

# Making Connections

Enhancing Program Function with Integrated Curriculum



**RISE 2023**



The New York State Office of Religious and Independent Schools  
**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
RESOURCE CENTER (PDRC)**  
The Upstate PDRC - All NYS Regions North of NYC

**MI** MEASUREMENT  
INCORPORATED



the  
**Randolph**  
School since 1963

Josh Kaplan, Director





**Picture a potato.**





# Picture a potato.



Does the potato you envisioned look like any of these potatoes?

You have permission to change your mind about what a potato is and how you envision it.







# Your School Ecosystem

Think about your school.

Who comes to mind first? Then who? (and what does that say?)

How do they compete or cooperate with each other?

What is your role in this ecosystem?





# The Forest Ecosystem

Think of the forest.

Did you envision trees?

What is the responsibility of one tree in a forest?

Did you learn, at some point in our 'survival-of-the-fittest' culture, that trees compete with each other in a forest?

How does a forest survive? stabilize? grow? thrive?

You have permission to change your mind.





Dr. Suzanne Simard

your school is a living system





# **Your School is a Living System**

**The strength of the team is each individual member.**

**The strength of each member is the team.**

- Phil Jackson, coach of the Bulls & Lakers Championship teams  
(the most decorated coach in NBA history - managed MJ, Kobe, Shaq and taught them all the value selflessness and teamwork in a winning system)

**Integrating the strengths of each tree with the needs of the overall forest bolsters the weaknesses that lead to harm in the ecosystem.**

How do the parts of your school ecosystem connect?

How do they interact? (competitive or complementary)

How do they integrate with your goals?







# **The Randolph School is one type of potato.**







Hello, I'm

# Josh Kaplan

Dad & Director at the Randolph School



Six years ago, I took my first gig as a head of school, coming off ten years as a teacher and school leader in Harlem public schools. I found a community of educators committed to doing things differently. Built on 55 years of history, the foundation was shaky.

My place in the ecosystem is as a connector. I link people with the spaces, within this place. I nurture links between teachers, and amongst parents in the community, so that they can do the same for the children in our care, which includes my own.

My work is to notice problems, which is the first step to solving them. But my old friend, Pete Seeger once sang that “in life or revolution, rarely is there a quick solution...everything worthwhile takes a little time.” This relates to the process of turning maple sap into syrup, and it applies to my efforts to maintain perspective as I steer my team through challenges.



the  
**Randolph**  
School since 1963







# Randolph School Ecosystem

the Built Environment



The Main Building is a private home built in the 1860s is home to our main office, preschool and K-1st classrooms.

The Carriage House is from the same era and home to our 2nd-3rd, 4th-5th groups.

The Studios building is where you'll find the art studio and library.







# Randolph School Ecosystem

the Natural Environment



We live and learn on 5 acres of eastern, deciduous forest. Some is cleared into open fields and the rest is dotted with gardens, playgrounds, outdoor classroom spaces, fire rings, and is home to hundreds of species of native and introduced plants and animals.

On one edge of campus is Hunter Creek (of the Hudson River watershed), and access to 40 acres of public land beyond our boundaries.





# An Unanticipated Change

In March 2020, everything we had planned suddenly changed. The onset of the pandemic quickly revealed that virtual learning wasn't going to work for our community, nor was the way we were doing things before. From a change that connoted loss, we leaned on what we had and found we had much to gain.



## Diverse Talents

in passionate teachers who support each other.



## Rich Traditions

with anchor points throughout the year that connect us all through shared experience.



## Pedagogical Legacy

that was laid out by our founders in a clear Philosophy and Mission.



## Outdoor Space

and a culture that values being in it.





# Randolph School Ecosystem

the intersection of  
Built & Natural  
Environments



7 lean-tos modeled after Adirondack Hiker Huts to serve as outdoor classrooms were built in VT and shipped to NY.

A stone amphitheater was completed in time for our return to school. This capital campaign was completed just before March, and we were set to break ground on the project March 14, 2020.

Our next project (coming soon) is a Sugar House to expand our maple sugaring curriculum and the school's capacity as it grows.





# Your School Environment

Think about the built (and natural, if applicable) environments that your school exists in.

What limitations do you feel because of the confines of the space?

What opportunities are possible because of the uniqueness of the space?

What would your teachers say? What about the children?



The first school I taught in had no windows.  
127th & Park in Harlem





# What is an ecosystem?

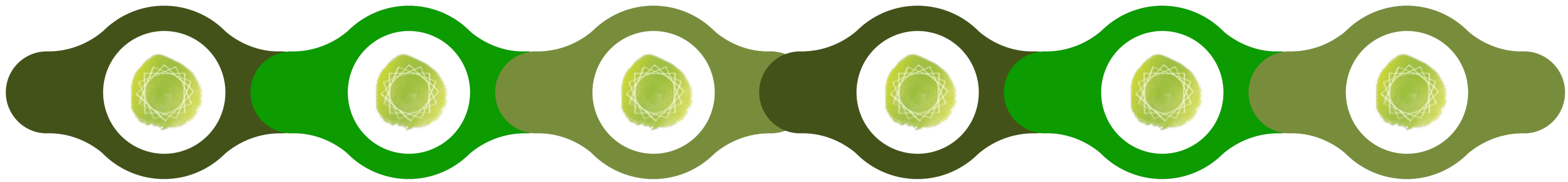
The ecosystem is the structural and functional unit of ecology where the living organisms interact with each other and the surrounding environment.

An ecosystem is a chain of interactions between organisms and their environment. A (bio)diverse, healthy ecosystem is one in which the individual organisms and the land itself are interdependent and effectively strengthening the entire community.

**In other words, it is an INTEGRATED system of all the living things within the environment.**

By integrating curricular experiences, you can connect the people doing the work to the community's goals and vision.





**Leadership**

**Teachers**

**Parents**

**Students**

**Board**

**Alumni - History**

# Links in This Forest

They are all feeding or depleting each other, all the time.



## **Make Decisions & Target Challenges**

get some buy in to make a change  
distribute leadership

## **Rinse, repeat**

solving one problem means moving  
on to the next



## **Learn & Envision**

study everything about the system  
(past & present)

## **See what/who doesn't work**

be willing to change your mind  
& notice the pushback





# Phase 1: study everything

The Randolph School's Founding Philosophy (1963)

start at the beginning - who we are and where we come from

- **A genuine philosophy of education is essentially a philosophy of life; living and learning are interdependent conditions.**
- Since human beings learn through exploration, interpretation of, and reaction to their world, then an appropriate educational approach encourages fearless exploration, challenge and exchange of ideas.
- Children who are expected to participate in a democratic society must be educated in schools that allow the greatest possible experience in making rational choices among a variety of alternatives, that also allow the widest possible experience in free interaction with others and in following their own lines of inquiry or investigation.
- This will not be a silent school. A school where children are learning is a place full of the sound of laughter, of tears, of gaiety, of anger...the sound of children communicating...the sound of life...the sound of growing.

Integrating a curriculum is to bring all of its parts together rather than separating them into distinct groups. Spelling can be part of math, math part of science, science and music part of language arts and language arts part of arts and crafts. This integration of study allows for children to perceive and understand topics in a more complete and well-rounded manner. Concepts and information derived from this kind of method, breaking down rigid, artificial boundaries which often impede learning and a child's enthusiasm. They take on life and relevance as they become necessary parts of the whole.

