

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Mission Statement	3	Fine and Performing Arts	21
Character Standards	4	Health, Wellness, and Physical Education	21
Multicultural Education Statement of Purpose	5	Language Arts: First Through Third Grade	22
Social and Emotional Learning Competencies	6	Reading Workshop	22
The MKA Learner	8	Read-Aloud	23
MKA Primary School Belief Statements	9	Reading Assessment	23
The Primary School	10	Writing Workshop	23
Morning Meeting	10	Phonics and Word Study	24
The Classroom Experience	10	Class Performances	24
Specialist Classes	11	Handwriting	24
Technology for Learning	11	First Grade	25
The Outdoor Classroom Experience	11	Second Grade	26
Student Voice	11	Third Grade	27
Social and Emotional Learning	11	Social Studies: First Through Third Grade	29
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Antiracism	12	First Grade	29
Field Trips	12	Second Grade	29
Policies	13	Third Grade	30
Homework	13	Mathematics: First Through Third Grade	31
Progress Reporting and Assessment	13	First Grade	32
Extended Absence Policy	13	Second Grade	32
Early Childhood: Pre-Kindergarten	14	Third Grade	33
Morning Meeting	14	Science: First Through Third Grade	34
Reggio Emilia-Inspired Program	14	First Grade	34
Balanced Literacy	14	Second Grade	35
Oral Language	15	Third Grade	35
Reading Experiences	15	World Languages: First Through Third Grade	36
Storytelling and Writing	15	First Grade	36
Name Study	16	Second Grade	36
Mathematics	16	Third Grade	36
Social Studies, Science, Third-Grade Buddies ...	16	Library: First Through Third Grade	37
World Language	16	First Grade	37
Library	17	Second Grade	37
Fine and Performing Arts	17	Third Grade	37
Health, Wellness, and Physical Education	17	Fine and Performing Arts:	
Early Childhood: Kindergarten	18	First Through Third Grade	38
Community, Character, and Social Studies	18	Dance / Theatre Arts	38
Reading and Writing Workshops and Phonics ...	19	Music	39
Mathematics	20	Visual Arts	40
Science	20	Health, Wellness, and Physical Education:	
World Language	20	First Through Third Grade	41
Library	20	First Grade	41
		Second Grade	41
		Third Grade	41
		Primary School Faculty	42

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:

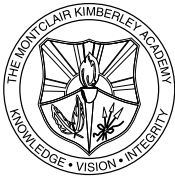
- Academic excellence
- Intellectual independence
- Love of learning

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



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.

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Multicultural education at MKA is a 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 will:

- 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.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies for the MKA Community

Taking Care of *Myself*

Self-Awareness



I KNOW how I feel and can communicate it clearly.

I know my strengths and challenges.

I know when to seek help and how to find it.

I know there are many parts of myself that make me who I am.

I identify and understand how my emotions, values, strengths, challenges, and personal and social identities*—and their interconnections—develop an accurate self perception.

I examine my own prejudices and biases.

I embrace a growth mindset.

I develop my sense of purpose.

Self-Management



I MANAGE my emotions, stress, and actions.

I make good choices and act with integrity.

I set and achieve goals.

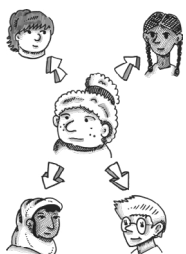
I organize and motivate myself.

I control impulses that cause harm, and I exercise self-discipline.

I work with my community to set and achieve collective goals.

And *Others*

Social Awareness



I RESPECT other people's feelings and perspectives.

I empathize with other people and demonstrate compassion.

I strive to be a positive influence in my school and community.

I read social cues in a variety of contexts.

I acknowledge, value, and honor everyone's perspectives, cultures, and humanity.

I understand the influences of organizations and systems on an individual's experience.

I stand up against actions and structures that cause harm.

Relationship Skills



I BUILD positive and healthy relationships.

I listen actively, communicate clearly, and collaborate effectively.

I respect and strive to understand the uniqueness of all individuals.

I help to resolve conflicts that cause harm.

I provide positive leadership in groups.

I interact with individuals in ways that demonstrate understanding of and honor their multiple identities*.

I negotiate disagreements constructively.

I seek and offer help (when needed).

I resist negative peer pressure.

And my *Community*

Responsible Decision-Making



I MAKE safe, responsible, respectful, and constructive choices.

I work to understand and solve personal and community problems with an open mind.

I stand up for the rights of others.

I analyze situations and information.

I take personal, social, and ethical responsibility.

I reflect on my role in promoting personal and collective well-being and evaluate the impact of my actions.

*The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) identifies 17 sample cultural identifiers, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, and ability.

Artwork by Katie Chung '24

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies for the MKA Community

Social and Emotional Learning at MKA helps students to build an essential foundation for academic and personal success by developing the self-awareness, empathy, and good character needed to make responsible decisions and create positive relationships with others. All members of the MKA community commit to developing the skills identified here and modeling them for others.

Self-Awareness



The ability to identify and understand your emotions, thoughts, and multiple identities* (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, ability) and how they influence behavior in different situations—and how different situations influence your behavior. The ability to understand your values, strengths, challenges, and areas for growth with a well-grounded sense of confidence and purpose.

