiction texts. During Reading Workshop, teachers focus mini-lessons to model effective, genre-specific reading strategies and to reinforce and extend more complex phonetic skills. (See the Reading Workshop description in the Language Arts section overview.)

Reading aloud to second grade students is an integral part of the curriculum because it exposes them to beautiful language and writers' craft at text levels beyond those they can read independently. This exposure is important to students as developing readers and as young writers who often seek to imitate and experiment with authors' voices and styles. During the discussions of read-aloud books, students not only learn more about the author's craft, but they also examine story structure and story elements and discuss helpful comprehension strategies. Read-aloud selections are often connected to themes the class is exploring.

Teachers use the information that they gather about their students as readers during reading conferences and through more formal reading assessments to guide second grade students to self-select just-right books. Teachers are continually assessing not only students' reading comprehension and fluency, but also their accuracy and strategies for solving words and monitoring meaning. Teachers continually monitor students' progress and look to ensure that students are selecting the next level of appropriately challenging books to ensure growth into reading more complex and nuanced texts.

Students are encouraged to share their interpretations of the books they are reading to motivate readers to deepen their comprehension through conversation.

Anticipated units of study in the second grade reading curriculum include:

- Second Grade Reading Growth Spurt
- Becoming Experts: Reading Nonfiction
- Accelerating Readers' Growth in Longer Fiction Books
- Bigger Books Mean Amping Up Reading Power
- Series Book Clubs

Independent reading is part of both Reading Workshop and nightly routines. During Reading Workshop, students build their stamina to read with engagement and comprehension for increasingly longer periods of time. Students read for a minimum of 15 minutes every night as part of their nightly routine. As the year progresses, students are asked to do some writing about their reading to convey their thinking and comprehension.

WRITING WORKSHOP

The goal for Writing Workshop is to empower second grade writers with a voice to enhance their self-expression and a confident command of the mechanics of language. Students keep writing folders to collect and generate ideas for writing topics. They expand selected topics through the steps of the writing process to produce published works, which they celebrate after each unit of study. Second grade students learn to revise and edit their writing for correct use of capitalization, end punctuation, word choice, and spelling. Students' individual writing folders help both teacher and student to track writing growth over time.

Students continue to write in many of the same genres that they did in first grade, including small moments, opinion writing, and fiction. Second grade units of study deepen students' understanding of how to further develop their thinking and writing in these genres.

The anticipated second grade writing units of study are:

- Lessons from the Masters: Improving Narrative Writing
- Nonfiction Writing: Writing Nonfiction Books and Writing for an Audience
- Persuasive Writing
- Poetry: Big Thoughts in Small Packages
- Realistic Fiction

PHONICS

To become effective readers and writers, second grade students engage in phonics lessons using *From Sounds to Spelling* to further enhance their phonetic development. They learn to apply phonics principles to polysyllabic words and to increase their accuracy in the conventional spelling of high-frequency words. Proofreading for correct spelling becomes an even greater focus as they edit their writing pieces.

Second grade phonics units include:

- Review of Previous Concepts: Short Vowels, Syllable Division Rules, Digraphs, Blends, Inflectional Endings, Glued Sounds, Contractions, Possessives
- Many Ways to Spell Long Vowels
- Word Endings - Prefixes & Suffixes
- Complex R-Controlled Vowels
- Diphthongs

THIRD GRADE

READING WORKSHOP

In third grade, the focus on reading instruction shifts from learning to read to reading to learn. Throughout the year, students read a variety of fiction and nonfiction materials and work toward independence with selecting books that feel within reach. In each unit of study, students are immersed in lessons that emphasize word solving, vocabulary development, and critical thinking. During fiction-focused units, students are encouraged to analyze and interpret characters, keep track of plot, and use textual evidence to support thinking. Nonfiction units address critical skills, such as ascertaining main ideas and supporting details, recognizing common text structures in expository and narrative nonfiction, and determining importance. To keep track of their thinking, students are introduced to a variety of reading tools, such as post-its and a reading notebook. Teachers encourage students to use these tools and to make them part of their reading habits. Ongoing reading partnerships and opportunities for students to collaborate together in book clubs lift the level of engagement and deepen understanding of a text.

Students' ongoing work as readers informs teachers about their progress and potential next steps. Students record their progress in reading logs, which provide the teacher with valuable information about stamina and engagement in reading. During Reading Workshop, teachers observe students reading and confer with them about the progress they are making, the strategies they are using, and their comprehension. Based on all of the information they gather, third grade teachers tailor daily mini-lessons to address targeted skills for reinforcement or to provide appropriate challenge. As third grade readers, students are expected to build and maintain their reading stamina to read for 30 minutes during Reading Workshop. This skill building continues at home, with 20 minutes of independent reading required during the fall semester and 25 minutes during the spring semester.

Read-alouds continue to be important in the curriculum. Picture and chapter books are often used to model reading strategies and skills and to expose students to vocabulary-rich language.

The reading units for third grade include:

- Building A Reading Life
- Reading to Learn (Nonfiction Reading)
- Mystery: Foundational Skills in Disguise
- Character Studies
- Research Clubs: Change Makers

Formal and informal assessment takes place throughout the year and directly informs reading instruction, both individually and in groups. In addition to targeted conferring with students on their independent reading during Reading Workshop, the Teachers College Benchmark Assessments provide information on students' growth in comprehension, fluency, and accuracy.

