

January 2017 Curriculum Updates

Nursery

by Caroline Mercier

"Today is soup day!" says one child. "Tomorrow is bread day," says another. "After pasta day is a home day," says an older, more seasoned nursery student. It's how you keep track when you're a nursery student, and for most, it's the beginning of an understanding of the sequence of the days of the week. It's not just a memorization of the days, but an awareness that each day means something different. This is an example of how we use real life experiences to prepare the children in our early childhood classes for future learning.

Now that we are midway through our year, we are mastering some of the hard work of being 3, 4 and newly 5. Staying at the table during lunch time, and resisting the urge to slip under the table to collect loose slippers and fallen crumbs is a great accomplishment! So is putting on your own slippers, and for some, even their snow pants, and coats. We have our tricks for doing this big work of dressing ourselves, and with a good "jump trick," "flip trick," and a "wiggle, wiggle push, stomp," we are ready "quick as a wink and a blink" for our outdoor play!

Circle time is now a great journey to King Winter's castle. When we finally find him, we will do our best to wake him up! Our playground is patiently awaiting a thick white blanket of beautiful white snow crystals. Our sleds and snow shovels are ready, and so are we! So we're going heavy on the winter songs, verses and stories, hoping to coax him out of his slumber. Wake up King Winter, it's time to play!

Friendships continue to form and transform, as these young children are waking up and beginning to realize themselves and one another as separate. With these realizations come trial and joyful discovery. The world is each child's oyster, but there are other oysters right nearby, using the same ocean and the same sand, and each contains a pearl as precious as the next. It is uncharted territory for some, but it is our work in early childhood to learn how to navigate these waters, and what good work it is. There is much to learn, and we guide them with love, understanding and certainty. *We know it is hard* and *we know that you can*, is what lies beneath our thoughts, words and actions as their teachers. As we say in the nursery, "We are all friends, and we are all learning." All of us. Everyday.

Kindergarten

by Cristan Vineis

Our kindergarten day is filled with much imaginative and physical adventure! We are all working hard at being part of a group—waiting our turn to do something special like

snuff a candle or play the lyre for our friends. We are learning to sit upright with our “golden crowns shining” to show our teachers we are ready for the story or the blessing before lunch. We’re learning to speak up for ourselves when something does not feel right. We’re learning to be a good friend and a respectful student.

During our indoor free playtime, first thing in the morning, the children have been building elaborate structures—pet centers, apartments, ships, and zoos. Many a wild animal has visited this kindergarten as of late: anacondas, boa constrictors, crocodiles, lynxes, bobcats, and well, puppies—lots of puppies! While the children play they are also given the opportunity to prepare the daily delicious lunch, mend the occasional broken toy, or work on a sewing project. The older children have all begun sewing their baby dolls, while the little ones are working on sewing felt hearts, stars, clouds and whatever else they think up, like a gecko for instance!

While normally we have our circle time outside directly following our nature walk, the very wet ground has urged the circle indoors, before we walk. The kindergarten circle is an imaginative movement journey, in which the children are given the opportunity to move their bodies in a variety of age-appropriate ways. One recent circle led us on a treasure hunt into a deep, low cave, which we entered by crawling and slithering. We searched for gnome jewels, sometimes picking them up with our toes! When leaving the cave we crab-walked so as to see the beautiful crystals growing on the cave’s ceiling. Now, we are woodcutters in our circle, chopping firewood for winter’s cold. This circle is also vibrant, lively and fun but it, too, is comprised of many movements that will prepare the older children for first grade at a foundational level.

As Mother Nature takes her time deciding which season it is, the kindergarten children have been reveling in the very mixed bag of recent weather. The mere skim of snow on which we sledded, shoveled, rode sleighs over, and built snowmen with a few weeks ago is but a distant memory, for now mud season is upon us (literally all over us—on our faces, in our boots, on all our clothes)! The cold, damp weather (albeit confusing for wardrobe choices and dreary at first glance) has created marvelous play opportunities for us in the play yard and on our walks. You may have noticed the after-effects hanging on drying racks in the lobby—we apologize for the mess but to us it’s a sign of a really fun day!