-Eric Tomlins, former Director/Teacher/Student at the Randolph School in notes for a meeting with prospective parents in the 1990s.







## **Phase 2: make decisions, target challenges**

Is the program cohesive from beginning to end?

What space can you make in a tight budget to make informed investments in supportive infrastructure and adapting the environment?


Staffing shifts & changes are necessary sometimes and, while hard, are always for the betterment of the whole forest.



# Links as Curriculum

Links are the roots of a Randolph education. Children develop links to the members of their community, to the past, to their passions, to the land. Links create strength, connection and stability. Through the process of creating links knowledge is created, questions are formed, growth is cultivated and children build a framework for developing their sense of self; who they are as an individual as well as in relation to others and their environment. A Links education supports the whole child; the development of their emotional, social, artistic, physical, and intellectual selves. The intersections of both living and learning at Randolph help solidify learning by linking experiences to new knowledge and skills.

The **Randolph** Roadmap



Since 1963, the teachers of the Randolph School have embarked on this journey with generations of children. Because we believe in children, we value them for who they are at the moment of our shared experiences, rather than trying to see them as grown-ups-in-training. A child's development is a journey that continues through their lifetime. With respect to the child, we are but a waypoint on that journey, a responsibility mandated by our mission and one we take seriously.

There is no one way to travel, nor a single destination to arrive at. This journey has many paths, drawn from a confluence of inspiration in the progressive movement and the values of our school's founding.

*"Learning and teaching should not stand on opposite banks and just watch the river flow by, instead, they should embark together on a journey down the water. Through an active reciprocal exchange, teaching can strengthen learning and how to learn."*

**To awaken in our students a love of learning that will last a lifetime.**

*"There is an inner voice that pushes children on, but this force is greatly multiplied when they are convinced that facts and ideas are resources, just as their friends and the adults in their lives are precious resources. It is especially at this point that children expect - as they have from the beginning of their life adventure - the help and truthfulness of grownups."*

**To support each child's capacity for a creative, meaningful, intellectual, social, emotional, artistic and physical life.**

*"Our task is to help children communicate with the world using all their potential, strengths and languages, and to overcome any obstacle presented by our culture."*

**To foster the development of the school community and its connection to the wider world.**

Loris Malaguzzi, Founder of the Reggio Emilia Approach  
**Randolph School Mission, 1963**

The Randolph School 2021

The **Randolph** Roadmap

**Purpose & Use**

The Randolph Roadmap was devised by the faculty as a tool to help identify strengths and growth areas, communicate them with parents and students, and plan strategically to support the individual needs of children.

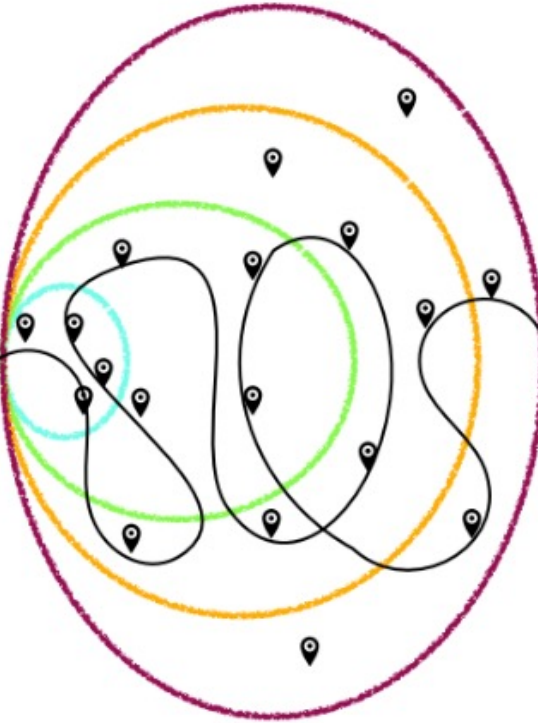
It reflects a whole-child pedagogy that recognizes the strengths of each child and closely monitors developmentally-appropriate progress towards that destination.

The work of the teacher is to offer authentic opportunities to practice a skill or strategy, to foster experiences that expand the loop on learning. Where a child exists on the roadmap does not indicate mastery or deficit. Rather, it informs the teacher and parents of the child's need to be given more opportunities to practice or to reflect on a child's experience and follow their lead.

Once a stop along the way is visited, the map allows for an entry point into discussion about the steps taken in the broader journey.

This tool is intended for use by Randolph teachers for planning and reflecting on their practice, for documentation and communication with parents, and for the development of a cohesive curricular structure in progressive pedagogy.

The developmental needs of children inform the destinations that are part of this leg of each child's journey. How they arrive at those destinations, and when, is up to the child, the teacher, and the environment. The purpose of this map is to help us orient ourselves to where we are and chart a course for where we'll go next.



The Randolph School 2021





# Links is also....

a way of living and learning that centers joyful engagement.

It distinguishes the school from others and gives a unified sense of identity to members of the community.

It is also a way to flexibly staff, providing contingencies for the myriad of staffing challenges school leaders face persistently.

It brings the community together through shared experience.

And it is a way to anchor anyone who joins us from here on out in the legacy of the school's founding, so that someone coming in is efficiently integrated into the team and its collective aims.



unique identity & school culture



staffing strategy



rooted in our mission and growing into the future





# Links as a Team



## Curricular Steward

Lead Teacher  
Social Studies & Curricular  
Connections

Anchored by school traditions and what emerges from the natural world, Links teachers INTEGRATE their specialties with the work of the cohort teachers.

Led by the Curricular Steward, they meet once a week as a team, and once a week with each of the other teacher teams. They meet informally throughout the day and even in their own time.

Links teachers cover the playground period, when cohort teachers break/prep and step in when a teacher is absent.



## Environmental Steward

Science & this Land



## Studio Steward

Art & school traditions



## Musical Storytelling

Music



## Library

(Digital) Literacy





# Links + Cohort Teams

Cohort teams are set based on personalities, compatible/complementary skills, and group size.

Cohort teams meet daily, formally and informally, and meet weekly with the whole Links Team to plan curricular experiences that integrate the parts of a child's day at school.