WRITING WORKSHOP

As third grade students grow as readers, gaining familiarity with a larger variety of literary genres, they are also developing as writers. Through read-aloud books, mini-lessons, and models of effective writing, teachers help students to identify and understand elements of their favorite genres and encourage them to explore and experiment with these elements in their personal writing. Students focus on using effective hook sentences to engage a reader, adding colorful details to enhance their explanations and gathering pertinent information to support evidence-based writing. Fiction writing units include lessons on using realistic dialogue to develop a scene and building tension to further the narrative.

The Writing Workshop focuses heavily on honing the revision process and developing skills for effective editing. Understanding audience and purpose are primary considerations in the revision process. Opportunities for feedback are embedded throughout the curriculum. Students are taught a repertoire of editing strategies and are encouraged to edit their writing daily.

Integral to the development of writing in third grade is the Writer's Notebook. Because writers learn to write by leading a "writerly life," students are encouraged to develop the writing habit of using their Writer's Notebooks to record observations and thoughts. Students often share their notebook entries during class; this allows them an audience for even the "seeds" of their writing. These notebook entries then become the catalysts for longer writing pieces that students produce as parts of the third grade units of study, listed below:

- Crafting True Stories
- The Art of Information Writing
- Changing the World: Persuasive Speeches, Petitions, and Editorials
- Intro to Literary Essay
- Best Part of Brookside: A Third Grade Memoir

PHONICS AND WORD STUDY

As part of word study, students continue to engage in inquiry and exploration of written language to enhance comprehension and spelling strategies. Students continue their exploration of phonetically based spelling patterns using *From Sounds to Spelling* as a basis, and they extend their study of word transformations to examine suffixes, possessives, plurals, and nonstandard spelling patterns. Reading and spelling multisyllabic words becomes an important focus in third grade. Students are held accountable for correctly spelling high-frequency words in their writing.

SOCIAL STUDIES: GRADES 1-3

While the Primary School curriculum at all grade levels and in all areas provides an understanding of the global community, students begin their social studies explorations with concepts of individual identity, celebrating the uniqueness of each child. Students' exploration of individual development and identity is supported by MKA's Diversity and Inclusion Statement of Purpose, Character Standards, and Social and Emotional Learning.

Through their growing understanding of similarities and differences between themselves and others among various communities and cultures, students develop an appreciation for what it means to be a caring citizen. Students consider their responsibilities and their impact in their school community in contexts such as service and sustainability and make connections to how their actions can affect the wider world. In addition, students continue to learn about the power of their own voices by exploring the ethics and moral responsibility inherent in effective communication, particularly with the use of technology tools. Social studies provides an opportunity for students to engage in research skills, such as questioning, exploring, evaluating, reflecting, solving problems collaboratively, and sharing their findings in meaningful ways. To support identity development and to build an inclusive school community, the Primary School helps students to understand many holidays and observances and fosters students' discussion of historical and current events from a variety of perspectives.

FIRST GRADE

Students begin the year with Responsive Classroom activities to create a lasting sense of classroom community. Friendship, inclusivity, and citizenship are key components of the first grade social studies curriculum. Using the MKA Social-Emotional Competencies, including self-management, self-awareness, relationship skills, social awareness, and responsible decision making, first graders are encouraged to develop independence with decision making and managing emotions. Additionally, they learn about navigating friendships. Students explore the idea of community through the creation of classroom rules and discuss the importance of rules, values, and responsibilities. The MKA Character Standards—which encourage community members to be respectful, friendly, responsible, confident, temperate, fair, informed, and honest—are woven throughout the curriculum and revisited in teachable moments daily. Throughout the year, students receive explicit instruction using vehicles such as literature and artwork to promote conversation.

Students also participate in a yearlong study of community, first exploring the MKA community and then taking an in-depth look at the components of a town. They learn that a community shares resources, institutions, and services that meet the needs of the people. Students also learn about creating maps, including introductory concepts of scale, key, and compass rose. As part of first grade's core work, students engage in a study of Virginia Lee Burton's book, *The Little House*. Through this study, first grade students learn about their connection to nature and the towns and cities around them. This classic book enriches the first grade's social studies focus on community and town, providing opportunities for discussions about change, curiosity, growth, and values.

SECOND GRADE

The second grade social studies curriculum focuses on the themes of rights and responsibilities, MKA Character Standards, identity, and the state of New Jersey. Students begin the year by exploring the classroom as a community of learners with individual strengths and shared responsibilities. Together, they collaborate to write their own classroom expectations as they consider how the actions of individuals affect the community. Students learn about the shared values of the entire MKA community via the MKA Character Standards. Through books read aloud, students explore these ideas of strong character and learn the value of being part of our thriving community.

Through their study of identity, students examine themselves as individuals via their own unique traits. Students also learn the value in understanding that there are parts of themselves that other people can see and parts that are hidden from immediate sight. Together, students examine the definition of identity and read picture books to deepen their view into a variety of different perspectives. Using the metaphor of mirrors, windows, and doors, students learn that books can serve as reflections of our own experience or gateways into other, diverse experiences.

Finally, students focus on the geography and other unique aspects of our state of New Jersey. Beginning with an investigation of maps and the role they play, students learn cardinal directions and other elements of map legends. With New Jersey as the focus of their study, students explore bordering areas, landforms, water, bridges, and major towns. Students explore types of communities, such as rural, suburban, and urban, and the locations of these communities throughout the state.