We have been enjoying “Fireside Fridays,” days when instead of going on our daily nature walk we stay in the yard, light a fire, collect and saw wood and share a snack around the fire pit. Last Friday we even ate our stone soup lunch outside! We frequently visit the shore by the lake and take time noticing the changes in the water level, the thickness of the ice, and the many and varied winged visitors. Goblin Hill has been a favorite woodsy play spot these past few weeks. With its varied terrain, intriguing trees, and proximity to the ever-growing stream, the children have many opportunities to run, climb, jump, roll, slide, crawl, throw sticks (splash!), build fairy houses, and weave crowns. Just getting to Goblin Hill, which is a perhaps a hundred yards down the path at

the end of the lower parking lot, is a journey in itself – we balance our way lengthwise across logs, climb over or slither under a large log, and straddle a skinny, yet growing stream (or if the water’s not flowing, avoid the “hot lava” that is in the trench). Always an adventure in the kindergarten!

First Grade
by Branigan Reed

Students are quite busy learning and growing in first grade! From September to December students were engaged in experiences with the sounds and forms of all the capital letters. We practiced writing the letters, drawing accompanying pictures from the many stories heard, forming the letters using beeswax, stones, and discovering the forms in the classroom and the natural world. Students entered their December break ready for some well-deserved mental rest!

Since we have returned from break, students have begun to explore the qualities of numbers 1-12. First graders are playing movement games to practice counting by 2's, 5's, and 10's, singing number songs to explore where we find different quantities in the world around us, and illustrating number stories shared in main lesson. To continue supporting their growing literacy skills, students are practicing sight words daily as a group and will soon be working in partners to practice spelling and recognizing the words independently.

Our artistic work has also been blossoming in the classroom. We are working with blending red, blue, and yellow paints in various ways to create beautiful flowing images during our painting time. We are using our beeswax to form everything from our letters & numbers, to snowflakes & swans. We have even just started learning how to play the pentatonic flute, adding even more music to our day!

Soon we will be moving on to explore lower case letters, the four processes, and science & nature stories before ending the year with our writing block, and our first class play!

Second Grade
by Maggie Smith

The second grade has spent the fall and winter revisiting and strengthening many of the skills we began learning last year. Through stories of mischievous animals and upstanding, courageous humans, we are building up our ability to write and read, in addition to crafting brief but informative summaries. These incredible stories give us both something to aspire to, in the world of Saints, as well as reminding us of what instincts it may be better to overcome, through Aesop's fables. In December, we manifested this generous impulse by going singing through the halls, delivering cookies and hot drinks to the entire school on Santa Lucia Day. In mathematics we have been

exploring more deeply the four processes. We have gained familiarity with the times tables one through ten, even seeing the kinds of patterns they make when they are drawn in a circle--who knew math could be so artistic! We have also stretched our skills by learning to add multi-digit numbers, until we realized that it makes much more sense to arrange them vertically rather than horizontally. Here in January we have been learning about place value and have just begun learning how to carry numbers that get too big in vertical addition. Outside of morning lesson, we have been learning more complex songs on our flutes, painting with more colors than ever before, and going to many walks in the woods to see the world changing around us as the year goes by.

Third Grade
by Ana Coffey

The third grade has been learning about lots of practical things this year, like farming, gardening, measuring, fiber arts, and house building. Last week we completed our three-week Shelter block, in which we studied various kinds of dwellings that were built by Native Americans, such as adobe houses of the Southwest, wikiups of the Northeast, and earth lodges of the Plains. We had lively and amusing discussions about the differences between shelters, houses, and homes, and created beautiful pages of drawings, diagrams, and cursive writing to capture our learning on paper. Now that the students have a feeling for discovering the who, what, where, when, why, and how that inspires different peoples to build a specific type of dwelling, they get to embark on their very first research project! With guidance from me, each student chose a type of house that appealed to them. Over the course of the next month, they will develop research strategies and organizational skills while learning about their dwelling. The month will culminate with the children creating a small model of their tipi, Ethiopian roundhouse, igloo, etc. They will also create an artistic surround that shows the landscape in which their house would be found. The houses will be on display for the other students and teachers to view. Students additionally will have written a brief summary about their dwelling, consisting of both facts and personal insights. The children are so excited to begin, and quite a few have already brought in books and ideas about how to create their models, even though we have until next Wednesday to gather our initial materials!