Self-Management



The ability to regulate your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes developing the capacities to manage stress, create balance, delay gratification, and feel motivation and agency to accomplish personal/collective goals.

Social Awareness



The ability to understand multiple perspectives and to act with empathy and compassion for one another. This includes understanding how your words and actions—and historical and current social structures—impact you and others.

Relationship Skills



The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive friendships and other relationships and to effectively navigate situations with diverse individuals and groups. This includes the capacities to communicate clearly, listen actively, work collaboratively, negotiate conflict constructively, navigate settings with differing social and cultural demands and opportunities, provide leadership, and seek and/or offer help when needed.

Responsible Decision-Making



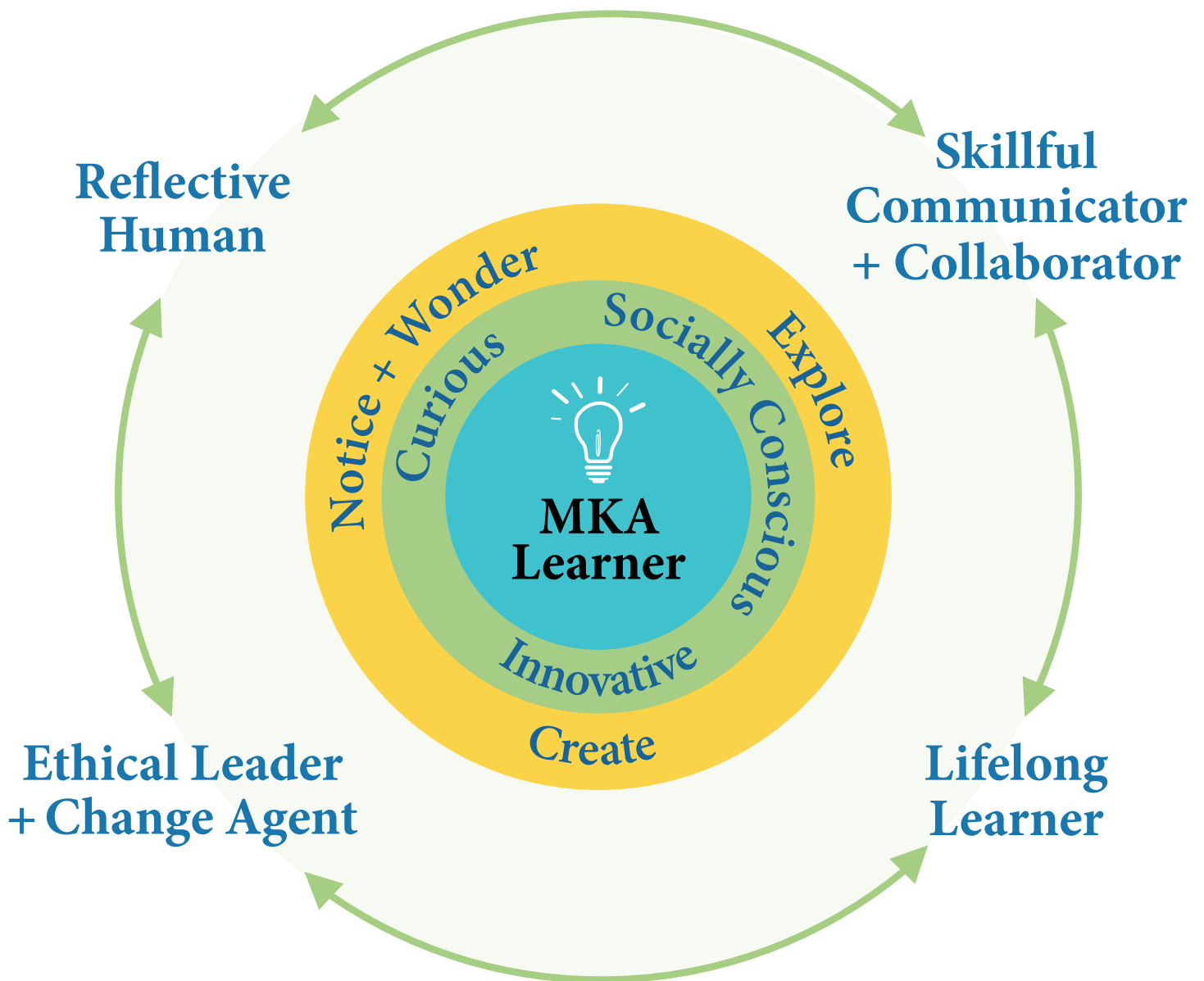
The abilities to make caring, respectful, and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions in different situations and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports. This includes the capacities to consider ethical standards (such as honesty and fairness), cultural norms, and safety, and to evaluate the benefits and consequences of various actions for personal, social, and collective well-being.

*The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) identifies [17 sample cultural identifiers](#).

MKA acknowledges the following as inspiration for its development of this SEL Competencies document:

- [Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#). We used their five SEL core competencies and adapted their definitions and skills.
- Anchorage, AK School District's *K-12 Social and Emotional Learning Standards and Indicators* (as viewed in 2017)
- Illinois State Board of Education's *Illinois Learning Standards: Social/Emotional Learning* (as viewed in 2017)
- [Responsive Classroom](#)

MKA also thanks Lauren Hyman Kaplan, M.A. for her insights and guidance. | Artwork by Katie Chung '24.