THIRD GRADE

The third grade social studies experience is centered around themes of identity, movement, and social responsibility and action. In the first half of the year, students explore facets of their personal identities and are challenged to think critically about how the nuances of individual identities influence perspective. Questions such as “How do our identities develop and change over time?” and “How does our perspective shape the way we view others?” encourage students to reflect on their own experiences and consider how aspects of their identities are similar and different from others. Read-alouds are carefully selected to provide students with both mirrors and windows—opportunities to see themselves reflected in stories, as well as time spent learning about the experiences of others. A number of classroom discussions are devoted to building an understanding of stereotypes and how stereotypes impact different groups of people. Enduring understandings from the identity unit continue to act as a lens through which the students examine the practice of voting as both a right and responsibility of citizenship in a democratic society. During this unit, students develop an understanding of what it means to participate in the democratic process and examine how and why voting rights have changed over time for different groups of people.

Students spend the second half of the year engaged in an in-depth study of the United States of America. Early lessons focus on geography, landforms, culture, and climate, as students consider how the unique, physical characteristics of a region impact the people who live there. Each student is given the opportunity to become an “expert” on one state and researches the state’s unique contributions to the country as a whole.

Third grade culminates with an interdisciplinary project, The Capstone, that incorporates grade-level collaboration and a design-thinking approach. By studying how change is initiated and brought about in different communities while drawing upon the stories of historical and current changemakers, students are empowered to consider innovative ways to create positive change. Students present their findings to and receive feedback from the MKA community.

MATHEMATICS: GRADES 1-3

Students gain an understanding of and increased comfort with mathematics through daily, hands-on learning tasks that actively engage students' interests and sharpen cognitive skills through collaboration, independent work, problem-solving, and inquiry. The *Everyday Math 4* curriculum, developed by the University of Chicago School Mathematics Project, provides the basis for the Primary School math program. It reflects the most recent findings in math education research and provides a developmental structure that progresses from concrete to representational to symbolic/abstract. Students master skills and concepts as they move through the spiraling curriculum that repeats applications of the same material at more advanced levels throughout the year and from year to year. Computational fluency practice provides students with opportunities to think like mathematicians while strengthening their number sense and deepening their understanding of underlying mathematical concepts. Learning tasks differentiated to meet students' learning needs help students extend their thinking by asking and attempting to answer not just "what?" but also "how?" and "why?". As they explore math in the context of other disciplines through measurement, graphing data, and geometry, students see connections between the math skills they are learning and their everyday lives. Estimation, patterning, probability, and problem-solving further increase the development of critical thinking processes that students need to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

Typically, Math Workshop begins with a mini-lesson in which teachers demonstrate a new skill or concept for students and provide opportunities for guided practice as a class. Then, students practice the new skill or concept independently or with a partner, depending on the needs of the students and the learning objectives for the lesson. Teachers often form small groups for reteaching a specific concept or for stretching students through enrichment. These groups change according to students' needs with regard to each new concept or skill.

In addition to the *Everyday Math 4* resources, teachers skillfully enrich math lessons to further reinforce the curriculum and challenge math learners with explorations, games, books, and projects created by a variety of experts in math education. Through materials and activities that allow students to discover and understand mathematical concepts, students participate actively in experiences that foster creativity, curiosity, insight, abstract and quantitative reasoning, and problem-solving while developing fluency with mathematical language. Students gain a solid background in arithmetic, geometry, algebraic reasoning, measurement, and mathematical inquiry. To support students' learning progress, teachers model mathematical thinking, encourage students to use representations to build their mathematical understanding, foster collaboration to promote learning, and require students to apply their understanding independently. Activities are rooted in real-life situations and problems. Students in Pre-K through grade three are introduced to thinking like a computer programmer as they prepare for and participate in the nationwide Hour of Code.

Children deepen their understanding of mathematics and practice reasoning skills through *Everyday Math 4* Open Response and Reengagement lessons. Day 1 of these two-day lessons provides the opportunity for students to solve a challenging problem that involves more than one possible strategy or solution. On Day 2, students reengage with the problem by examining and discussing their own and other students' solutions to deepen their understanding of the mathematical content and practices involved. Students then revise their own work from day one of the lesson. They draw upon their mathematical understandings, ask good questions, and communicate their mathematical thinking.

Students increase their computational fluency through practice and review to develop skills through traditional methods, such as computation sheets, practice using fact-family triangles, hands-on explorations, and games. Students' progress in acquiring basic skills fluency is continually assessed, and instruction is appropriately adapted to meet the needs of students at varied developmental levels. To enhance skill development through practice with immediate feedback, children use technological tools, such as the calculator and iPad, when appropriate. Students can also access *Everyday Math 4* and IXL resources online for further information and practice.

FIRST GRADE

Students learn new skills and concepts and further develop, at a greater level of mastery and understanding, many of the skills that are taught in kindergarten. They develop skills to explain their reasoning and thinking using mathematical language. Emphasis is placed on growing numeracy, including developing number sense, counting, and related patterns; learning fact families to support addition and subtraction; and understanding both place value and part-to-whole relationships of equal shares (fractions). Frequently, students play games, explore and manipulate math materials, and solve problems to demonstrate their understanding and ability to apply mathematical concepts. Teachers vary these activities to match first grade students' developmental levels. As students delve into problem-solving, they learn how to identify problems and use a variety of mathematical representations, such as diagrams, tally charts, and tables, as organizational tools to support logic. Students often create products that range from pattern art composed of basic shape blocks to graphs of data collected from their classmates.

The following mathematical concepts and skills are the basis of the first grade *Everyday Math 4* curriculum:

- Counting
- Addition (one- and two-digit)
- Subtraction (one- and two-digit)
- Place Value and Comparisons
- Attributes of Shapes
- Geometry (one- and three-dimensional shapes)
- Telling Time to the Hour and Half Hour
- Equal Shares (Fractions)
- Mental Arithmetic
- Number Stories
- Open Response Number Problems

SECOND GRADE

Second grade mathematics ensures that students attain greater mastery and fluency of basic addition and subtraction skills, while developing greater understanding of concepts and exploring more varied approaches to solving real-world problems. Students develop math reasoning through game play, math manipulatives, and written work. Developing mental math and estimation skills is an additional focus.