Fourth Grade
by Anita Warren

The fourth grade year centers around the Norse Myths: the images of Loki, Thor, Odin, Idunn, etc. These myths mirror the internal changes that the fourth grade child encounters in their nine-tenth year. There is a certain rowdiness and interest in being mischievous that is certainly evident in my class this year! We are having our play: *Idunn and the Golden Apples* in February. This is the first time the class play will be on a real stage. We welcome you all to come.

Another curriculum item is fractions, the study of which goes beyond arithmetic into grammar where we begin to take our language apart and look at the words that make up sentences. We identify the words as the parts of speech and use their common names: nouns, verbs, articles, etc. We also learn about verb tenses and begin writing more complex sentences.

The year started with a block on local geography. The students studied their home location in relation to the school, the area of Beverly in relation to Cape Ann and Cape Ann in relation to Northeastern Massachusetts. We went to Plimoth Plantation to experience early Native American life, the Pilgrim settlement, and board the Mayflower. Later in the block we visited the Cape Ann Museum, and learned about the granite industry in the Rockport area by hiking to a quarry, under an old granite stone bridge (the echoes under it were fascinating), for lunch. The block ended with a focus on the cod industry and tales of the sea. It was a fun way to start the fourth grade year.

Fifth Grade
by Kevin Doering

In the fifth grade the children have been experiencing ancient civilizations and most recently North American Geography. We enjoyed a beautiful block on ancient India from late October through mid-November, appreciating the sanctity of life and the ways of the Brahmin. Fifth grade parents put together a capstone Indian meal, where in an Indian decorated classroom we sat in a circle on cushions, did a special blessing and enjoyed food and fellowship. After this we have been traveling through the North American continent exploring its physical regime and history; with particular attention paid to the Native American people and the way they lived off the land. The children developed physical maps of both the major geographical features, as well as the primary housing that tribes used to live in amidst the varying topography and climate. Most recently we “walked” across the continent with Lewis and Clark, on an incredible expedition which could not have been accomplished without the support and efforts of Sacawagea, a native of the Shoshonis Tribe. The children heard this gripping tale from her perspective and were thoroughly captivated; this translated to some beautiful drawings and paintings of Sacagawea pointing the way through the wilderness of the far west.

Math has included an introduction to the anciently derived system of decimals, and has progressed forward to the use of money today. In Language Arts, the children have been reading “Minn of the Mississippi,” a wonderful story about a turtle that traverses the course of the mighty Mississippi. In addition to supplementing our North American block, this book has also supported our class ecological project of helping to raise two endangered Blanding Turtles. They reside in an aquarium in our classroom, and the children have all been learning, (thanks to Coleen, our nature specialist!) how to feed and care for these important creatures. Finally we have continued our journey into the deaf world of sign language, where the children have been absorbing not only words

and signs, but a glimpse into the unique word use and order that deaf people actually use.

As we look ahead we are returning to the world of ancient history, a journey that will ultimately land us in Greece. There we will learn not only myth, but also recorded history about the civilization that planted the underpinnings for our modern democracy. The children will participate in an Olympic Games with other Waldorf area students, and be a part of a play that comes out of this landscape.

Sixth Grade
by Brian Macdonald

The sixth grade began this year studying South America geography which allowed for individuals to research countries, write a report and present them to their classmates. We learned about the various climates and landscapes a country could contain while also learning about the diversity of animal and plant life it sustained. The history, language and culture were also part of the study. After the oral reports the students took their first end-of-block exam and then shared a feast of sample dishes from their particular country for lunch. We accompanied this study with the book: The Secret of the Andes.