## Curricular Steward

Curriculum & Program  
Director



**PK**  
3 teachers  
1 apprentice



**K-1**  
2 teachers  
1 apprentice



**2-3**  
2 teachers



**4-5**  
1 teacher

 **Links Team**



**Curricular Steward**  
Lead Teacher  
Social Studies & Curricular  
Connections



**Environmental Steward**  
Science & this Land



**Studio Steward**  
Art & school traditions



**Musical Storytelling**  
Music



**Library**  
(Digital) Literacy





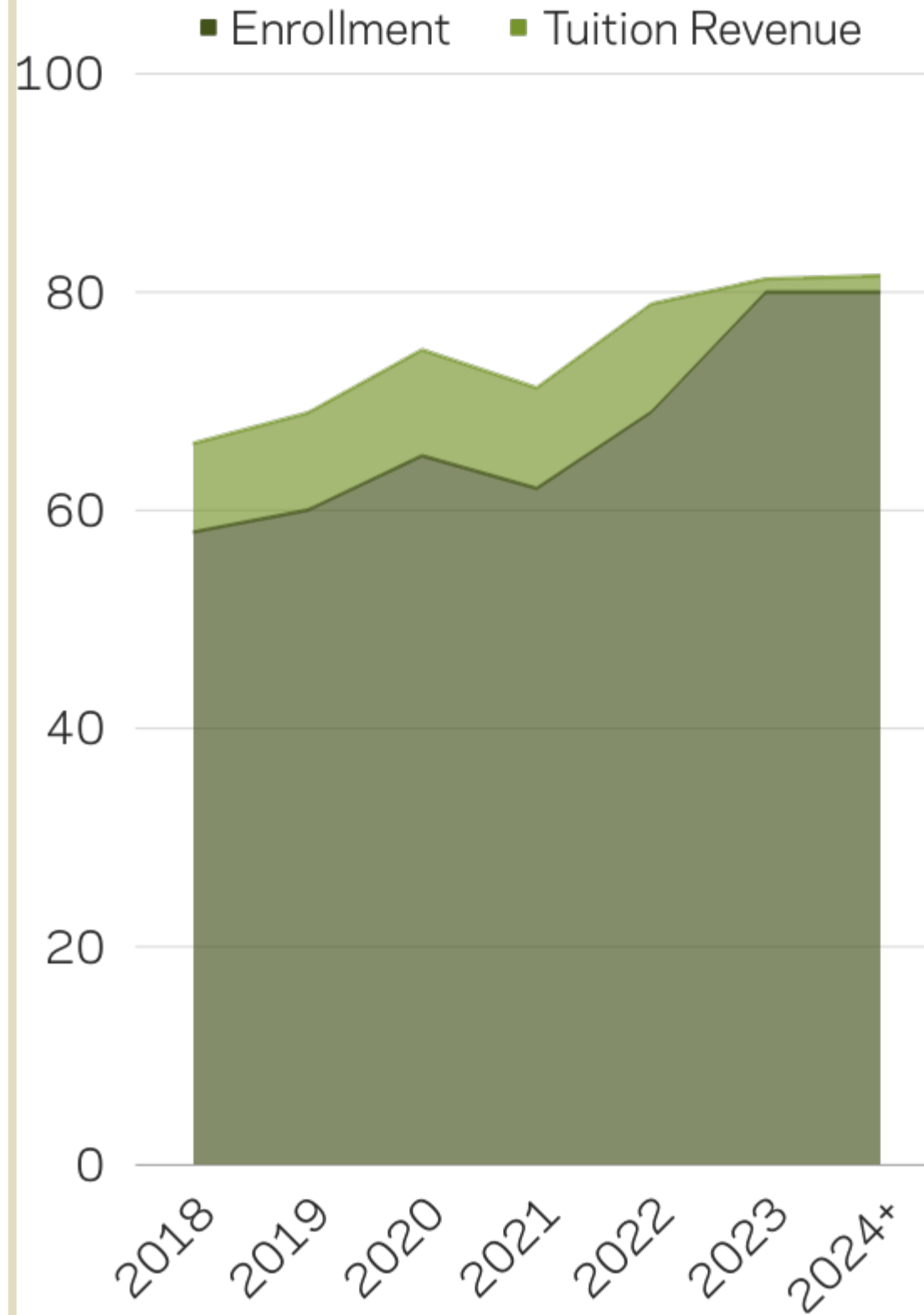
# Phase 3: see what/who works and doesn't work

Links has contributed to the growth of the school; its finances and its community, its ability to extend its reach beyond its campus, and its ability to recruit and retain quality, experienced teachers.





# Since Implementing Links



Enrollment has increased by 25%.

Tuition revenue has increased by 30%.

Our substitute budget has reduced to \$0, redistributed.

Teachers have taken on more work, but report higher quality-of-life and satisfaction with their work.

Teacher retention is 95% (100% in 2023-24)

Quality of instruction has improved immensely & elevated, joyful student engagement is evident every day.

There is more flexibility in grouping and staffing, allowing for true differentiation at all levels.

I am happier, and so is my family. My team and my school are stronger. I am able to focus on the big picture(s) finally, and put what I learn to use, effectively. My life is more balanced.





## What it looks like...



Daily Schedule & Flexible Grouping



Emerging from Natural Cycles & School Traditions



Integrating Curricular Experiences, connecting people and place.





# An Integrated Schedule



## Math Groups 10:15- 10:45

The Curricular Steward, with input from teachers, set up the daily schedule to have several mirrored periods across age groups, each day.

In the morning, all children are in math groups, based on their developmental readiness, practicing skills within the scope and sequence of the year.

In planning time, teachers have shared what skills are being practiced and Links teachers will work these skills into their authentic work in the afternoon, during Links Time, in different groupings and staff collaborations.

Links teachers also teach math and phonics in these small groups, which supports the strongest possible ratio of students:teachers. In event of teacher absence, a Links teacher can pick up where the absent teacher left off and maintain continuity for students.



# Math Groups



**How much money did we raise?**

How do we count it? + Addition      The same as  
x • Multiplication      -Norah

start with the highest bills -Johan  
 $20 + 20 + 20 = 60$   
 $20 \times 3 = 60$  -Magnolia

Then the next highest, fives -Zeke  
 $5 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 5 = 25$   
 $5 \times 5 = 25$  -Tiqui      -Pippa  
 $5 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 5 = 5 \times 5$  -Zeke

We have \$25 in fives

We have \$60 in twenties  
 $1 + 1 = 2$

We have \$2 in ones  
 $1 \times 2 = 2$  -Rhys

Now we add them together -Theo  
 $60 + 25 + 2 = 87$  -savion

We have \$87 in cash

Venmo?  

\$10	\$5	-Alvin

 $5 + 5 + 5 + 5 = 20$  -chloe  
 $5 \times 4 = 20$  -Rio

We have \$90 in Venmo  
 $10 + 10 + 10 + 10 + 10 + 10 + 10 = 70$   
 $10 \times 7 = 70$  -Riley

$90 + 87 = 177$  -Zeke  
 $20 + 70 = 90$  -Norah

**We raised \$177 !!!!!!!**

Authentic models and opportunities to practice are one part of the learning. Closing the loop on the experience is what solidifies learning.

In the morning, children pick up a new skill. In the afternoon, the environment is designed to elicit the practical use of this new skill.

Links between living and learning are illuminated.

It is documented - studied and shared.



**Scale and BAR MODELS**

18"

12"