Students build on their understanding of many concepts learned in first grade. For example, students expand their exploration to include three-dimensional shapes and gain deeper understanding through comparing, drawing, and reasoning about shapes. They also explore the concepts and mathematical vocabulary of size, directionality, and location. Students learn to write "number sentences" (equations) as mathematical models for number-story problems. Further work with place value evolves using base ten blocks as students experience addition and subtraction with larger numbers. As foundations for multiplication and division, students create arrays, form equal groups, and write number models to represent them. They explore multiplication by using repeated addition, arrays, and skip counting, and develop a beginning understanding that division is the concept of creating equal groups and equal shares. Second grade students learn the partial sums and expand-and-trade subtraction algorithms to add and subtract double-digit numbers. Calculator use helps students to extend their manipulation of numbers beyond their developmental ability.

Work in math stations and on projects also provides students opportunities to explore concepts and practice skills through hands-on engagement or through iPad use. These experiences allow students to make choices, explore interests, and practice their math reasoning. Teachers also gather information about students' skill mastery through observing their work in math stations and through students' periodic self-assessment of their own progress.

The following mathematical concepts and skills are the basis of the second grade *Everyday Math 4* curriculum:

- Establishing Routines
- Addition and Subtraction Fact Strategies
- Addition up to 4 Addends
- Place Value and Measurement
- Telling Time to the Nearest 5 Minutes
- Whole Number Operations Number Stories (Addition and Subtraction Algorithms)
- Comparison Number Stories and Interpreting Number Stories
- Measurement and Data (Inches/Yards and Centimeters/Meters)
- Geometry and Arrays
- Equal Shares (Fractions)
- Open Response Number Problems

Nightly *Everyday Math 4* Home Link assignments are intended to provide review and practice with concepts and skills learned in class. Second grade students are also expected to practice basic addition and subtraction facts for five minutes each weekday to build math fact fluency.

Teachers assess students' mastery of skills through unit assessments and ongoing assessment of fact fluency in addition and subtraction. Educational technology resources allow students to demonstrate and share their critical thinking with teachers and peers. Students save and curate their individual and group work in their own portfolios.

THIRD GRADE

Third grade students refine mathematical skills in measurement and problem-solving applications as well as in geometry, where they explore more sophisticated symmetry concepts and work with perimeter and area. An introduction of algebraic concepts and reasoning becomes more distinct with activities involving missing addends; missing factors; parentheses; and the recognition of square numbers, attributes, and function rules. More work with grouping further refines multiplication and division concepts in solving real-life problems. Students learn that division is the inverse operation of multiplication and work to develop proficiency with multiplication facts.

The following mathematical concepts and skills are the basis of the third grade *Everyday Math 4* curriculum:

- Math Tools and Time (Bar Graphs)
- Multistep Number Stories and Number Models for Two-Step Number Stories
- Fractions (Comparing Fractions, Equivalent Fractions, and Fractions in a Number Story)
- Multiplication and Division
- Multi-digit Multiplication
- Operations (Number Sentences with Parentheses and Order of Operations)
- Geometry (Area, Perimeter, Line Plots)
- Elapsed Time
- Measuring to the Nearest $\frac{1}{4}$ Inch
- Open Response Number Problems

Because fact fluency is an important skill for learning higher-order math, continued practice with math facts and playing related games at home are strongly encouraged beyond the nightly *Everyday Math 4* Home Link. Once students have mastered the concepts of a given operation, they practice several strategies for remembering the related basic facts. Unit tests assess progress and understanding of the concepts studied, and teachers also periodically assess fact fluency.

SCIENCE: GRADES 1-3

Science classes meet in the science room, where students develop an awareness that science involves a continuous process of discovery to generate solutions for everyday life and to find answers to the great mysteries of the universe. Students' observations and experiences with everyday phenomena comprise a foundation for understanding scientific concepts. As a result, the science program provides students with experiences that encourage them to collaborate, discover connections, and engage in the practice of science and engineering, which promotes early literacy in those areas and helps students construct an accurate understanding of scientific concepts.

Designed to stimulate students' curiosity, the program encourages students to explore a broader spectrum of science, including basic concepts of life sciences, physical sciences, and Earth and space sciences. Within this context, students learn about their human footprint and explore scientific concepts in relation to sustainability and conservation. Studying science as inquiry, students learn science process skills, such as questioning, ordering, measuring, observing, and collecting data and explaining its significance. They engage in laboratory experiences, outdoor exploration, and multimedia learning. Hands-on laboratory activities provide students with opportunities to undertake their own investigations while they engage in the experimental process and learn to think like a scientist. Collaboration and reflection not only help students to better understand scientific concepts, but also help them to develop a sense of cooperation and responsibility in problem-solving. Opportunities to collaborate, solve problems, and share thinking occur through grade-level-appropriate projects, such as engaging in the engineering design process while designing egg-drop vehicles to protect eggs dropped from the Primary School's roof and using block-based intuitive coding to animate a Lego creation in Lego Robotics.

Students keep a science notebook where they use their growing scientific vocabulary to record observations, ideas, questions, measurements, comparisons, interpretations, and reflections. Notebooks also help students develop the habits of titling; dating; and making and labeling diagrams and other illustrations, such as charts, tables, models, and graphs.

