As December began, we dove into the whimsical world of Winnie the Pooh and friends, embarking on a journey of kindness, friendship, and adventure created by A. A. Milne. Our new unit provided the opportunity to explore the components of a story, beginning with what an “Author” and “Illustrator” are, then digging deeper into the key elements of a story. As we continued to study A. A. Milne, our discussion focused on what each story has in common: a title, characters, setting, beginning, middle and end. Taking inspiration from Milne's stories and his many lovable characters, we embarked on our own journey of becoming authors and illustrators, by creating our very own stories inspired by cherished stuffed animals from home. The friends also enjoyed hands-on exploration of sewing, sorting, mapping and an “outside of the box” experiment, all inspired by the wonderful world of the Hundred Acre Wood.

**Reminders**
- For 2017, school begins Tuesday, January 3rd. Our unit for January is Water.
- The winter season is here; please send hats, gloves, scarves, snow pants and boots.
- Please remember to label all winter items.
SEWING PROJECT

We began our unit by entering into the Hundred Acre Wood, and meeting the many characters in A. A. Milne’s imaginative world. We discovered how Milne took inspiration from his son Christopher Robin’s beloved stuffed animals. He brought those characters to life, giving them personality that was welcoming and relatable. Feeling a connection to the characters, the Kindergartners created a tangible character by taking part in a sewing project that ended with either a Winnie the Pooh, Tigger, Eeyore, Piglet, or Kanga stuffed animal. First, the friends chose a fabric that they then stitched together using the sewing machine to create a body. After stuffing the character with batting, they were able to sew the character closed. The finishing details were added by sewing ears and tails, then finishing with drawing the face of the character.

STORY MAP

As we continued reading A.A. Milne’s many stories, the children learned how the Author is a person who writes a story and the Illustrator is a person who creates the pictures for the story. While listening to a story, the friends would become “Book Detectives” looking for the parts of a story to help complete a story map as a class. First, the children identified the Title of the story and the Characters we met while reading. They then worked together to identify where the story took place, the Setting, as well as the Problems the characters faced. We would finish by discussing how the characters resolved the problem with a Solution. After learning the components that go into a story map, the friends furthered their knowledge of the elements of a story by discussing what is a beginning, middle, and end. They learned that at the Beginning you meet the characters and where the story is set, moving onto the Middle where a problem often occurs and how it is solved in the End.

WINNIE-THE-POOH AND SOME BEES

Inspired by the story “Winnie-The-Pooh and Some Bees”, the friends were challenged to see if they could make a helium filled balloon hover next to the “beehive” by adding or taking away objects (paper clips and cotton balls) from a bag attached to the end of the balloon’s string. In the story, Pooh attempts to use a balloon to lift himself up off the ground, with the hopes of sneaking up on the beehive to obtain honey. In our experiment, the friends had to explore the best way for the balloon to float next to the hallway light, without touching the ceiling or floor. They quickly discovered that adding too much or too little hindered their success, learning that a delicate balance worked best!
Feeling inspired from A.A. Milne's stories and the makings of what goes into a story, the Kindergartners were ready to begin the book writing process. They began by introducing a special stuffed animal from home to the class, sharing what makes it special to them. That stuffed animal then became the main character in the child’s story about. The friends then randomly picked a picture of an item that would be an object in their story and provide inspiration. After dictating a story to a teacher, the friends then drew illustrations using black sharpie and then adding color by using crayons. After the stories were completed and then assembled into books, the kindergartners began to share the stories in front of the class, taking us all on an imaginative journey.
DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE KINDERGARTEN READING

Learning to read is a developmental process; all children do not begin to read at the same age. Literacy milestones appear along the way as children develop a basic oral vocabulary and understanding of the alphabetic principles before beginning to read. Learning how to read is a complex cognitive process that requires enriching and enjoyable experiences with books. As educators, we strive to create a comfortable and stress-free learning environment that promotes an understanding of the function of reading, while developing a positive attitude towards it. In kindergarten, we focus on emergent literacy and gradually progress to what is developmentally appropriate for each child at that time. Research has proven that reading and writing develop at the same time in young children and are interrelated. As students begin to explore “kindergarten spelling” (invented spelling), they reconstruct their knowledge of reading and books as well. Below are just a few milestones experienced within the kindergarten classroom and examples of how they are integrated into our curriculum.