Inspired by the Conceptual Model of the “Educator as a Caring Intellectual” from the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, College of Education and Human Services

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 learn to build caring, supportive, and cooperative relationships. Guided by the MKA Character Standards, students are actively encouraged to become intellectual risk-takers and lifelong learners in a community that values acting with integrity.

MORNING MEETING

Students begin each day with a classroom Morning Meeting, one of the most important times of the school day for setting a positive tone for learning and creating a sense of community and belonging. Students and teachers interact with one another through four purposeful Morning Meeting components: greeting, sharing, group activity, and morning message. In Morning Meetings, classes use the MKA Character Standards, the Primary School Anti-Bullying Standards, and MKA's Social and Emotional Learning Competencies as guides and are informed by MKA's Diversity & Inclusion Statement of Purpose 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.

In second and third grades, Morning Meeting helps students appreciate each other as individuals. Students explore facets of their personal identities and are challenged to think critically about how the nuances of individual identities influence perspective. Through full-group discussion, 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 to 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 to learn about the experiences of others.

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 who are 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. Supported by the MKA Research Cycle, social studies additionally encourages inquiry by prompting students to wonder, ask questions, find answers, synthesize, interpret, and present information to 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; health, wellness, and physical education; and information literacy (library). Students in kindergarten through third grade learn from our science specialist; Pre-K students explore science in hands-on ways within their classroom and outdoors. These opportunities to work with experts throughout their Primary School years provide students 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, 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. They also capture students' thinking and provide assessment, reflection, and feedback opportunities. The flexible use of Seesaw, a student-driven, digital portfolio tool, helps teachers gather data about students' learning; promotes student reflection and metacognition; and helps parents, students, and teachers see progress and growth over time.

THE OUTDOOR CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

In keeping with current research on the importance of play to young students' learning, all Primary School students have two recesses a day. Recess activities are varied and provide students with nearly limitless choice in how they 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. In the Outdoor Classroom, students can imagine, construct, create, uncover, share, and ramble during recess and, occasionally, classtime.

STUDENT VOICE

Throughout their Primary School years, students develop their personal voices and gain the confidence that they have important things to share. They develop great poise in communicating to an audience and practice effective leadership skills. For example, during “sharing time” at Morning Meeting, students share aloud to the group in response to a daily prompt; and during writing celebrations in kindergarten- through third-grade classrooms, students present their writing process and their work to an invited audience. In a typical year, students sing in at least one concert and share their developing performance skills with an audience through class performances. Presenting and acting on stage helps students to develop confidence, take risks, and work together—opportunities that ultimately prepare them for the third-grade Capstone experience. For more information about the dance/theatre arts and fine and performing arts curricula, please see those sections on pages 38 and 39.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Social and emotional learning (SEL) and academic growth are integrally connected. Research shows that students who attend schools with strong social and emotional learning programs have higher academic achievement, better mental health, and fewer behavioral difficulties in school—benefits that continue into adulthood. At the Primary School, teachers help to set the stage for social and emotional learning by helping students develop five social and emotional competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. See pages 6 and 7 for more information.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ANTIRACISM

Primary School students set the foundation for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Antiracism work at MKA by examining their own identities and sharing what makes them unique and special within our community so that all students feel seen, heard, understood, safe, and honored for who they are. As students grow and demonstrate developmental readiness, they 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; and its aspirations, abilities, and affiliations. In forming and affirming positive classroom communities, students celebrate and value their individual differences.

Our responsive multicultural curriculum is taught in conjunction with social and emotional learning skills, which instill respect for the individual as well as all members of our community. Students are encouraged to speak confidently and genuinely, inspiring everyone to examine life and history from a variety of perspectives.

FIELD TRIPS

Class trips are planned both to promote students’ learning and to enhance their appreciation for the diverse world around them. Students explore their neighborhood surroundings on foot and document their observations. Students further explore the local community on trips to environmental centers and historical sites that provide context for students’ learning. Some trips are designed to integrate community engagement experiences, such as visits to Toni’s Kitchen, a food resource in the Montclair community, highlighting the Primary School’s emphasis on the joy of giving and the responsibility to help others.

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 first through third grade; no homework is assigned on weekends or holidays. First-grade students should spend approximately 20 minutes per night on their assignments; second-grade students should allow 30 minutes; and third-grade students approximately 40 minutes. These estimates include required, daily independent reading in students' just-right books. Teachers always encourage students to further explore subjects of individual interest through additional independent reading beyond their assigned homework.

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 for teaching and learning.

Communication with parent(s) or caregiver(s) is of the utmost importance. The classroom teacher, who also serves as the student's advisor, is the family's first line of communication. Advisors contact parent(s) or caregiver(s) on a monthly basis to share students' successes and experiences, and to discuss any concerns about students' academic and social and 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 Seesaw, a student-driven, digital portfolio tool for teaching, learning, feedback, and assessment gives parent(s) or caregiver(s) another window into their child's work and growth over time. At midyear, a formative, written comment from the child's advisor and comments from most Specialist teachers are available to parent(s) or caregiver(s) through Veracross. A summative, written comment from advisors is available 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, under the supervision of the Assistant Head of Campus and the Office of Student Support, will provide assignments. MKA faculty assess work assigned on a Home Study. The Head of Campus must approve any exception to this policy.