Our next block was our first physics block where we studied sound, light and heat. The block was made of daily experiments or demonstrations in which the students fully participated. For example, we saw how slow sound is compared with sight, how the eye creates opposites in color to attain a balanced whole and how heat is the most important aspect to sustain life. These mentioned experiences are just a few of the many memorable experiences we shared. The students daily wrote lab reports and illustrated the experiences in their main lesson books. We again culminated the study with a comprehensive final exam.

Next we journeyed through time, picking up our historical narrative from Alexander the Great, which ended our fifth grade year. We moved on from Troy and Aeneas and the founding of Rome. We studied Rome from its founding, through its stages as a monarchy, republic and finally as an empire. We learned the many ways we are influenced by Roman history as well as the huge influence it had on European culture. We also noted the counter influence that challenged Roman power with love. We again took a comprehensive exam at block's end. We accompanied this study with the books: In the Shadow of Vesuvius and The Bronze Bow. This study concluded the first semester.

We returned this new year with a short geometry block where we studied various constructions of geometric principles as well as geometric forms. We learned how to use the wonderful and amazing compass with precision and grace. How satisfying it was to so accurately and beautifully work with circles! We again took an exam to solidify our

new found skills. This block was accompanied by the wonderful book: The View From Saturday.

We currently are immersed in our second physics block and have, at this writing, just concluded our work with magnetism. Tomorrow we will begin examining triboelectricity or less accurately labeled, static electricity. Let it be noted that the teacher scheduled this study for the dry and cold season! (It is currently pouring about three inches of rain today.) He hopes his study is not literally washed out. We will also conclude with an exam. Hopefully we will also visit the Museum of Science and its lightning machine.

During all of these blocks we have accompanied our studies with related poetry and recitations and if possible, songs. We have four parts in many of our recorder pieces and are beginning to work on medieval recorder songs, which will accompany our studies of Medieval History and, perhaps, our Knighting Ceremony later this year.

Seventh Grade by Vanya Yoors

The seventh grade has most recently been busy with an Algebra Block. We worked with solving simple equations, solidifying work with order of operations, exploring positive and negative numbers and then moved on to investigate linear equations with two variables. The block culminated in graphing a line. In looking at positive and negative numbers we discussed their characteristics. As well as forward and backwards, above sea level and below sea level, debt and assets, students suggested that good and bad were a way of understanding these. They recalled a story from our fifth grade Ancient History block where in Egyptian mythology Anubis, on giant scales, weighs the souls of the dead against the weight of a feather.

Last week, students also came into class with thoughts, questions and concerns stemming from the inauguration and women's marches that had happened over the previous weekend. I gave them an assignment to write haiku as an avenue to express their thoughts. The following are a few examples:

One march - thousands fight,
Different voices same idea,
Many signs – much hope.

A fire was lit,
It will burn and rage a lot,
In time it will die.

The mist of despair,
Has fallen in heavy clouds,
Will the bright sun rise?

Acts of priceless love,
Screaming not in pain but strength,
We are the women.

Thinking about it,
To be forced out of your country,
I wonder what it's like.

Strong women marched,
In Boston with powerful signs,
I wish I was one.

He is our leader,
We are in it together,
But we'll make it right.

Eighth Grade
by Rebecca Rugo

The eighth grade is in the middle of a drama block and is working on “Don Quixote.” The story is a familiar one—the class heard parts of it in sixth grade from Professor Foster in Spanish class. The tale is rich with characters, imagery, and passion. It explores age-old questions of what is real, worthy, and meaningful in life. At its heart, it is a story of transformation.

Every student has helped in many ways: casting, costuming, learning lines, finding props, rehearsing music, and much more. Everyone plays at least two characters, a process of creation multiplied.

This class has enjoyed and learned from play blocks over the years. There have been times when students have overcome nervousness, shyness, exhaustion, and a distrust of the stage. There have been many more times when a new perspective was achieved, laughter was shared, and students felt a well-earned sense of accomplishment. Preparing and performing a play together is a fantastic group project and strengthens the class community. While the most visible fruit of play blocks are the performances offered to the community, there are many more important experiences both big and small that occur during the process.

