



The Herald

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Laying the Proper Foundation



Kindergarteners Jump Rope for Heart

Ah, springtime! According to Tennyson, it's when a young man's thoughts turn to love, but for many parents, it's a time when their thoughts turn to completing enrollment applications for their rising five year olds. Kindergarten is a special time for children, often the first time they are away from their parents for any extended amount of time, and often the first time they are in social situations with other children. It is the very foundation for the remainder of any formal education, and therefore, a highly important year. MCA's mission of creating lifelong learners starts in kindergarten, as our teachers strive to help students gain a joy for learning and, along with that, a curiosity for exploring new concepts and ideas, all the while learning to respect themselves and others as they begin to mature. Of all the years of formal education, perhaps the year with the most learning, growth, and change is kindergarten.

As with many areas and grades at MCA, our kindergarten classes go above and beyond the usual, and one way this is accomplished is through our curriculum, which consistently has higher expectations of our students than that demanded by traditional educational legislation. One key curricular component used by MCA is the Core Knowledge curriculum, which is not to be confused with the Common Core curriculum under so much use and scrutiny throughout the nation. Core Knowledge provides a rich platter of meaningful information for all our students, giving them a basis for learning in all subject areas. In kindergarten, Core Knowledge recommended reading exposes our kindergarten students to nursery rhymes, stories, and fables that help them learn the cadence and rhythm of language as they begin their processes of learning to read. It brings the history of our nation to life for them, as they study events, notable presidents, and historical landmarks. They learn sayings and phrases commonly heard in our culture, and learn music and music history that is significant in America and other cultures. Several methods are employed to teach reading and writing. For reading, students have fun learning letters, letter sounds, and through active processes like Jolly Phonics, the Four Blocks Literacy Model, and the Orton-Gillingham Method, which employs a multi-sensory approach to reading and writing. Students learn beginning mathematics with Everyday Math, which uses a logical, real-world problem solving approach to teaching mathematics. Lessons are reinforced by fun activities like students who like the various super-bowl teams, or using manipulatives that provide hands-on experience with sorting, counting, and making patterns. Science and technology are routinely integral parts of hands-on, kindergarten instruction. Our kindergarten teachers work hard to ensure that our students are well-prepared academically for first grade.



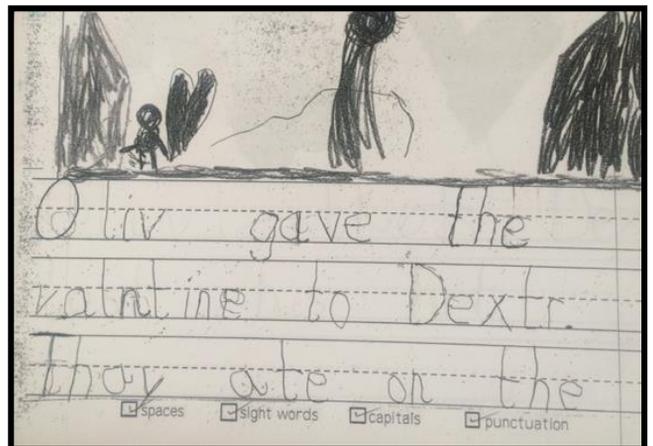
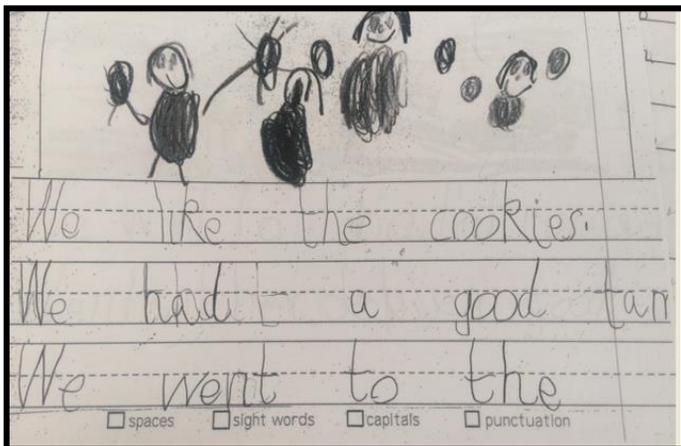
Smiles abound at Jump Rope for Heart

MCA kindergarten students also learn from the community through field trips. Recently, students visited Mrs. Hanes Hand Made Moravian Cookies in Winston-Salem, NC. In addition to seeing the facility and sampling some delicious handmade cookies, students learned about units of measure that corresponded with a current math unit, and they learned how cookies were packaged and shipped, which also focused on various math concepts using quantities and weight. Following the trip to the cookie factory, students enjoyed lunch at CiCi's Pizza, where they had access to a healthy salad bar and delicious pizza.

MCA kindergarten teachers have the liberty to do multi-level teaching in the classroom, and this is a difference between MCA and some conventional kindergarten settings.

Teachers work with students on the level that is best for the individual child. For example, some children come into kindergarten already knowing how to write their names and even read a few words. Some children come having no experience with either. Students with no experience are assisted at their level, and also are exposed to the skills taught to students with more accelerated abilities, thus gaining a more informative and richer experience overall. Kara Westmoreland, who joined MCA teaching kindergarten when the school was founded in 2000 says, "Because our expectations are so high, even the students who come in at a lower ability level will surpass the state standards because we exceed them. Children soar with this type of instruction, and as a result, we create students well-prepared for first grade. This whole concept spirals upward through the grades."

Joy Parsons, also a well-experienced MCA kindergarten teacher, points out how MCA kindergarten teachers take time to focus on content in addition to teaching skills. "This is directly related to Core Knowledge with the enrichment it brings to all the students. We teach this enriching content, helping the students get the 'big ideas' of education, and although we do assessments to ensure our students are reaching proper levels, we're not on assessment overload as it seems to be in some places. An MCA student leaves kindergarten with a broader view of the world than you might see in some traditional settings. For example, if we have children from different cultures in our classrooms, then we integrate material from those cultures into our daily lessons. It is beautiful and good that we have this flexibility to use the personal journeys of some students to enhance the educational experience of all the students."



Above are samples of kindergarten writing from early February, with still more than three months of instruction remaining. By this time, most kindergartners are able to use proper capitalization and punctuation in basic sentences, and are able to write two to four sentences independently. It is amazing to see the growth of our kindergarten students!

If you or any of your friends would like to learn more about the MCA kindergarten, or about any of our grades, please feel free to call the school to set up a tour.