9" Magnolia  
4.5" Pippa  
3" Pippa

6" Max

9"	
4.5	4.5
3	3

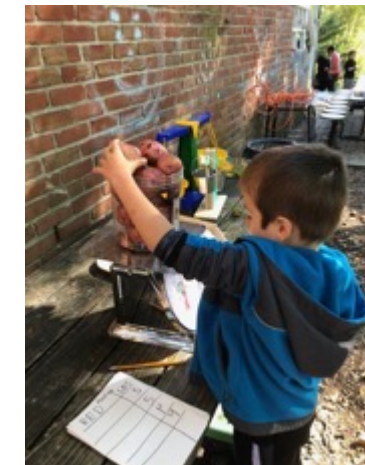
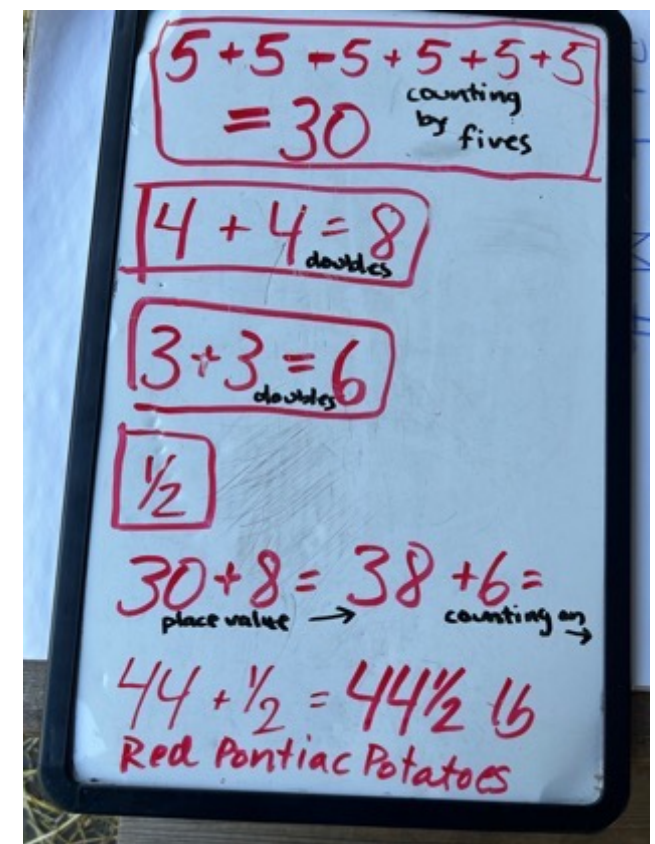
10  
5 5 Sofia  
8  
4 4 Maki Tiqui

12	
6	6

Avi



# A Hearty Harvest



The potatoes we harvested link us to those who planted them last spring. There are entry points to developmentally-appropriate skills in the potatoes, for all ages. The skills build off of what was introduced in math groups.

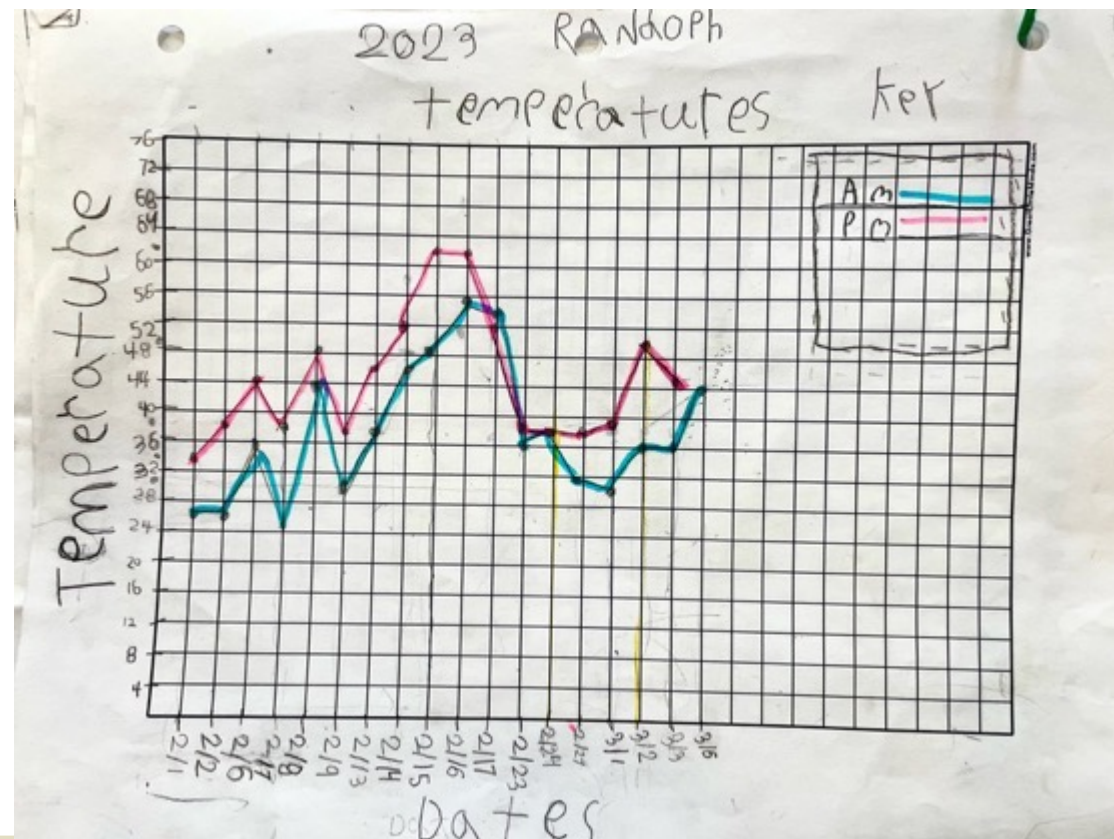
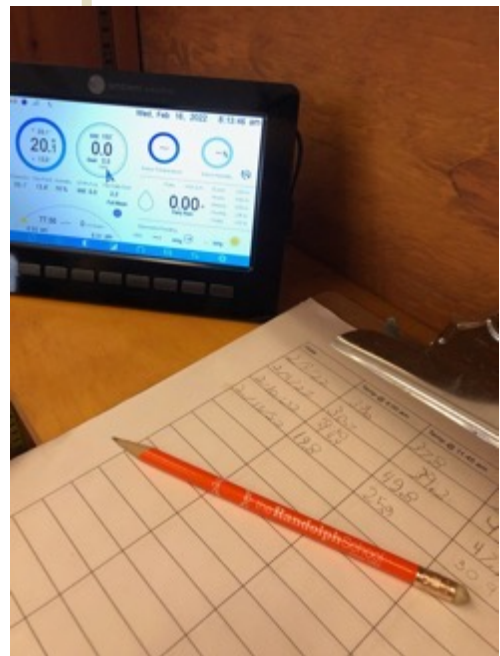


# Maple Magic

Math is real life and maples are magic: the sweetest combination. Teachers are skilled in applying standards in authentic contexts and motivation is built in.

February Weather Data Table I can almost smell the syrup!