FIRST GRADE

Students explore the role of a scientist as they engage in hands-on experiments that provide them with opportunities to undertake their own investigations while they discover some tools of science. They record their observations and take notes in their science notebooks. As they use their senses to explore their world, make observations, and formulate testable questions, students are introduced to the concept of a fair test. Each classroom exploration begins with a question that the students answer through experimentation, discussion, data collection, and analysis.

Students identify different types of simple machines and explore the concept of mechanical advantage. They collaborate and engage in problem-solving as they build different types of simple machines and understand how simple machines help in making work easier. They investigate light energy by conducting experiments to explain properties of light and constructing an evidence-based account. First grade students engage in the design and construction of a shadow puppet theatre and make multicultural connections by exploring "Wayang" shadow puppetry from Indonesia. They also explore the weather and weather patterns and discover the life cycle of a plant.

SECOND GRADE

Students further develop the inquiry skills of questioning, ordering, measuring, observing, and collecting data. They record the results of experimentation in their science notebooks where they work to explain the significance of the data that they collect. Students expand their understanding of a fair test as they begin to formulate their own experiments. Through studying animals and their habitats, students learn how organisms adapt to their environments and how they react when their environments change. Using their imagination, they design and create a habitat diorama. Students explore the concepts of balance and motion as they learn to balance various two- and three-dimensional objects and observe and compare different types of motion to understand the dynamics of the world around them. Students also engage in interactive and creative learning through Lego Robotics as they refine their problem-solving skills in an intuitive, block-based, coding environment.

THIRD GRADE

As they explore Earth and space sciences, students research Earth's place in the universe, study space exploration, and conduct various experiments to understand the principles of flight. They engage in design and construction as they create a model of a spacecraft. Students continue to develop their inquiry skills as they observe and identify the characteristics of life and investigate seeds and the dispersal mechanisms of the plants. They then design and test a wind-dispersed seed structure. They learn to compare the characteristics of various arthropods, including structure, function, behavior, basic needs, and growth. Students synthesize and interpret their scientific observations as they develop an understanding that plants and animals within an ecosystem are dependent on each other.

Students learn about inventions from all around the world and engage in interactive and creative learning to refine their problem-solving skills. They address various STEM challenges, including design and construction projects to understand the engineering design process. The students learn about forces and changing motion and apply their discoveries and knowledge to engineering egg-drop vehicles for the end-of-the-year, egg-drop project. Students test and judge their successful application of the learned scientific concepts when their egg-drop vehicle is launched. They design and present a poster explaining the engineering design process, analyze the results, and make suggestions for improvements to their design.

WORLD LANGUAGES: GRADES 1-3

Introduced to either French or Spanish in Pre-K, students continue their study through third grade. Teachers make the language comprehensible to all students through a variety of strategies while using the target language the majority of the time. Much like babies and toddlers learning languages from their parents by hearing it spoken aloud repeatedly over time, Primary School students acquire world languages by listening and understanding before they are able to speak. Although students generally develop listening and reading (receptive language) skills in the target language before speaking and writing (productive language) skills, their language acquisition journeys are developmentally unique according to their learning styles. In addition, language students further develop cross-curricular skills, such as concentration, listening, oral expression, vocabulary development, logical thinking, classifying, predicting, collaborating, and problem-solving. Teachers aim to build children's confidence and love of learning, with the ultimate goal of communicating in a supportive, positive, and engaging learning environment.

FIRST GRADE

First grade students further develop listening comprehension. They are introduced to beginning reading skills through exposure to text containing familiar material, often in the form of stories previously comprehended by the students through a variety of activities, such as theatre, "Movie Talk," "Picture Talk," and a variety of games. At their own pace, students start reading and communicating by answering questions, chorally or individually, and by using familiar expressions to make requests and statements. A variety of tools help students to acquire language. The most important tools are visual clues on the walls, which consist mostly of frequently used written vocabulary and expressions.

SECOND GRADE

Students focus on developing the skills of listening comprehension and speaking while increasing proficiency with an emphasis on reading. Through a variety of stories, games, songs, TPR (Total Physical Response) and many more activities, students acquire new vocabulary and expressions. At their own pace, students start reading individually and communicating by answering questions, individually or chorally, and by using familiar expressions to make requests and statements.

THIRD GRADE

Third grade students work continuously to strengthen and expand upon their target language acquisition skills of listening comprehension, reading, and speaking, with an emphasis on writing. New content is introduced orally, with gestures and visuals for support, and is reinforced in different contexts through storytelling using a variety of tools. Early on in the year, third grade students are gently led to start writing, often by responding to a visual prompt, using the language they have acquired and the visual clues provided by the teacher. At the end of the school year, third grade students are invited to a World Language picnic organized and hosted by their World Language teacher to celebrate the students' accomplishments. Third grade students also perform a song in the target language during their graduation ceremony.

LIBRARY: GRADES 1-3

The librarians collaborate with classroom teachers to provide students in grades 1-3 with an integrated and interdisciplinary information literacy curriculum. The library program enhances students' appreciation of literature as a way to transport them to an entirely new world where their imaginations can run wild. At the same time, the library program supports students' development of many literacy skills taught in the classrooms. For example, library classes provide a rich learning environment for students as they participate in storytelling and making connections to literature. Students explore a wide variety of literature through song, rhyme, read-alouds, and art that bring stories to life. Learning about the library's collection and how it is organized supports students in developing strategies for independently selecting books to check out and take home. Varied resources, including audiobooks, ebooks, and electronic databases, accommodate different interests. Using a variety of print and digital resources and gaining a foundational understanding of the MKA Research Cycle, students access information, synthesize what they learn, and demonstrate their understanding. The library's information literacy curriculum builds and fosters a balance between the science of research and the art of literature and illustration to instill in students a lifelong love of learning.