German, Grades 1-8
by Kati Manning

All of the students in the grades have been talking about “Winter in German.” Winter weather, clothes, sports, foods, drinks, nature...

In first grade the children are playing a game called “Schneemann, Schneemann” and have fun dressing the snowman in winter clothes.

In second grade the children are learning to talk about the weather, the months and the days of the week. They enthusiastically play a game called “Wirbelwind.” On Wednesdays the children hear about Peter and his dog Fipsi. In second grade, Peter is terribly naughty and the children enjoy hiding and finding him in his house or garden.

In third grade, the children are learning to recite and solve riddles. They are listening to stories about Peter and his creepy neighbor Frau Ratten-Schwanz. The third graders are learning the vocabulary of the house with all its rooms and furniture.

The fourth grade is learning how to read in German. Every Thursday Frau Kati tells another chapter of “Die Kleine Hexe.” The fourth graders summarize the chapter with Frau Kati and then practice reading their summaries out loud.

The fifth grade finished the story of “Fipsi und die Dimanten.” On Thursday the students took their first comprehension exam based on the story. They had to answer 36 true or false statements based on the content of 15 chapters. It was exciting and challenging to do this.

In sixth grade, the students have finished the epic “Nibelungensage” and are preparing for an exam. They are also completing regular written homework every week and are energetically competing in an oral game of survival in nature called “Leben und Tod in der Natur.”

In seventh grade the students have heard the Legend of the “Lorelei.” They are also continuing to hear, read, write and translate chapters in “Taju und die Fernen Inseln.”

In eighth grade the students are working on expressing themselves in the present, past and future tenses. They are also continuing to hear, read, write and translate the final chapters of “Taja und die Fernen Inseln.”

Middle School Language Arts—Writing Skills and Reading Workshop by Jenny Helmick

During the fall semester, our weekly eighth grade writing skills classes focused on essay writing (descriptive, narrative, expository, persuasive) as well as some creative writing assignments. Most recently, we read excerpts from Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” and explored in writing the question of whether it is ever right to break the law. In January, we embarked on a formal research paper in which students explore a topic in U.S. history of interest to them. In the seventh grade, the students have received a variety of assignments in creative and expository writing; short stories have also been a focus. I’ve used some relevant lessons from our new Cyber Civics curriculum in our writing skills classes (e.g., how to evaluate sources of information on the Internet).

In our reading workshops (grades six, seven, and eight) students read books of their choice from our middle school library (curated for literary quality, diversity, and appeal to/appropriateness for middle school) or from home. They participate in short lessons about literature and writing, periodically write about their reading, and share recommendations for books.

If you would like to learn about these classes in more detail, please visit my website at www.helmick.org. (You can see past assignments under “Resources.”)

Math Curriculum
by Dianne McGaunn

Thus far in seventh grade math, we have been solidifying our number sense and foundational skills of arithmetic including operations with fractions and decimals. We began the year with a review of factoring but took it to another level with many puzzles and word problems. Next, we briefly re-visited fraction operations to deepen our conceptual understanding and skills, and we have moved into a review of decimals (which are fractions with a denominator having a power of ten.) After solidifying our understanding with decimals, we will move into practical applications of decimals including an exploration of percentages, rates and ratios. Most of the spring will be dedicated to working with proportions, more geometry, graphing, and measurement. While I have been leading the skills classes (with Mr. Yoors’ support in the classroom), Mr. Yoors has been working on the beginnings of formal algebra with the class during morning lesson, and it is always so wonderful to walk into the class to see something about algebra so beautifully illustrated and explained! We will continue to build on this algebra work throughout the year in skills classes.

While we are indeed strengthening skills with the students, we are also working on more “open-ended” problem-solving, alone and in groups, which helps to foster many other capacities such as flexible thinking and creative problem-solving. For instance, lately we worked with this puzzle: “Two fractions together make $\frac{1}{2}$. What are those fractions?” First working independently and then with a partner, students offered many creative and interesting answers to this question, and they justified their answers through their written and verbal work.