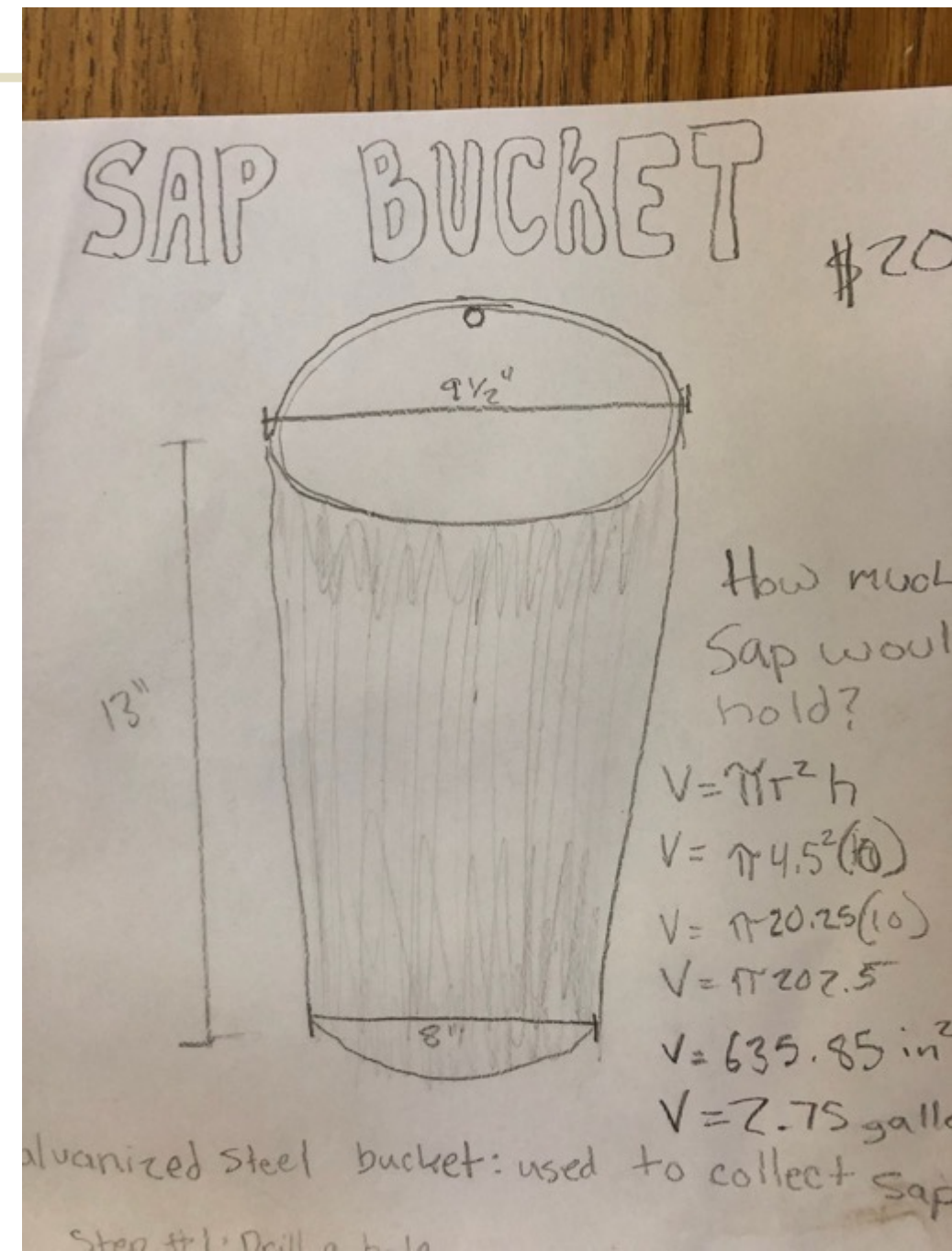
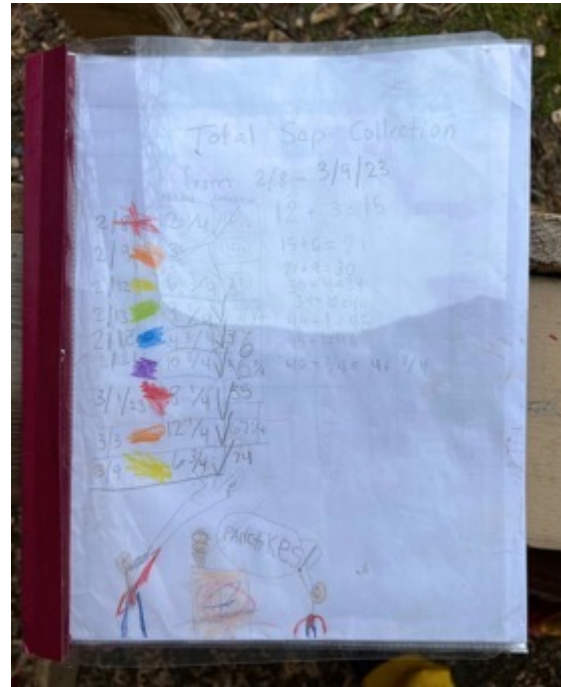
Date	Type of Weather	AM Temperature	PM Temperature
2/1/23	Sunny, cold	26°F	33°F
2/2/23	Cloudy, cold	26°F	38°F
2/6/23	Partially sunny, mild	36°F	44°F
2/7/23	Sunny, cold	25°F	38°F
2/8/23	Sunny, mild, damp	44°F	48°F
2/9/23	Cloudy, damp	30°F	38°F
2/13/23	Sunny, mild	38°F	50°F
2/14/23	Sunny, warm	46°F	52°F
2/15/23	Sunny, hot, windy	51°F	61°F
2/16/23	Partly sunny, mild	56°F	61°F
2/18/23	Cloudy, rainy	55°F	55°F
2/23/23	cloudy, damp, drizzle	44°F	38°F
2/24/23	cloudy, damp, windy	39°F	37°F
2/27/23	glad, frost, sunny	37°F	37°F
3/1/23	Snowy, sunny	30°F	39°F
3/2/23	Cloudy, rainy	36°F	50°F
3/13/23	Sunny, clear	37°F	45°F
3/16/23	Sunny, clear	44°F	





# Maple Magic

Math is real life.





# Maple Magic

Links to Literacy

**DO Maple Trees Have Feelings?**

**Max** - "Many give Sap to people"

**Xochitl** - "Yes! They feel confused when you do something they don't want to do like pulling on them!"

**Emily** - "Yes, because if you hit them they get made or sad!"  
"If you help the trees, they keep growing!"

**Sophia** - "Yes, because they do have sap. If you take out the sap you take their feelings!"

**Neta** - "Yes! If you take off their bark they don't grow. They feel sad!"

**August** - "When the maples feel <sup>uncomfortable</sup> weird, their sap is flowing from their trunk to their crown!"