FIRST GRADE

As first grade students grow as readers, an emphasis is placed on identifying books that are a good fit for each student. Students are encouraged to consider their purpose in selecting a book. Students learn about the parts of the book and then explore the elements of non-fiction books, such as the table of contents and index, during a collaborative research unit.

SECOND GRADE

Students begin using MKA's online library catalog and learn the skills necessary to find and identify appropriate library materials to take home, such as identifying different genres. Students build upon their research skills by learning how to safely use online sources to locate new information. Second grade students also enjoy evaluating the books they read and voting for their favorite.

THIRD GRADE

Third grade students are increasingly independent library users as they learn how call numbers are used to locate books and expand their searching skills. Students explore how illustrations and text work together to support meaning in picture books. Students continue to develop research skills as they consider sources of information, evaluate credibility, and discover why it is important to appropriately give credit when using another's work.

FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS: GRADES 1-3

Students gain interpersonal skills and self-confidence as well as an appreciation of the arts from their earliest years at MKA. The art program strives to increase students' ability to understand and describe the visual world around them. MKA's encompassing arts curriculum focuses on both content and skills and cultivates an independent and lifelong curiosity and a love of learning. Students are encouraged to use the art room as a place for creative thinking and problem-solving. Children's classwork in the arts is closely connected to the learning they do in their other classes. Through their study of the arts, students expand their communication skills and develop a range of tools for exploring all areas of learning. Each year, students apply acquired art knowledge and skills in dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts and celebrate their growth in productions and exhibitions, including classroom plays, musical and dance performances, and an annual art show that transforms the gymnasium into an art gallery.

DANCE/THEATRE ARTS

In dance/theatre arts class, students explore movement through exercises and imagery that create an awareness of how body parts move through space. Students develop a love of learning and an appreciation of self-expression through dance and theatre arts. They experience freedom and joy of movement in a supportive atmosphere. Dance gives children a forum to develop social-emotional skills as they take risks, solve problems, and work together to find success. Theatre arts provides students with opportunities to develop confidence and communication skills.

Students are exposed to specific content that focuses on the elements of dance and theatre arts: space, time, body, and energy. They engage in self-assessment, group assessment, and observation to support their growth as performing artists. Students develop their basic, gross motor skills of jumping, galloping, skipping, and hopping and stretch these skills to become dance steps. Using imagery and theatre arts skills, they transform themselves into many things, such as drifting leaves, kings, or frogs. They create interesting forms with their bodies while exploring their relationships to others and learn the difference between symmetrical and asymmetrical shapes. Students learn increasingly complex pathways, patterns, and sequences throughout the year. Creative movement engages the mind in ways that require innovative problem-solving and analytical reasoning. The performing arts support students' development of self-esteem and confidence in their ability to express themselves as they stretch their imagination and creativity. Striving for excellence, practicing discipline, and achieving self-confidence are part of every class.

FIRST GRADE

Students explore dance and theatre skills in every class, combining their performance art skills with proper terminology. They collaborate with peers and engage in a variety of theatrical exercises that both strengthen skills and stretch students beyond their comfort zones. As a final project, they choose a story to adapt into a play that they perform for an audience within the Brookside community. Throughout the process of creating, planning, practicing, and performing, students utilize and develop social-emotional skills, build community, and increase their confidence. Students also learn modern dance vocabulary as they increase their skills and complete simple dance phrases of their own. Through study of *The Nutcracker Suite*, part of the MKA Core, students learn about Tchaikovsky and Balanchine and learn specific ballet steps and dances adapted from Balanchine's choreography. They learn to create their own dance phrases by learning "four sets of four." Initially, students learn a dance move that they associate with a chosen animal and become that animal for four counts. Then, they create a sequence of four different animals, each associated with its own dance move for four counts. Once they have mastered the sequence of movements, they plan how to use the space and their relationship to each other to choreograph a short dance phrase.

SECOND GRADE

Students explore dance and theatre skills in every class as they expand on the fundamentals of dance movement as expressed in space, rhythm, energy, and line. They are introduced to Labanotation (a system of symbols for recording movement) and explore movement while working toward finding their own style. Students learn eight basic Laban symbols, including symbols for "travel," "freeze," "grow," "wiggle," "turn," and "twist." Students experiment with different movements and sequences, exchange ideas, and notate a short dance using these symbols. This new "language" not only allows students to create their own dance sequences that they can return to over time, but it also helps them to

understand that their dances can be shared and performed by others. The second grade dance program culminates in a traditional Maypole dance, which students perform for the community in May. In addition to dance, second grade students also engage in a variety of theatrical exercises that strengthen skills, develop communication, and help to increase comfort with being in front of an audience. Students collaborate to develop a script that they perform on stage with members of the MKA community. Throughout the process of creating, exploring, practicing, and performing, students utilize and develop social-emotional skills, build community, and increase their confidence and awareness.

THIRD GRADE

Students explore a variety of movement phrases throughout the year. In their “A Dancer to Know” study, students look for examples of canon, isolation, element of surprise, and dancing in unison when they view a few dances choreographed by Bob Fosse and Alvin Ailey. Inspired, students then create their own 16-count dance phrase incorporating two of the elements they identified, and eventually incorporate all four elements into a 32-count dance phrase. Throughout the year, students exchange ideas and compromise while choreographing their dances. As they work to achieve their goal, students use skills of cooperation, creative problem-solving, and discipline. Their dances demonstrate their ability to take risks and present a cohesive dance piece with the skills they have mastered. Their final dances reflect increased confidence with movement and their own bodies.