While we still encourage students to do quite a bit of mental math calculations, students are ready to learn how to share their developing thought processes, in writing, with classmates and teachers. There are many reasons for this. First, students need to learn clear thinking processes and the value of sharing those with others. Related to this, teachers need to understand their students’ thinking processes to help them in their learning. In addition, when things are written or clearly communicated, we can better support each other and appreciate the many different ways to arrive at an answer. And finally, learning how to “show what one knows” is essential in more advanced algebra,

so learning how to show our work clearly is becoming more important. Developing solid work ethics and truly understanding a process is just as important, if not more important, than the right answer! The most important thing, though, is fostering a healthy social atmosphere as we all explore the beautiful order and practicality of math.

The main theme for seventh grade math is for the students to experience number relationships of all kinds. The students are led through this in many ways - artistically and imaginatively, with some structure and some open-ended formats, independently and in small and larger groups. Since seventh graders are quite interested in their social relationships, the math topics described above meet their development beautifully. Studying factoring in different ways or understanding ratios and proportions or negative and positive numbers offers pictures or illustrations of how numbers “relate” to each other.

In eighth grade, Mrs. Rugo and I are having some stimulating discussions with the students as she leads them through the algebra curriculum. I support Mrs. Rugo in the algebra classes as we work with the many different learning needs in the class (this is the same reason that Mr. Yoors and I work together in seventh grade). This pushes us to find new and different ways to bring the math and meet the needs of the students in front of us. Some of my favorite activities in algebra include hands-on activities that illustrate an algebraic concept. For instance, calculating the difference of two squares can actually be done with squares with sides represented as variables, cutting out those pieces and calculating the areas involved. It is always interesting to watch the reactions of the students as they move the pieces around and imagine how to calculate the area of the larger square when one smaller square has been removed. The discovery or understanding of how to calculate the area in question can be somewhat ephemeral and subsequently one might need to experience this discovery over and over again. Rudolf Steiner describes this type of experience in Kingdom of Childhood, in reference to teaching and understanding the Pythagorean Theorem:

“This is something very remarkable, very striking, and when you look at it like this you cannot really see how it comes about...It is just this fact of the wonder of it, that you cannot see how it comes about, that you must make use of to bring life into the more inward, soul quality of your teaching; you must build on the fact that here you have something that is not easily discernible; this must constantly be acknowledged. One might even say with regard to the Theorem of Pythagoras that you can believe it, but you always have to lose your belief in it again. You have to believe afresh every time that this square is equal to the sum of the other two squares.”

I am thoroughly enjoying my work with these classes and I am always humbled by what we, as teachers, can learn from our students and each other. The learning never ends, which is a wonderful thing!

Handwork

by Heather Collis Puro

First Grade: **What we are learning:** The basics of knitting: The knit stitch, casting on and casting off. **What we are making:** Rainbow Flute Cases. **What projects have been completed this year?** We have sanded and polished a pair of knitting needles from wooden dowels and knitted a kitty cat. **What you might hear if you came into the classroom:** “Who wants to be my leap frog partner?” or “How many rows have you knitted? I am sure I have done more!”

Second Grade: **What we are learning:** Advanced Knitting: Purl stitch, decreasing and increasing. **What we are making:** Knitted Gnomes made from naturally dyed yarn. **What projects have been completed this year?** Leaf transparencies sewn with perle cotton thread. **What you might hear if you came into the classroom:** “I made my gnome a turtle and three scarves!” or “My gnome is going to have a beard!”

Third Grade: **What we are learning:** Crocheting and Spinning. **What we are making:** Crocheted hats. **What projects have been completed this year?** Wool michaelmas comets dyed with goldenrod collected on the Moraine Farm property, a crocheted flute case using mathematical progressions of the number 7 and a caterpillar bookmark. **What you might hear if you came into the classroom:** “Can I take a turn carding wool?” or “Mrs. Collis Puro, can I do handwork at recess?”

Fourth Grade: **What we are learning:** Embroidery. **What we are making:** A personalized handwork bag and embroidered wool balls. **What projects have been completed this year?** A round mat decorated with the running stitch, a felt needle case embellished with the chain stitch. **What you might hear if you came into the classroom:** “Is pink in the red color family?” or “How do I make a tailor’s knot again?”