A student absent from school for an extended period of time due to medical reasons may be eligible to apply for home tutoring support through the Essex Regional Educational Services Commission. A doctor's note verifying the diagnosis and estimated length of absence must accompany an application for services. The school can help the family to complete the application process only after the student has been out of school for at least 10 consecutive days (or 20 cumulative days). In the event of a lengthy medical absence—generally exceeding 60 school days at one time or in aggregate—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. The Pre-K curriculum is ever-evolving as topics of study come from students' interests and curiosity. Through hands-on projects and active discovery, students are encouraged to notice and wonder and to form their own hypotheses, ask questions, and initiate explorations that fuel learning. 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 whole-class Morning Meeting. Students greet one another, share news, and get excited for the upcoming day. During the greeting, they practice using a friendly tone of voice and establishing eye contact. During the share, students learn listening and speaking skills, and teachers check in on their emotional wellbeing. During the activity, students practice self-control as they follow directions and engage in fun, physical activity. Students also read and reflect on a morning message that allows them to practice literacy skills, such as sight words, letter-sound correlations, beginning word sounds, patterns, and rhymes. (See also the description of Morning Meeting in the Primary School overview on page 10.)

REGGIO EMILIA-INSPIRED PROGRAM

The MKA Pre-K program is inspired by the beliefs and practices that Loris Malaguzzi developed in the town of Reggio Emilia, Italy after World War II. This early childhood philosophy has been adopted around the world by educational communities that wish to empower children as individuals with the freedom to imagine and the ability to care for themselves, their communities, and the world. In this approach, young students 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). Students learn through relationships with one another, their teachers, and their environment. Relationships are the focal point around which curriculum develops as the students' ideas drive the direction of their learning.

The Pre-K classrooms each have their own Reggio Emilia-inspired piazza and atelier spaces in which students play and work. These flexible spaces provide limitless opportunities for students to imagine, explore, and create to learn. Teachers provide provocations to inspire students, and students take initiative for their learning as teachers guide them. The piazza offers a blank slate for creativity and innovation, so it reflects students' learning in ever-changing ways: it can be a laboratory where students explore light and shadow or a place where students construct and build. The atelier is the artist's studio: a separate place where students can work individually on a specific, innovative project. Photos are used to document project work and allow students to reflect on their work and experiences. As the year progresses, students begin to use an iPad to photograph and document their own work.

BALANCED LITERACY

The Pre-K language arts curriculum is designed to facilitate students' 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 that promotes a blend of phonological awareness, explicit phonics instruction, and exploration of literacy through a reading and writing workshop approach.

Oral Language

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

Reading Experiences

Pre-K students 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 students' fluency and identity as readers.

Daily read-aloud experiences of picture books also develop students' love of stories and the written word. Students gather on the carpet as a community of readers to explore storylines, characters, and settings. They learn various ways to interact with stories, and the stories provide a springboard for social and emotional learning and conversations. Comprehension and making meaning are always at the forefront of students' early reading experiences as they 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 students develop early writing skills at their own paces, maintaining their confidence and love of writing is the ultimate goal. In the Pre-K program, students first learn to illustrate stories with increasing detail and describe their illustrations with rich, oral language. They progress through well documented stages of writing development: from writing scribbles and letter-like formations, to labeling pictures, to writing in phrases as they progress through the Primary School. Teachers guide and support students' 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 developmentally ready, students incorporate teacher modeling and begin to label their drawings with letters corresponding to the initial sounds they hear; and they may later add final consonant sounds. They 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, they come to appreciate being the authors of their own stories and often enthusiastically volunteer to share their drawings and writing pieces with an audience.

NAME STUDY

Part of the balanced literacy program in Pre-K, name study sets the foundation for reading and writing in a playful way. Called “Making Friends with Letters,” this unit joyfully engages students with learning and with one another. As students learn about each other’s names, they learn the letters of the alphabet by noticing their shapes and sounds, and they develop an awareness of syllables. This work also serves as a warm-up for the literacy work students do in kindergarten.

MATHEMATICS

As students embark on their math journey, Pre-K learners focus on developing a strong mathematics foundation through engaging and interactive hands-on activities. Central to this approach is the development of number sense, with targeted activities designed to enhance skills such as accurate counting, number recognition, understanding numerical relationships and patterns, spatial awareness, data collection and analysis, and shape recognition. By providing a stimulating environment that encourages inquiry and problem-solving, teachers guide students as they discover mathematical concepts and apply them in meaningful ways. These skills are woven into thematic Reggio-inspired projects, where students explore and integrate math concepts through creative activities during center time and in small group learning experiences. Additionally, students use iPads to reinforce learning through interactive games, further supporting the development of these essential mathematical skills.

SOCIAL STUDIES, SCIENCE, AND PRE-K / THIRD-GRADE BUDDIES

Students explore social studies connections in many ways, including experiences in social and emotional learning, 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.

At the beginning of the year, each Pre-K student is assigned a third-grade buddy. Pre-K students 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. Students in Pre-K and third grade collaborate on a variety of community projects that extend outside the classroom and the school. For example, they take a field trip to a local farm where they pick produce and deliver the food to a local soup kitchen. Students also explore the natural environment through visits to a forested, neighborhood park and through a research project, which involves gathering information on a North American animal and creating an artistic representation of their knowledge.