**Isa** - "Yes! When you hug them, they feel happy!"  
"You must be gentle."

**Annie** - "Yes! If you cut them down they feel sad!"

**Sula** - "Yes! That's because if you like give them a leaf blanket, they feel happy and they go asleep!"

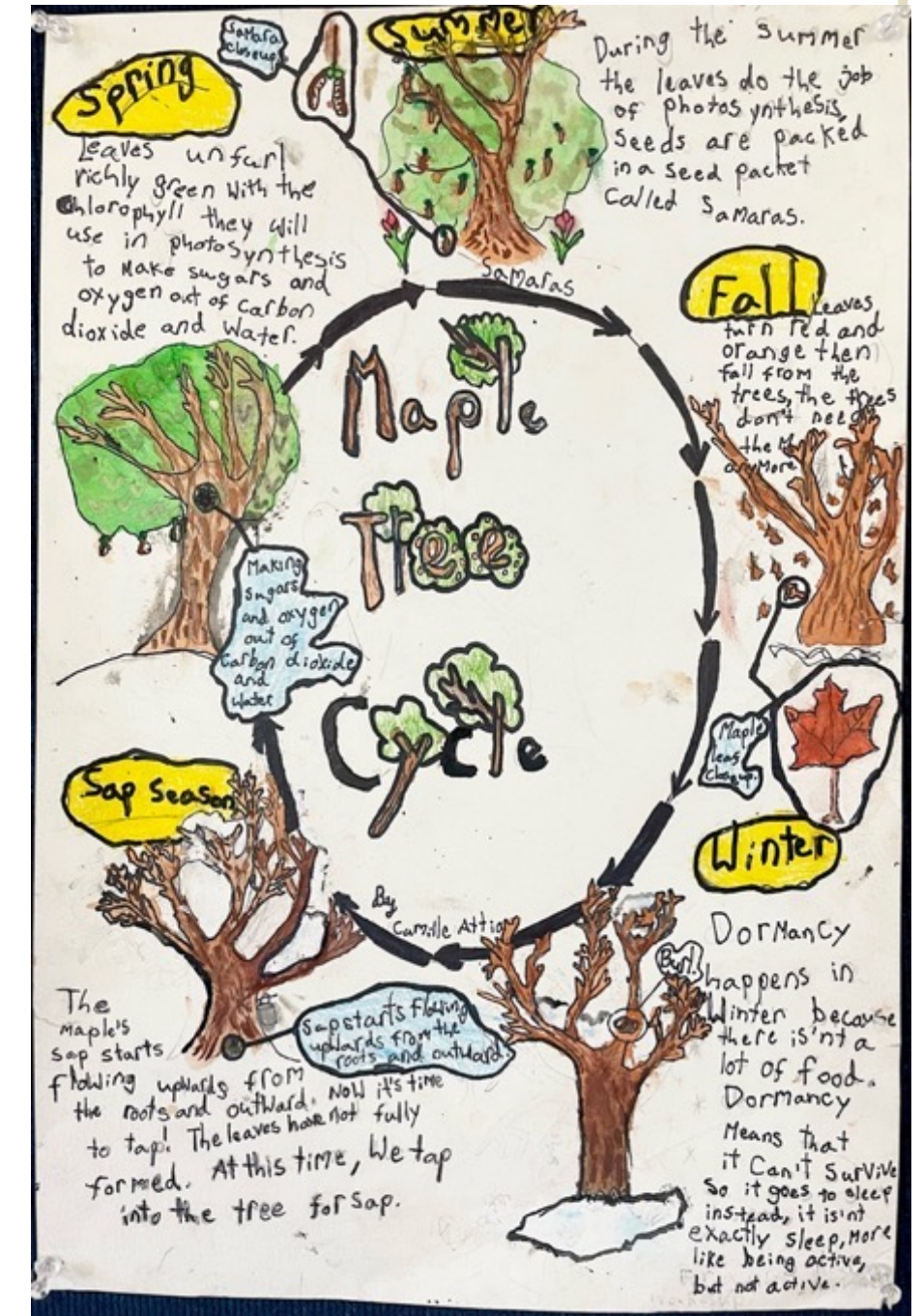
**Hazel** - "No!!"



The beetle dragons love the taste of Chlorophyll in my leaves so that's why they sneak up on me and I don't like it at all!! Don't even think about biting my leaves!



**SPRING**. In the SPRING THE FLAWRS ARE GROWING AND OTHER BIRDS ARE EATING WORMS FROM OUT OF THE GROUND THE SUN IS OUT!





# Food, glorious food!

We work with what's emerging from the environment and what interests children. Cooking and eating together is the driver, and we just take the wheel to steer us there.

Every skill there is to practice academically exists within this context and just needs some harvesting to reap that elusive engagement from children.







Integrated Curriculum

# What teachers say

about collaborating with the Links Team

“Working here, we’re encouraged to live our passions, the things we like to do and then weave it into the different learning activities for the kids. Seeing them get inspired feeds us, and we then feed off other teachers.”

“Sometimes something amazing is the result of years of talking and thinking about how to connect maple sugaring and the blocks. We meet all the time, but being together and having the experience of working with Links teachers helps see where possibilities can emerge.”

“Being with each other, I am enjoying Links this year because I get to experience as the kids are and then I get ideas about what to do. In our Links meetings, we talk about what we’re doing and then the Links teachers get inspired by that and apply it to their work. Then, when we go to the garden, we get inspired by their work. It’s a reciprocal relationship, which is not always how teachers approach their work.”







Integrated Curriculum

# What Links teachers say

about collaborating with the Cohort Teacher Teams

“I like getting to work with all the kids and getting to understand how different ages and developmental stages make meaning out of their experiences.”

“I like the challenge of finding entry points that are accessible to everyone in the community, and to connect it with what each class is doing. I do this by checking in with the teachers; we talk about what we’re doing. This is important, but also is the fun part.”

“I feel like my work has purpose and is valued. The things I am passionate about connect with the things everyone is passionate about. If I don’t see the link, I make it.”

“I feel connected to the other teachers here, and I feel seen for what I bring to the table. In other places, me being a specialist means I am a ‘prep teacher’ in isolation, and so the work I do with kids is in isolation too.”





It's all important. It's all linked.

by Amy Miklos, Curricular Steward/Lead Teacher at The Randolph School

Our curriculum is everything. Or more precisely it is the experience of growing and learning as a full and whole child in this place at this time. It sounds kind of simple, which makes us think that simple is not the same as easy.

The subjects we cover include, but certainly are not limited to: reading, mathematics, walnut rolling, geography, getting to the bathroom in a timely manner, advanced fairy house construction, writing, sharing, capture the flag related mediation, phonics, dragon medicine, communicating feelings and processing disappointment, singing, dancing, honest and accurate history, field ecology, and of course pancake eating. We consider it all when we plan our curriculum. These hard working teachers reach for the stars and inevitably miss. Things fall apart, something derails our plans, the rabbits eat all our corn plants, three times. Luckily, the flexible nature of our program allows for infinite possibilities to adapt and change (more on change later). Each person here plays a role in shaping our work together. The teachers with their solid knowledge of child development and academic standards, combined with their own unique personal passions, team-up with your children and their boundless curiosity, prior wisdom and keen observational skills to create our “curriculum” in real time. It is alive! From dramatic adventures on the playground, insect discoveries at the creek, snapping turtle midwifery in the sandbox, to practicing multiplication strategies, phonics instruction and working through the writing process, it is all important. It is all linked.

We like to use that word here at Randolph School. A link is the metaphor we use to describe how we learn. A link is a concrete item whose purpose even our youngest children can understand. The more links we create, the stronger our connections. The more questions we ask, the more opportunities we have to create links. While our Links curriculum doesn't date back to our founding, its principles and values do. It has always been Randolph School's mission to create a space where children are free to explore and wonder, chart their own learning journey and embrace the messy complexity of the world around them.