MUSIC

Through their study of music, students develop an appreciation of many musical styles, learn songs from around the world, and learn to express themselves in multiple mediums. They learn to understand music, listen critically, and incorporate feedback into their performance. In music class, each student experiences both vocal and instrumental music. Students explore the basic elements of music and rhythm using the approach of Carl Orff, who believed that “feeling precedes intellectual understanding.” The Kodaly method, complete with hand signals for pitch that students can follow, helps to focus instruction on particular pitches that are common to music from around the world and that children can hear and distinguish easily. Learning to play xylophones, glockenspiels, metallophones, and Baroque recorders and to ring the choirchimes and handbells not only helps students to learn to read music, but also helps them to appreciate harmony and performing in a musical ensemble.

FIRST GRADE

First grade students play primary-level xylophones, glockenspiels, and metallophones with the musical staff and a note in letter form printed on each bar reinforces note recognition. Students are exposed to the concept of harmony, introducing the importance of communication and cooperation in a musical setting.

SECOND GRADE

Second grade students learn basic orchestration techniques by learning to ring the choirchimes and handbells. Each bellringer works with a partner who assists with reading the notes and ringing the corresponding choirchime or handbell. Students learn and apply the concept of harmony through the chords played collectively, fostering communication and cooperation.

THIRD GRADE

Handbell and choirchime stations provide further opportunities for third grade students to develop communication and cooperation with their partners. Students expand their knowledge of musical terms as they learn more written music theory, including terms for dynamics, such as piano (soft) and forte (loud). Learning to ring the bells is a starting point for learning the notes of the staff and preparation for playing band and orchestral instruments offered for study at the Middle School.

VISUAL ARTS

The art program is a continuous, sequential program related to design, beginning with simpler skills and understandings and progressing to the more complex. Students are prepared and challenged through a wide range of distinctive artistic experiences. Students begin to develop an understanding of the elements and principles of art through studio experiences that include drawing, painting, and mixed media. Problem-solving and risk-taking promote successful, progressive development of self-awareness, self-esteem, self-discipline, cooperation, and motivation. The breadth of artistic methods and materials introduced during Primary School offers the students a solid foundation for more specialized art endeavors. Projects and design problems are targeted to develop students' ability to think critically and communicate creatively at a developmentally appropriate level, including knowledge and skills related to the elements of art; the principles of organization; and the use of art vocabulary, materials, tools, and techniques. As students explore the nature of art as a means of communicating ideas, strategies for building visual literacy are continually brought into focus: looking closely, describing what is seen, making connections to prior knowledge, sharing new information using art vocabulary, and comparing and contrasting to deepen understanding.

FIRST GRADE

First grade students develop increasing flexibility with methods and materials that they encountered in kindergarten. Their comfort with basic media allows them to delve deeper into artistic concepts such as color, shape, and material. Students learn the difference between observation drawing and drawing from their imagination, and use this knowledge to expand on their understanding of different artistic styles and forms. Many of the units are integrated with science lessons, allowing students to strengthen and explore their understanding of scientific skills through creative expression and problem-solving.

SECOND GRADE

Second grade art students hone their technical skills while discovering exciting new methods and media. They continue their study of color theory by learning how to mix and identify warm and cool colors. Students expand on prior knowledge as they learn to look, identify parts, describe, analyze, interpret, and judge artwork of their own and of others. The design elements and the principles of organization are reinforced through more challenging studio work geared to sensitize students to the intricacies of visual information.

THIRD GRADE

The third grade year offers challenging studio work wherein students are called upon to apply what they have learned over their Primary School years. Students consider how artists work and think as they discuss their work with others. They are introduced to a variety of artists and explore the range of methods and materials that artists use for creative expression. Artistic concepts are reinforced and explored in greater detail. Students are expected to expand on skills developed throughout their time in Primary School and create works with ambitious, conceptual frameworks.

HEALTH, WELLNESS, AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION: GRADES 1-3

Health, Wellness, and Physical Education at the Primary School provides students with the skills and knowledge to live a physically active, healthy life. Students look forward to physical education class and the exposure to the activities provided. All activities are designed to enhance each student's gross motor skills, dexterity, spatial awareness, and ability to change direction. Areas of concentration include, but are not limited to: upper body development, core strength and development, lower body development, catching, throwing, dodging, fleeing, skipping, galloping, and hopping. Students learn to master these skills in many creative and engaging ways. In addition, students partake in activities to strengthen their balance and coordination. Endurance and lifetime exercise are foci in addition to distance running. Exercise breathing is a technique used to increase endurance and health.

Team concepts and team sports also have a place at the Primary School. Students learn the importance of working together to achieve a common goal. Emphasis is placed on good sportsmanship while students learn how to handle winning and losing games respectfully.

In first through third grade health classes, students discuss the importance of nutrition and hygiene as well as social and emotional health. Students also take part in bullying prevention and awareness.

FIRST GRADE

Students develop personal fitness skills as they learn "exercise breathing" (in through the nose, out through the mouth) and build up to alternately running and walking for a quarter mile. They learn to jump rope (from one to five repetitions) and do multiple sit-ups. They practice jumping over a 12-inch hurdle and changing direction on the 8-inch balance beam. Ongoing emphasis on good sportsmanship focuses, in part, on inclusion in games and activities and supports students' recess play. First grade students love Beanbag Toss, a game that involves beanbags, bowling pins, and two teams divided by a center line. Students slide beanbags at the other team's feet or at the bowling pins that the other team is protecting. Targeting, dodging, and defending skills are the focus. Health topics include a continuing focus on basic hygiene and beginning conversations about healthy eating.