Learning about composting helps Pre-K students understand the cycle of food and soil and offers students another meaningful connection with nature. During an ongoing investigation, students are introduced to how compost is made and why composting is important. They learn about landfills, conserving waste, worms, and gardening. In addition, they learn to use different types of composting bins over time. Composting introduces broader scientific and social concepts, such as ecosystems, regeneration, sustainability, and environmental awareness and stewardship.

WORLD LANGUAGE

This year, Pre-K students engage in an age-appropriate experience of the Spanish language. (Introduced to French or Spanish in Pre-K, students continue their study of the same language through third grade.) Initially, students learn language predominantly through listening to their world language teacher speak in the target language. While telling students a variety of stories, the teacher provides input that is comprehensible to the students by using high-frequency words and expressions with demonstrative gestures, as well as visuals and props. The stories are based on books, videos, and the students themselves. Students also acquire the Spanish language through singing a variety of songs and participating in Total Physical Response (TPR).

LIBRARY

Through the use of songs, rhymes, 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 between 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 students are learning 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 shapes. 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 imaginative collaboration and exploration in dance/theatre arts class.

Music

Students in Pre-K explore music through singing, dancing, playing, and inquiring. Singing creates a community of voices, and the students learn to sing in tune by singing together. By dancing, students connect to the physicality of making and interpreting music. Young students can best understand musical concepts, such as loud and soft and fast and slow, by illustrating these qualities with their bodies. As they play and experiment with a variety of percussion instruments, they transfer energy to the instruments and practice self-expression. Through inquiry in a safe and respectful learning environment, students have the freedom to improvise and to wonder, “How do I know when to stop/start?” or “Why does the music go up/down?”.

Visual Arts

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

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 encourage students to explore materials, notice details, hypothesize, wonder, and question. Project-based learning is designed to reflect children’s curiosity and interests, and it 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 on page 10). 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 to becoming an independent learner and ethical leader who is part of a learning community.

Developing good character is a primary focus of Morning Meeting that 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 them express uniqueness, appreciate differences, and see themselves within their family, their school community, and the world around them. The class showcases each student as “Cougar of the Week” once each year. This is an opportunity for the students to share unique qualities about themselves and their families and to celebrate the individuality of each child.

In social studies, kindergarten students explore elements of the MKA community that bond the members of the school’s three campuses. Using the Primary School belief statements as their guide, teachers help students to understand the core values, themes, symbols, and language. 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 the campus. The second half of the year is dedicated to learning about the physical characteristics of the Middle and Upper School campuses. Students explore the reciprocal relationship between the Primary School and the MKA community as a whole.

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 and literacy centers involve half of the class at one time for focused reading instruction. In this small-group environment, students confer about their reading with their two classroom teachers. Reading Workshop includes a short, teacher-focused lesson and practice time for students to focus on their reading individually or with a partner. This time may also be allocated to an interactive read-aloud or word study. Students have both community and individual book bins that include high interest texts, decodable texts, leveled texts, poems, and songs. 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
- Sharing Reading
- Super Powers
- Boosting Reading Power
- Becoming Avid Readers

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

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, 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, informal, and formal gatherings.

The units of study in writing are:

- Launching the Writing Workshop
- Show and Tell Writing
- Writing for Readers
- Persuasive Writing of All Kinds

Students also learn to add explanations, stories, directions, or other written text to their projects and choice-time discoveries. Clipboards with paper are placed strategically around the classroom to encourage students to engage in this kind of purposeful writing. Students may display their 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 phonics 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 deepen math literacy skills within the context of daily routines, which include 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 and engineering involve 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 they learn about the roles of a scientist and develop the skills of observing, comparing, testing, and counting. Building off the kindergarten guiding question of "What makes me, me?," students explore the different systems of the human body through a variety of hands-on activities. Students then 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.

WORLD LANGUAGE

This year's kindergarten students continue their study of the French language at the Primary School through comprehensible input in an environment where the target language is used during 90% or more of the class time. Through Total Physical Response (TPR), the world language teacher continues to provide input using high-frequency words and expressions, storytelling based on books and videos, and a variety of songs. 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 all students can comprehend. In kindergarten, students start to develop their speaking skills at their own pace.

LIBRARY

Kindergarten students continue to explore the world of literature through 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

Students in kindergarten continue to explore music through singing, dancing, playing, and inquiring. These explorations happen through the lens of “Music as Storytelling.” Kindergarten begins the year exploring musical vocabulary and concepts of dynamics (forte/loud and piano/soft) and tempo (fast and slow). Students work toward imitating and creating a steady pulse; they also continue experimenting with rhythm and gait as they dance. As their vocal range expands, their engagement with singing varies, ranging from making up lyrics (usually based on a known melody), to providing accompaniment with body percussion, to solo singing activities, if desired. At the beginning of the year, students utilize an array of unpitched percussion instruments (e.g., drums, sticks) and are gradually introduced to barred percussion instruments (e.g., xylophones). The newest skill emerging for kindergarten students is creating music with their peers while putting aside social distraction. Using stories and rhymes, students practice taking turns, assigning instruments (orchestrating), improvising, and both creating and playing patterns, culminating with the exploration of the quarter note and quarter rest.