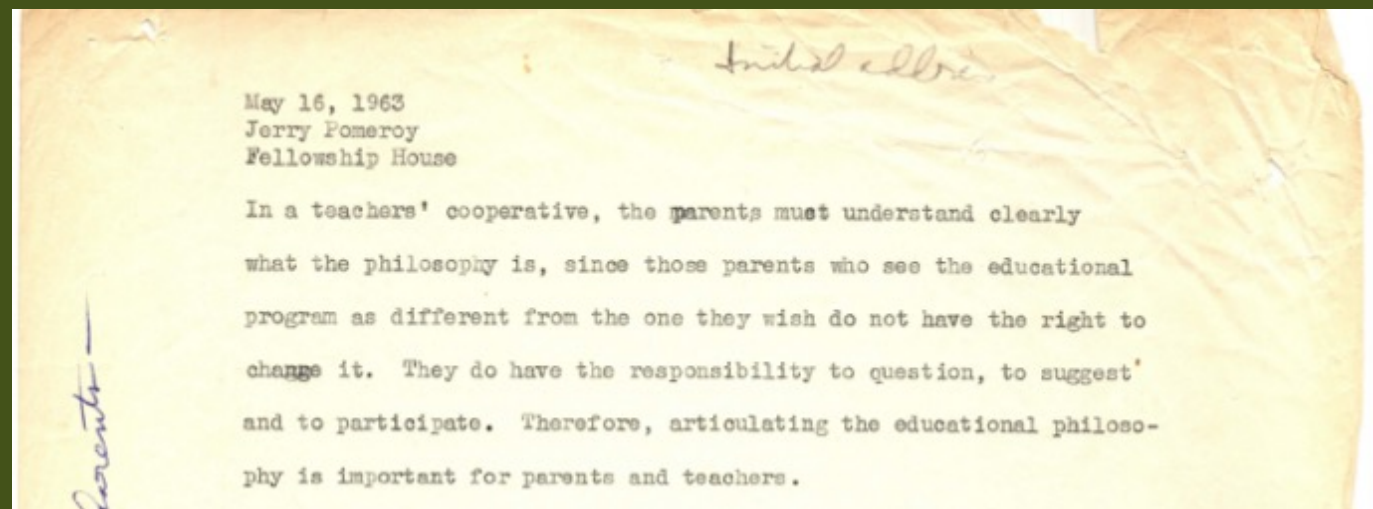
Which brings me to change. Each year our school adopts a unifying theme through which we can all refract our learning experiences. One year, it was Links. This year it is change. Change is constant and not always pleasant. There are many lessons we can all learn from thinking about what has changed, Why? When? What needs to change?

A change we have made as a faculty over the past two years is to adopt two pre-written curriculums from outside sources. One for direct phonics and literacy instruction (Reading, Phonics and Me) and for math (Tang Math). These two programs were chosen because they efficiently teach content specific academic skills in a style that aligns with our values. They are backed by research and designed to meet state standards, which are not bad words here at the Randolph School. Rather, these are welcome tools that the teachers will be using each day to help children (K-5) build skills based on a scope and sequence created by experts in the field. We know that children need time to practice phonics skills and math strategies every day. Our schedule this year incorporates two blocks of instruction time that is common across the Upstairs(5-11) which allows for flexibility, because we also know that age is only one indicator when it comes to placing a child in a group of peers. These changes are meant to bolster one aspect of our curriculum, but not at the expense of the other goals we value: things like choice, free play, art and science. There is time for all of it. It is all important. It is all linked.





# It Happened @ Randolph School



One perpetually-perplexing problem people on the outside had was understanding how things worked from the inside. Randolph teachers were consistently beaten down by misconceptions about how children learn at Randolph and how the integrated curriculum nurtures each child's sense of wonder, which is our central role and key to parents' decisions to remain.

The teachers produce a weekly blog that highlights the links in the learning that are happening at school. Strategically and effectively, they peel back the curtain on how things work and invite parents into our world at school. At the same time, they are reflecting on the depth of their work with children, reviewing photos and inspiring both memories and next steps. Throughout this process of documenting and reflecting, teachers are also finding inspiration for collaborations with colleagues, strengthening staff bonds that lead to teacher retention.



# Randolph is Wild!

September 2023

The return of students and teachers to campus breathes new life into this old place. It is an annual ritual, a perennial process that reminds us that we're part of something larger than ourselves when we arrive back to this place. In reality, Randolph is alive and buzzing, in the absence of humans (sure) but in the presence of them too. You can discover the wonders of nature out in the lean-tos or in the humble sandbox.

At the start of a new year, my mind is drawn towards the function and finances of the school, bogged down by both the minutiae and massiveness of managing many moving parts. And then, there's a call over the radio... "attention teachers, there are baby turtles in the sandbox!"

Nothing could be more important than that, surely, and in abandoning everything else on the planet for a while, I found a lot of company out there on the playground, gathered around a parade of snapping turtle hatchlings. I witnessed the wonder in the eyes and hearts of the children and adults gathered, and I experienced the humility these magnificent creatures and this ancient process inspires. I am reminded that just out of my window here is a wild world, where nature is the classroom and the teacher; where this land's inhabitants are our classmates and our teachers too. And I am grateful that my children get to live and learn here and in this way, with adults who harness this magic; where their sense of wonder is nurtured every day.



This turtle's first glance at the world above ground is of Randolph and some of its people...



This big and old female visits us every spring, as she searches for the perfect spot to lay her eggs. The spot must maintain the 'just right' temperature. Even the subtlest change could impact the sex of the hatchlings, and the species requires balance to sustain itself over many generations. And along those lines, this turtle knows all of this intrinsically, with an ancient wisdom that remains a mystery to us.



...and its people look back with love and awe.



Look familiar? Those of you who were at Camp Out might remember her wandering the parking lot, likely waiting for a quiet moment on the playground to lay the eggs that hatched. Whenever she visits, we make sure to spread the word, a reminder that we can all be more mindful of the space we take up in our shared environment.



Turtles and their symbolism were a big part of life at Randolph last year, even taking the form of a very big, two-person wearable turtle costume at Mask Parade, as well as our annual piñata.



"Let the wild rumpus begin!"

These iconic words from a beloved children's book by Maurice Sendak sum up the sentiments around campus these days. Preparation for our first ever Randolph Rumpus has shaped the focus of our work over these past few weeks. Adults and children have been building an interactive playground/sculpture using natural materials, creating individual pennants to form a community bunting, making informative signs for our visitors, and generating our own Randolph Ring-Toss. This is what Randolph School is all about. Each day this week children were using important skills: measuring, building, self-expression, communication, negotiation, reading, writing and planning in service of a real-world situation that affects their community. We are so excited to open our campus to new friends and share the way that community, collaboration, and hard work can create a magical brand of education.

## A (Very) Wild Playground



We love to play at Randolph School, and not only for the obvious reasons. We also believe that play is an effective way to engage children in deep learning. Play, joy and fun can often be found at the root of our learning experiences. So its not that surprising that we built a new playground structure in our back field! The structure was designed by community members and many parents were on hand at its inception to supply the human power, tools and materials to get this beauty up and running. Over the course of this week, each child has had a chance to help enhance and add to this sculpture. We hope you all have a chance to experience it on Saturday and beyond. Special thanks to even for all of the heavy lifting, physical and otherwise.



Check out It Happened @ Randolph School! Use the Sidebar to access "Older Posts"





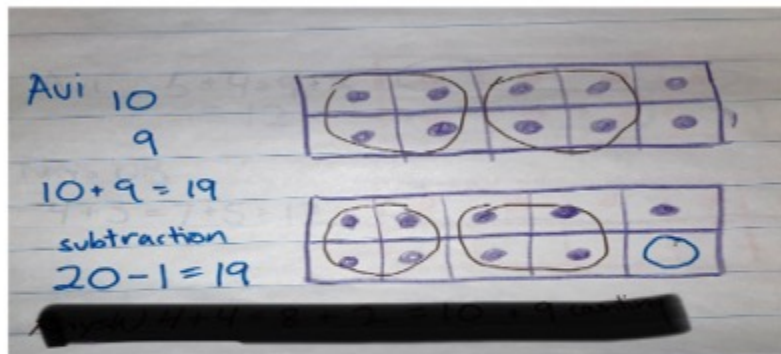


# Narrative Reports

Teachers also felt that the effort and time that went into drafting comprehensive narrative reports were failing to connect with parents. Adapting to the generation of folks in our community, we first added lots of rich images of each child to the narrative, giving visual context to what parents are reading about.