Telling a Story Through Pictures
- Taking a “Picture Walk” through a story, uses the illustrations to anticipate what might happen in the story. Reading books aloud during our daily group times.
- Using pictures to create meaning. “Reading” picture books with friends, Reading with the teacher, Journals, Writing Center.
- Their drawings and artwork tell their story. Journals, Birthday Pages, Writing Center.
- Able to retell a familiar story. Group Time discussions, Story Map, Sharing at Group Time.
- Listening to and comprehending books that are read aloud. Group time discussions, Story map, Sharing at circle.

Letter Recognition and Recall
- Able to recite the alphabet in alphabetical order. Challenges, Daily Work
- Recognize upper and lower case letters. Challenges, Daily work, Identifying name
- Form letters of alphabet. Challenges, Daily work, Writing name, Forming sight words

Relationship between Letter Sounds and Printed Words
- Recognizes known sight words and uses picture clues and print to recognize new words. Reading books with the teacher.
- Understands difference between letters and words. Letter identification, Reading with a teacher, Journals.
- Has control of most consonant sounds. Sounding out words when reading, Journals.
- Uses language, memory, picture and print as major cues to read and understand text. Reading with teacher, Read aloud.

Robin writing in her Photo Journal.

Betsy, Ksenia, Leeza, and Katharina working on a birthday page.

Friends read a book with Ms. Bondi.

Max and Issac read a book.
SORTING

The kindergarten friends focused this month on sorting. This beginning math skill allows the friends to gain practice in understanding and verbalizing which objects are similar or different. We explored organizing items into different groups based on a characteristic (shape, size, or color) as well as characters vs. settings from a story. After physically sorting the objects, the friends were able to describe their rationale.

The friends sort animals by color, diet, location and size.

MAPPING

As we continue to read about the adventures of Winnie the Pooh, the friends expressed their interest in the Hundred Acre Wood, home to all of the characters. We discovered that the forest is actually based on the real life Five Hundred Acre Wood in Ashdown Forest, located in East Sussex, England near where A.A. Milne and his son enjoyed exploring. Inspired by A.A Milne’s map, the kindergarten friends were eager to create their own. First, the class created a town using landmarks, then each friend drew a map using kindergarten spelling. Next, we created a physical representation using a map as a guide. The friends were also challenged to draw a map of the classroom and their bedroom, along with following a map around the school while bouncing on a ball like Tigger. The friends were able to explore, create and follow a map thanks to their spatial thinking skills. Spatial thinking involves visualizing, interpreting and reasoning using location, place, distance, direction, relationships, movement and change in a space. Exploring with maps allows students to compare and analyze the places and spaces around them, as well as enhancing their language skills as they collaborate and communicate.

Benjamin, Betsy and Annika draw a map. Morgan builds a physical representation of a map and Atticus and Javi draw the classroom.
THE ELLIS SCHOOL PLAY
We were invited by The Ellis School to attend their production of “Seussical”. The children excitedly rode on a large, yellow school bus to The Ellis School, where they enjoyed a brown bag lunch together in the cafeteria. They took part in a craft project, turning a paper plate into The Cat in the Hat. The friends were a wonderful audience, engaged in the silly story of kindness and friendship.

Friends eat lunch and enjoy making The Cat in the Hat before watching the play.

A TIME FOR GOODBYES
The month of December brought a time to say goodbye to our student teacher, Ms. Bondi. We have enjoyed our time listening to stories, learning new playground games, and conducting exciting science experiments with Ms. Bondi. We wish her the best of luck at her next student teaching adventure. We also said goodbye to our friend, Raekwon, who has joined his brother at their local elementary school. We hope Raekwon enjoys his new adventures at his new school. We will miss both Ms. Bondi and Raekwon, and we hope to hear from them often.

CONTINUING ADVENTURES IN THE HUNDRED ACRE
With only three weeks in the month of December, the kindergarten class was limited with the number of books we could read. The students truly enjoyed the works of A.A. Milne and are eager to continue their adventures with Winnie the Pooh, Piglet, Eeyore, Christopher Robin, and many more of his lovable characters at home.