SECOND GRADE

Sportsmanship goals for second grade students include being a good teammate and working toward a common goal, as well as understanding how to win and lose graciously. To support the skills of game play, students work with perimeters and boundaries in sports games and focus on game skills, such as stopping and kicking a moving ball and developing proper throwing mechanics with balls, volleyballs, and Frisbees. Newcombe, the variation of volleyball that involves catching and throwing the ball, is a second grade favorite. With a focus on understanding the importance of lifetime fitness, students learn how to record a resting and active pulse as they increase their stamina to alternately run and walk a half mile. They skip rope for 20 seconds and learn to execute a push-up. Students explore the food pyramid as their health focus during physical education class.

THIRD GRADE

Students enjoy developing skills to support lifetime game play, including striking an object with a bat, hockey stick, or racquet; shooting a basketball; throwing small objects at targets; and passing a ball or object. They are encouraged to apply those skills in working well with teammates and encouraging all team members, regardless of their ability and the outcome of the game. In third grade, students' fitness goals include doing multiple sit-ups and push-ups, skipping rope for one minute, and developing the pacing and stamina to jog or run a quarter mile without stopping. Third grade students are proud of these fitness accomplishments. Understanding the importance of good nutrition is the health focus for the year.

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Visual Arts / Fine & Performing Arts Chair

B.A., B.F.A., University of Vermont

M.S., Columbia University

Suzanne Giarrusso

Pre-Kindergarten / Grade-Level Team Leader

B.S., Bucknell University

Crystal Glynn

Science

B.A., University of Denver

J.D., University of Minnesota

M.L.I.S., Rutgers University

Lauren Griffin

Pre-Kindergarten

B.A., Holy Cross

M.S.Ed., Wagner College

Alex Langbein '03

Grade 1

B.S., M.A., Springfield College

Tara Mallon

Learning Specialist

B.A., American University

M.A., Teachers College, Columbia University

Caylie Marden

Pre-Kindergarten

B.A., Smith College

M.S., Wheelock College

M.S., Teachers College, Columbia University

Erin McMenamini

Grade 2 / Grade-Level Team Leader

B.A., Bloomsburg University

M.A., Bank Street College of Education

Isabella Mendez '16

Spanish

B.S., Providence College

Brittany Trevenen O'Neill

Grade 3

B.A., Colgate University

M.S.Ed., Bank Street College of Education

Ralph Pacifico

Physical Education / Director of the Children's Sports Program

B.A., University of New Haven

Spencer Pyke

Kindergarten

B.A., Lynchburg College

M.S., Montclair State University

Jenny Rosenoff

Library

B.A., University of Virginia

M.L.I.S., Rutgers University School of Communication and Information

Anne-Sophie Roure

French

M.A., University of Strasbourg, France

M.S., Columbia University

Jessica Sarfati

Kindergarten / Grade-Level Team Leader

B.A., Bates College

M.A.T., Montclair State University

Kathy Sasena

Grade 1

B.A., Marymount Manhattan College

M.A., Bank Street College of Education

Michael Sasso '12

Associate Teacher Grades 1-2

B.A., William Paterson University

Karen Schifferdecker

Library / Technology

B.A., Drew University

M.L.I.S., Florida State University

Jane Smith

Music

B.A., M.A., Montclair State University

Sophia Trinidad

Associate Teacher Pre-K and Kindergarten

B.S., Rutgers University

Daniela Vespucci

Grade 3 / Grade-Level Team Leader

B.A., M.A., Quinnipiac University

Mojda Walker

Grade 2

B.A., Alfred University

M.S., Pace University

Kristen Weaver

Dance / Theatre Arts

B.A., SUNY at New Paltz

Jill Wimmer

Reading Specialist

B.A., Brown University

M.A., University of California, Berkeley

Ed.M., Bank Street College of Education



CHARACTER STANDARDS FOR THE MKA COMMUNITY

ALL MEMBERS OF THE MKA COMMUNITY STRIVE TO
ACT, SPEAK, AND THINK IN WAYS THAT ARE:

RESPECTFUL

We act with civility in our relations with others while still valuing ourselves. We are conscious of the world around us, and we recognize the worth of all we have and treat it accordingly.

FRIENDLY

We demonstrate good will and compassion in our relationships with others. We understand that in order to have friends we must be friends and treat all with understanding, loyalty, and respect.

RESPONSIBLE

We fulfill obligations and complete tasks to the fullest of our ability, and we are accountable members of our community. We volunteer our assistance when called upon and budget our time, efforts, and resources sensibly.

CONFIDENT

We uphold a positive image of ourselves regardless of the way others perceive us. We recognize our potential and challenge ourselves to improve the talents and skills we possess. We are able to take pride in our work, while remaining humble and accepting criticism. We express our opinions freely without fear of the judgment of others and always speak up when we see acts of injustice.

TEMPERATE

We balance all aspects of our lives. By devoting personal attention to academics and personal commitments, we maintain moderation. While welcoming relaxation, we exert self-control and strength of will when faced with temptation and challenge.

FAIR

We cultivate an environment where all students may act and speak without the fear of prejudice, intolerance, or judgment. We recognize and seek to understand the differences between individuals in the community. While recognizing these differences, we also value the inherent equality among all.

INFORMED

We rely not only on our own experiences to make decisions, but we also actively seek a more thorough understanding of the world. With our knowledge, we envision a more peaceful and empathetic society.

HONEST

We understand the value and necessity of being true to ourselves, as well as others, and we are sincere in words and actions. We take pride in the authenticity of our own work and ideas, and we have the courage and integrity to take responsibility for all of our actions.