The teachers still felt limited and decided to meet parents where they are: on their devices. As part of the ever-evolving effort to demystify this way of living and learning for tuition-paying parents, each child now has a narrative report website that is constructed collaboratively by all the teachers who intersect with each child. It is permanent and updated as a child grows and moves through the program. As teachers collaborate and reflect, the power of their shared work becomes most evident to parents, and importantly, to them too. Likewise, teachers have increased their work output and its quality, and invested more of their time, enthusiastically.

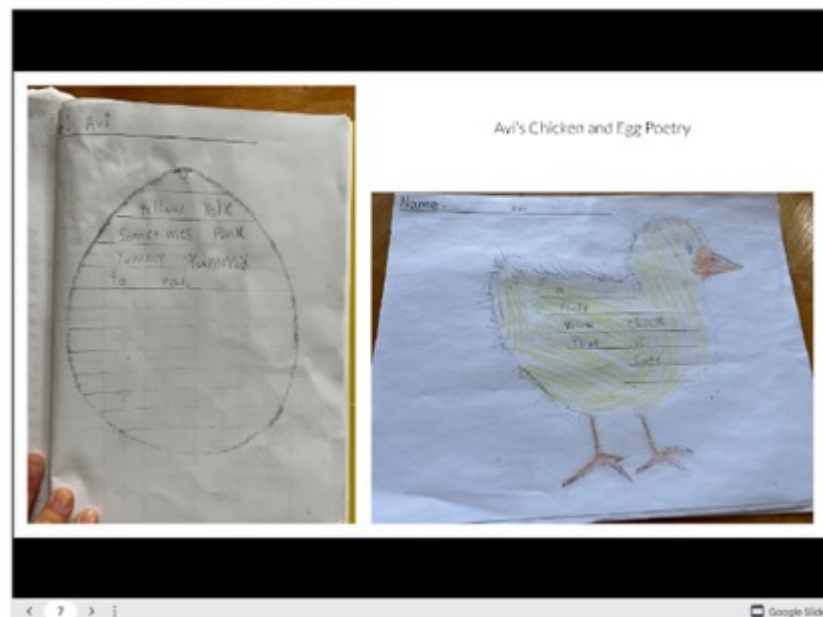
Spring growth, science, creativity, learning and playing go hand in hand here at Randolph School. Click through the slideshow below to see how Aviva learned and grew through our spring curriculum of Space and Rockets; Eggs, Birds and Gardens.



During a Number Talk using two ten frames, Aviva saw the number represented was 19. She subitized the top frame as 10, as all the frames contained a dot. She subitized the bottom frame as 9 because she saw one empty space and knew  $10 - 1 = 9$ . Then she added  $10 + 9 = 19$ . The blue circle in the bottom frame is Aviva's. The teacher miswrote Aviva's words as 20-1, but knew what Aviva meant was that she used subtraction to subitize the bottom frame.

M19-I can show how addition involves putting numbers together.

Spring growth, science, creativity, learning and playing go hand in hand here at Randolph School. Click through the slideshow below to see how Aviva learned and grew through our spring curriculum of Space and Rockets; Eggs, Birds and Gardens.



Student Name: Aviva Kaplan

Teachers: Maria de la Peña, Renée Vitale and Princess Lamb

Age: 7



Left: Avi, the chicken whisperer. Right: Look how much Avi has grown since September 2021!



## Overview:

This was Avi's second year in the Upstairs Neighborhood and the second half of this school year has been a continuation of the incredible first half of the year she had. She continued working hard on her academics, and is now reading for pleasure (voraciously, in fact!) and feeling good about her math skills. She continued to make so much incredible art in a variety of media. In true Avi fashion, she often makes for other people, like the sweet finger knit bunny she made for her cousin. Excitingly, this spring Avi has felt confident enough in her abilities and in using her voice to teach others. She would read morning journal prompts to emergent readers in her class, explain a morning math problem, and, of course, teach people how to finger knit. Avi has also grown physically. She's gotten close to two inches taller since last September and four inches taller since September 2021. We measured!

Scroll through the website to get a glimpse into the Upstairs Neighborhood's winter and spring curriculum. Click through the slideshows at the end of each section to see examples of Aviva's work and how she experienced the second half of the school year.

Our analog community dipped its toes into the digital pool last year, in hopes of bridging the long-lamented gap between home and school. The aim of the staff was to illuminate how living and learning intersect here at Randolph by welcoming you into it. Your child's report is designed to be a window into their world at school and a lens with which to view their growth within the context in which they are living. Your child's report is interactive, with slideshows and buttons to access new elements, as well as historical ones. You are encouraged to look back and look forward as you learn more about who your child is today.





# Phase 4: rinse/repeat; what do build on & what to take down



We're doubling down on nature-driven, progressive education and the infrastructure to build on 60 years of foundation. The Sugar Shack at the Randolph School will offer a new, authentic science lab in nature, as well as additional capacity for our growing enrollment. In efforts to diversify revenue, we are also expanding our program into the broader community and partnering for grants with maple sugar producers, NYS, and community organizations.

We'll continue to hone the documentation practices in place, seeing how it strengthens links between families and the school and between teachers and each other, as well as connecting their passions to their work.

We've decided to move on from the Roadmap and begin to adapt it to be more functional for our purposes. We had three years to see its potential and experience its flaws. A new, cohesive set of developmentally-appropriate standards will strengthen links between the work of teachers and families. We brought on a consultant to lead this overhaul effort.







# Where can you begin?



## **Learn Everything**

Take inventory of the people and the place. Skip what's missing and focus on what's there. Curriculum is a good place to start.



## **Make Decisions**

Choose a problem to target & connect the people who have a stake in it. Let them lead.



## **Focus on Fun; Change Your Mind**

Keep joy at the forefront for teachers. As you discover new information, adapt your thinking. The potato you envisioned may not be the potato you harvest.



# Thank You!

Go home.

Start to notice the mycorrhizal networks that exist already that can be strengthened.

Look for new ones that don't yet exist but totally should.

Pick one to nurture.  
Get out of its way.

Tell me how it's going  
down the road...







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 February 6 & 27



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**MI MEASUREMENT  
 INCORPORATED**

**Integrated  
 Curriculum:  
 Leverage Teacher  
 Collaboration &  
 Solve Common  
 Challenges**



With Mr. Josh Kaplan  
 Principal at the *Randolph School*

**Join us!**

Learn how an integrated curriculum improves teacher collaboration, efficiency, retention, and instructional quality. This series will help you get started within your school's current context, leveraging the people you already have to establish a workable plan toward a more integrated curriculum. Join us to explore practical implementation tips and ways to assess the impact of these changes.

**January 23, 2024**  
 4:00-5:00 pm



**Making Connections:  
 Enhancing Program  
 Function with Integrated  
 Curriculum**

**February 6, 2024**  
 4:00-5:00pm



**Practical  
 Implementation at Work:  
 Nuts and Bolts of  
 Moving to an Integrated  
 Curriculum**

**February 27, 2024**  
 4:00-5:00 pm



**Checking In:  
 Assessing What You  
 Tried and Next Steps**

Questions?  
 Contact Rebecca Shea, Upstate PDRC Director  
 rshea@measinc.com

Scan the QR to learn  
 more & register!