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, and 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 emphasizes the development of fundamental motor skills and movement concepts—such as throwing, catching, running, and jumping—that are an essential part of class time. The development of these skills is critical for students’ ability to progress in sports and games.

LANGUAGE ARTS: FIRST THROUGH THIRD GRADE

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 research-based, workshop approach that 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, 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 and rate, as well as the 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, note observations, or share thoughts. At times during Reading Workshop, students may go to centers to participate in a skill-building game or use iPads to record and replay their reading as they work to reinforce fluency skills.

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 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) that can help students to build reading stamina and document books they have enjoyed recently and can recommend to friends. Through continual observation of students while they are reading and frequent individual conferences to better understand students' preferences and skill development, teachers guide students to books that they can engage with and help them grow as readers. Sometimes, teachers encourage students to experiment with authors or genres 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 tailor their book recommendations for students. Over time, students develop independence in their use of the classroom library, make independent book selections, and read in a variety of genres. As their fluency and comprehension increase, students progress from easy readers and simple chapter books 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 or 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 inform students’ independent reading selections and experimentation in their 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 assessments take place throughout the year and directly inform reading instruction, both individually and in groups. Teachers’ targeted conferences with students take place during daily Reading Workshops and immediately inform 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. Teachers monitor and support phonics acquisition through weekly dictations and unit assessments. 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 formats and genres, 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; and write, revise, and edit multiple drafts. Ongoing feedback from peers and teachers is essential to students’ growth as writers. During writing celebrations, students share reflections on their writing process and celebrate their skills in a particular genre with an audience of peers and special friends. Writing celebrations occur two times per year in kindergarten through second grade and once per year in third grade.

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 to set revision goals.

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 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 classroom writing activities. As a class, students are encouraged to play with phonics patterns to build both spelling and vocabulary skills. In small groups, 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 high-frequency and pattern words in their reading, they add them to their lists. 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, students also learn to edit for grammar and syntax. This close attention to phonics, syntax, and semantics helps students develop 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 become more engaged and careful readers who can interpret the author's voice and make more nuanced interpretations of their reading.

CLASS PERFORMANCES

Performing on stage helps students develop confidence, take risks, and work together—opportunities that 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. As they develop, students use their voice, body, and imagination, as well as their growing understanding of social dynamics in interactions with others to create believable characters and tell a story. 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 begin to develop handwriting skills in Pre-K when their fine-motor skills enable them to hold a writing utensil properly. Kindergarten students are taught handwriting skills through the multi-sensory and structured *Handwriting Without Tears* program. Students in first and second grade continue to use this program to practice and refine their handwriting. Third-grade students additionally practice cursive writing.

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 of books, including chapter books and books projected on a screen. Sharing books in different mediums 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 on page 22.)

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 independently in their just-right books. Through these mini-lessons, students increase sight word recognition, develop decoding skills, and improve fluency, all of which empower students on their journey to comprehend increasingly complex texts.

The 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 about their reading individually and in small groups with their teacher and are coached while they read their just-right books. During a conference, teachers gather data by asking students to read a small section of their just-right book aloud and monitoring reading fluency, sight-word growth, and phonics knowledge. 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, then 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. Familiar authors and 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 how to revise their work and use editing strategies, such as revision strips and caretts. 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 Realistic 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 can practice concepts in a variety of ways.

First-grade units include:

- Review of Letter Sounds, Short Vowels, Digraphs
- Blends and Glued Sounds with Short Vowels
- Plurals, Contractions, Simple R-Controlled Vowels, Introduction to Long Vowels, Open/Closed Syllables

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 making reading an enjoyable part of students' lives and encouraging 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 on page 22.)

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 learn more about the author's craft, 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 students' reading skills and interests during reading conferences and formal 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 deepen their comprehension through conversation.

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

- Becoming a Big Kid Reader
- Becoming Experts: Reading Nonfiction
- Tackling Longer Words and Longer Books
- Stepping Into the World of the Story
- Growing Knowledge Together

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 also 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 to enhance their self-expression, develop their voice, and gain a confident command of the mechanics of language. Students keep writing folders to collect and generate ideas for writing topics. They expand on selected topics through the steps of the writing process to ultimately 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:

- Making Small Moments Big
- Writing Research-Based Nonfiction
- Finding Awesome Everywhere: Celebrating Through Opinion 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, and 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 use a variety of reading tools, such as Post-it notes 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 challenges. 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

While third-grade students grow as readers and gain familiarity with a larger variety of literary genres, they also develop as writers. Through read-aloud books, mini-lessons, and models of effective writing, teachers help students 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; allowing them an audience for even the "seeds" of their writing. These notebook entries then become the catalysts for longer writing pieces that students produce.