Fifth Grade: **What we are learning:** How to knit in the round on double-pointed needles. **What we are making:** SOCKS! (Finally, Mrs. Collis Puro!) **What projects have been completed this year?** We completed our cross stitch and entered it in the Topsfield Fair – and we won beautiful ribbons! We also revisited knitting by making a simple knitted gnome. **What you might hear if you came into the classroom:** “I am going to give my socks to my dad!” or “Can I make each sock a different color?”

Sixth Grade: **What we are learning:** Pattern making and the basics of proportion. **What we are making:** Waldorf dolls from the children’s own design. **What projects have been completed this year?** We have completed the head, created the pattern for the doll’s body and begun to sew the body. Recently, we explored the geometric form of constructing a pentagon in a circle by making a paper star lantern. **What you might hear if you came into the classroom:** “My head is really lumpy” or “My doll’s name is definitely Jeff?” or “Where should his nose go?”

Seventh Grade: **What we are learning:** Shoemaking working with patterns based on our own foot. **What we are making:** Leather shoes with soles made from recycled

heavy-duty innertube. **What projects have been completed this year?** We created models of our feet from which we developed a pattern; we also learned to work with leather by making simple earbud holders. **What you might hear if you came into the classroom:** “I want to make a high-top sneaker” or “What is the difference between a sole and a top sole?” and “Was the Cummings Center really once the largest shoe factory in the world?” In addition, the class is headed to the PEM next week to view a visiting exhibit from the Victoria and Albert Museum in England. It’s entitled Shoes: Pleasure and Pain.

Eighth Grade: What we are learning: How to use the sewing machine. **What we are making:** Geometric Pieced Napkins. **What projects have been completed this year?** Eye pillows and tissue holders. **What you might hear if you came into the classroom:** “What happens if I press this button, Mrs. Collis Puro” or “How do you use a seam ripper?” or “How do you wind a bobbin again?” and most definitely “Mrs. Collis Puro, the sewing machine is not technology!” In addition, recently we took a trip to the fabric store in Natick, MA to buy fabric for our upcoming shirt project. We were treated like celebrities, as we return to this same store every year. Check out pictures from our trip on the Fabric Place Basement’s Facebook page.

Eurythmy
by Mari Yamaguchi

Eurythmy, taken from Greek, meaning "harmonious rhythm," is a movement curriculum that engages the students in space, both as individuals, together with others in groups, or with the class as the whole. The development and cultivation of the spacial sensibilities within each student, and collectively amongst them in the class, have their paramount opportunities when the students learn to move different geometric forms, some of which I described in the last curriculum update for the lower grades.

Working with geometric forms in eurythmy is one of the most unique experiences this curriculum offers. In the middle school, the students' awareness, skills and spacial intelligence are being developed and practiced through the years in such a way that the students progressively engage in more complex geometry formed by increasing numbers of students. In moving these forms, students not only apply geometric laws to create the forms in space, but also move and discover where they stand in relationship to each other and have a beginning sense of how all parts are harmoniously interconnected, forming the whole. The sixth grade is in the middle of this kind of work. Please come talk to me if you would like to see how they work!

Chorus
by Julia Elliott

The fourth through eighth grade choruses have been ringing in the new year with new musical challenges and some scheduling changes. The sixth grade has joined the

seventh grade in the Middle School chorus and will experience music of the Renaissance, songs from other cultures (yes, our middle schoolers can sing in Swahili!), and some contemporary ballads as well. The eighth grade will use their chorus time to work on Spanish songs for their upcoming play, and then begin the exciting work of preparing music for their graduation in June.

The fourth and fifth grades continue to grow in song with their beautiful voices and enthusiasm for learning music. Fourth grade is busy learning music for their upcoming Norse play and is singing a beautiful ancient hymn in Icelandic! The fifth grade will be focusing on contemporary and traditional American music, state songs, and sea chanties. We will be looking for opportunities for these two grades to come together in song before the year is out!