The third-grade units of study include:

- Crafting True Stories
- The Art of Information Writing
- Changing the World: Persuasive Speeches, Petitions, and Editorials
- Intro to Literary Essay
- Best Part of the Primary School: 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: FIRST THROUGH THIRD GRADE

While students develop an understanding of their role in the global community through their engagement with social studies, they begin their explorations with concepts of individual identity that celebrate the uniqueness of each child. Students' exploration of individual development and identity occurs throughout the day and is supported by MKA's Diversity and Inclusion Statement of Purpose, Character Standards, and Social and Emotional Learning Competencies. Students develop an appreciation for what it means to be a caring citizen through their growing understanding of similarities and differences between themselves and others from a variety of communities and cultures. Students consider their responsibilities and their impact in their school community in contexts such as service, sustainability, and social justice; and they recognize 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. 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, particularly with the use of technology tools. 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 and Emotional Learning Competencies—self-management, self-awareness, relationship skills, social awareness, and responsible decision making—first-grade students are encouraged to develop independence with decision making and managing emotions. Additionally, they learn about navigating friendships and explore the idea of community through discussions about the importance of rules, values, and responsibilities and the creation of their own classroom rules. 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. Students engage in a study of Virginia Lee Burton's book, *The Little House* and 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 while providing opportunities to discuss change, curiosity, growth, and values.

SECOND GRADE

Students focus on the themes of responsibilities, MKA Character Standards, identity, geography, and the State of New Jersey. Social studies lessons occur during the informal Morning Meeting time as well as throughout the week. During Morning Meeting, 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 read-alouds, students explore these ideas of strong character and learn the value of being part of our community.

During 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 broaden their understanding of a variety of different perspectives. Using the framework of mirrors, windows, and doors, students learn that books can serve as reflections of our own experience and also as gateways into other, diverse experiences.

During social studies lessons, students begin the year with a study of geography and explore questions such as “How can we use maps?” and “How does geography affect the way we live?” Students examine a variety of different types of maps, review geography-themed terms, and label new terms (e.g., oceans, continents, and important landforms) on both political and physical maps. Students closely study the environment of our State of New Jersey and explore the history of the Native Lenape People and how they used the land’s natural resources to build their communities. Students consider the timeline of change that has occurred in our area and how different communities have evolved into rural, suburban, or urban communities. Within this exploration, students learn about the kinds of resources and services each type of community provides to the people of our State.

THIRD GRADE

The third-grade social studies experience is centered around themes of citizenship, geography, social responsibility, and action. Enduring understandings from identity work done during Morning Meeting act as a lens through which students examine the practice of citizenship. Through activities and read-alouds, students explore the concept of voting as both a right and a responsibility in a democratic society. 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 transition into 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. Technology is integrated into a culminating activity in which students create an informative commercial about their state.

Third-grade students end the year with an interdisciplinary Capstone Project, which incorporates grade-wide collaboration and a design-thinking approach. By studying how change is initiated and brought about in different communities and 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: FIRST THROUGH THIRD GRADE

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, both 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. Assignments that are 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 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 actively participate 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 third grade also are introduced to thinking like a computer programmer as they prepare for and participate in the nationwide Hour of Code.

Students 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 1 of the lesson. They draw upon their mathematical understandings, ask 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. Teachers continually assess students' progress in acquiring basic skills fluency and appropriately adapt instruction to meet the needs of students at varied developmental levels. To enhance skill development through practice with immediate feedback, students 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

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.

Building on their understanding of many concepts learned in first grade, 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 representational number models. They explore multiplication by using repeated addition, arrays, and skip counting, and they 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 Four Addends
- Place Value and Measurement
- Telling Time to the Nearest Five 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 each weekday using fact triangles provided by the teachers to build math fact fluency.

Teachers track students' mastery of skills through unit assessments and ongoing assessments 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.

In the spring, second-grade students also participate in a special, four-week program to learn basic coding logic and skills in a fun and immersive way through a partnership with Technology for Youth.

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 Quarter 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.

In the spring, third-grade students participate in a special, four-week program to learn basic coding logic and skills in a fun and immersive way through a partnership with Technology for Youth.

SCIENCE: FIRST THROUGH THIRD GRADE

Meeting in a dedicated laboratory space for the subject, students develop an awareness that science and engineering involve a continuous process of discovering how to generate solutions for everyday life and 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. The science curriculum is designed to help students develop STEM skills and a STEM+ mindset that they will use to navigate a complex world and solve tomorrow's toughest challenges.

The program is designed to stimulate students' curiosity as they explore a broader spectrum of science, including basic concepts of life sciences, physical sciences, Earth and space sciences, and engineering and robotics. 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 making egg-drop vehicles to protect eggs launched 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 roles 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. Classroom explorations frequently begin with a question that students answer through experimentation, discussion, data collection, and analysis.

Students explore the relationship between the Earth, Moon, and Sun and engage in hands-on activities as they learn about weather and weather patterns. They extend this study as they investigate light energy by collecting evidence to explain various properties of light. 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 discover the life cycle of a plant as they learn to program Bee-Bot robots.

SECOND GRADE

Students further develop the inquiry skills of questioning, ordering, measuring, observing, and collecting data. They record the results of their experiments 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. 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 that incorporates elements. Students continue to develop their inquiry skills as they observe and identify the characteristics of life and investigate seeds and the dispersal mechanisms of 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 address various STEM challenges, including design and construction projects to understand the engineering design process. They learn about forces and motion and apply their discoveries and knowledge to engineering egg-drop vehicles for the end-of-the-year egg-drop project. When their egg-drop vehicle is launched, students test and judge their successful application of the learned scientific concepts. Finally, students explore "hive-mind" programming as they collaborate with their peers to program a robotic Bee-Bot dance.

WORLD LANGUAGES: FIRST THROUGH THIRD GRADE

Introduced to 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. Primary School students acquire world languages by listening and understanding before they are able to speak. Although all 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. Language students also develop cross-curricular skills, such as concentration, listening, oral expression, vocabulary development, logical thinking, classifying, predicting, collaborating, and problem-solving. Teachers aim to build students' confidence and love of learning with the ultimate goal of communicating in a supportive, positive, and engaging learning environment.

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, either 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, Total Physical Response (TPR), and many more activities, students acquire new vocabulary and expressions. At their own pace, students start reading individually and communicating by answering questions, either individually or chorally, and by using familiar expressions to make requests and statements.

THIRD GRADE

Students work continuously to strengthen and expand upon their 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 in the year, the teacher leads third-grade students to start writing, often by responding to a visual prompt, using the language they have acquired and the visual clues that the teacher provides. At the end of the school year, 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: FIRST THROUGH THIRD GRADE

The librarians collaborate with classroom teachers to provide students in first through third grade 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 make 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 helps students develop 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 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 students grow as readers, an emphasis is placed on identifying books that are a good fit for each individual. 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 nonfiction 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

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. As they continue to develop research skills, students 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: FIRST THROUGH THIRD GRADE

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 content and skills and cultivates independent and lifelong curiosity, creative thinking, problem-solving, and a love of learning. Students' 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, which include classroom plays, musical and dance performances, and an annual art show that transforms the auditorium 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. They experience freedom and joy of movement in a supportive atmosphere. Students develop a love of learning and an appreciation of self-expression through dance and theatre arts. Dance gives students 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 they stretch these skills to become dance steps. Using imagery and theatre arts skills, they transform themselves into many things, such as royalty, frogs, or drifting leaves. 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 collaboratively write a story to adapt into a play that they perform for a Primary School community audience.

Throughout the process of creating, planning, practicing, and performing, students utilize and develop social and 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*, 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 four-count dance move that they associate with a chosen animal, and eventually create a sequence of four-count dance moves for four different animals. 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 can be performed by others. The second-grade dance program culminates with the 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, elements 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. Through final dance presentations, students demonstrate their ability to take risks, present a cohesive piece with the skills they have mastered, and reflect increased confidence with movement and their own bodies.

MUSIC

Through their study of music, students develop an appreciation of many musical styles, sing a diverse array of songs, and express themselves in multiple mediums. They learn to understand music, listen critically, and incorporate feedback into their performance. 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 students can hear and distinguish easily. Building on their skills when playing pitched percussion instruments, such as xylophones, glockenspiels, and metallophones, not only helps students learn to read music but also helps them appreciate harmonizing and performing in a musical ensemble.

FIRST GRADE

Through the lens of “Making Music as Community,” students begin the year reviewing familiar musical vocabulary. Utilizing an array of unpitched percussion instruments (e.g., drums, sticks), students explore and expand their recognition and understanding of beginning notations of quarter notes, quarter rests, eighth notes, and half notes. With the inclusion of barred percussion instruments (e.g., xylophones), students use one or two mallets to play together in unison and, eventually, two-part music. Students practice their sense of steady beat and changing rhythms by taking turns; improvising; following visual cues; and creating, playing, and recalling patterns. As their vocal range increases, students experience singing in unison and solo-singing activities that strengthen their sense of pitch, phrasing, and meter.

SECOND GRADE

Students continue to expand the skills acquired in previous years to interpret and create music through singing, instrument playing, dancing, and musical games. Using various percussion instruments and xylophones, students begin to develop their understanding of rhythmic patterns to include sixteenth notes and melodic patterns on the music staff that cover the range of pentatonic scale. Playing individual parts in an ensemble setting provides students with opportunities to develop listening skills and musical sensitivity to create ensemble cohesiveness. In addition to adding their voices to instrumental activities, students practice healthy vocal techniques, phrasing, and singing in both unison and two parts as a full group.

THIRD GRADE

Students further develop music literacy and instrument playing as they build on the skills acquired in previous years. They are encouraged to become composers of simple rhythmic pieces, which aid in their understanding of writing and recognizing rhythmic, melodic, and treble-clef notation. Playing instruments develops students' listening and instrumental skills, so they can play cohesively as an ensemble while maintaining the form of their individual parts. The use of handbells provides further opportunities for students to develop coordination and musical understanding and prepares them to play band and orchestral instruments offered in the Middle School. Students add their voices to layered instrumental activities, and they practice singing in unison or two parts as a full group.

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. Studio experiences that include drawing, painting, and mixed media help students begin to develop an understanding of the elements and principles of art.

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. Important skills include learning specific knowledge 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

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 they 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

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 critique their own and others' artwork. 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

In third grade, students are offered challenging studio work wherein they 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 expand on skills and create works with ambitious, conceptual frameworks.

HEALTH, WELLNESS, AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION:

FIRST THROUGH THIRD GRADE

Students are taught the skills and knowledge to live a physically active, healthy life. They look forward to physical education class and activities 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. 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 fair play while students learn how to handle winning and losing games respectfully.

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 play 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.

SECOND GRADE

Goals for 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.

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. Regardless of their ability and the outcome of the game, students are encouraged to apply their skills and to work well with and support their teammates. 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.

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