



Acorn hunt encourages look-move-sketch experiences

text Katie Logan

(With Ms. Murdoch's morning group)

Look:

We looked at an acorn I had found under an oak tree near our parking lot. We talked about what we knew about acorns, and passed the acorn around.

Liem's acorn



We looked at two books, *The Secrets of Trees* and *The Secret Life of Trees*.

Move:

We pretended to be acorns by rolling our arms and legs into our bodies like little balls.

Sketch:

We left the classroom to go on our "acorn hunt" with a little chant ("Going on an acorn hunt!") In keeping with "the secret of trees"

theme the place we were going to was a special, secret place that squirrels knew well. We looked for clues on the way. When we arrived much excitement followed each child's discovery of acorns in various stages: whole, eaten or empty.

We sketched our discoveries.

Look:

Later I read parts of *A Seed is a Promise* to extend their learning about seeds.

Move:

We then balled up like a seed, then an acorn and finally we grew into a tree.

The next day I told the children, "We are going on an acorn hunt! What do



Lucy's acorn

you know about acorns?"

Liem said, "They're scratchy." Ivy added, "They're smooth." Levi announced, "It's a seed!"

I asked the children to look for acorns with a little hat and showed them what I meant. I said, "This is our clue!"

We took the sketch bag with some magnifying glasses and walked to a different type of oak tree that had smaller acorns.

There was a lot of excitement during the search for the smallest acorns. Lucy and Lazlo were inspired to create and perform an acorn dance.

Lazlo's acorn: "It's a big acorn and I danced."



Summer is over and there is a chill in the air...

...be aware of the weather when dressing our child for the day. We spend as much time outside as we can and want everyone to be comfortable.

Halloween is coming up... wear your costume October 27th (Tuesday) and/or October 28th (Wednesday)!

Jar of beans all that's needed for family fun!

introduction by Kathy Tichota, photo courtesy of Burcher family

Tara Burcher, Aaron's mom, writes about the many creative play experiences her children have with beans. Unlike battery-operated toys that walk, talk, sing and dance with the push of a button, a simple open-ended material such as beans provides her children with opportunities to use their imagination, creativity, initiative and resourcefulness. Young children discover and refine skills (language/literacy, math/science) through play as they manipulate and explore concrete materials such as beans. This is how they learn!



By Tara Burcher, mom to Aaron

In my kitchen on a slender shelf, sits a non-imposing clear cylinder-shaped container filled with all kinds

and colors of beans. The words "PLAY BEANS" are written on the front of the container.

Many a guest in our home has asked, "What are play beans?" Play beans are magic to me. They can be anything a child's mind has to offer up.

Some days our beans fill an 8"x16" pan and many a jewel or treasure can be hidden, buried beneath. Oh, I wonder, what could it be, and the guessing game begins. Is it round? How big, how small? On and on we go.

This game never gets old. A few outer space landscapes have been created in a tray of beans. Sometimes the cylindrical jar will become sinking sand. Can you see inside? What is in it this time? Look at how different it is to find a toy now hidden in the jar of beans, than covered in a tray. Can you see the toy better if you look at the bottom of the jar?

We also have fun with toy backhoes, bulldozers, and trucks. These toys are great to move play beans all about. And last of all, many fantastic kitchen tools can be found to scoop, spread, measure, and stir the beans. We talk about size. We look and see that a cup is much bigger than a spoonful.

It is truly amazing and so wonderful to see a child explore and grow. And so we say, "hooray for beans."

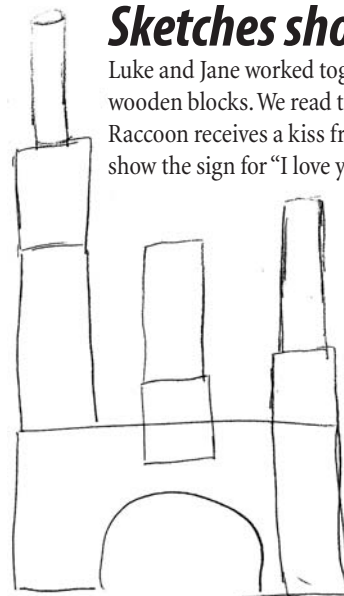
Sketches show comprehension

Luke and Jane worked together during Small Group with small wooden blocks. We read the story *The Kissing Hand* in which Chester Raccoon receives a kiss from his mom. At the end of the story they show the sign for "I love you."

After Luke and Jane built their structure Luke said, "Look, Mrs. Guess, it's the sign for 'I love you'. Up, down, up." They were able to show with blocks the way you hold your fingers in sign language.

Luke was in the Toy Area using magna tiles. After building his tower he said, "Look, Mrs. Guess, my tower is leaning so it is the Leaning Tower of Pisa."

text & sketches by Heather Guess



Help Wanted

Make a difference in the life of a child

Are you a retired teacher or do you have an education background? Are you someone who could make a difference in the life of a young child? Maybe you're a student completing your studies in the education field and would like to gain some valuable classroom experience. Or perhaps you are a parent or guardian looking for some extra income. If you have the desire, education, or experience we would love to speak with you regarding employment possibilities. Dimensions offers a competitive rate and flexible scheduling for our substitute teachers. If you are interested, please contact Debbie Wike at debbiew@dimensionsfoundation.org or 476-8304.

Cleaning Volunteers

Join us for a Classroom Clean-up Day, Saturday, November 7th, 8-11AM. If you would like to pitch in, contact Jane Cogan at jcogan@neb.rr.com

Book Fair Volunteers

We will be hosting a Book Fair during Parent/Teacher conferences, December 9th-10th. For volunteer opportunities contact Heidi Thurber at heidithurber@yahoo.com

Preschoolers experience wide-range of nature-related activities, locations

captions & photos by Kris Van Laningham



Ms. Murdoch worked with children to pick green beans on our outdoor classroom. She also brought some beans from her home garden. The children helped cut the ends off the beans and grind garlic with a mortar and pestle. Then the beans were covered with olive oil and cooked in a toaster oven. Children sampled the cooked beans and found they were delicious. Griffin ate at least four beans. He loved them!



Drew held a preying mantis as Bella watched carefully. It crawled quickly and flew away into our Nature Explore Prairie Garden.



We went on an insect hunt around our school. Charlie was so pleased when he found a dried worm in the shape of the first letter in his name!



Liem showed how strong her arms are as she swung from some material draped over a pine tree in the Messy Area.



Henry used his body to make a tunnel in the Messy Area. His hands were on one stump and his feet were on another stump. He encouraged children to go under his tunnel.



We discovered how seeds travel from a burdock plant when Deb, our guide at Spring Creek Prairie, pointed out how the plant's seeds stick to clothes. Henry experimented by seeing how many seeds he could attach to his shirt.



At Hazel Abel Park, Tristan tracked a squirrel and pointed to the path it took up the tree.



Mac was able to balance himself on a fallen tree in the woods at Spring Creek Prairie. He had to straddle the log and then scoot up to the highest point possible on the log.



Griffin used a spray bottle to water lettuce in the raised bed garden on the Nature Explore Classroom.



Mark found milkweed pods on the Prairie and enjoyed letting the winds carry the fluffy seed away after he pried the fluff out of the pod.



Ryder looked closely for roly polys in the worm bin in the Greenhouse. After she found one, she watched it carefully to see how it moved.

Upcoming Events...

Every 1st & 3rd Friday, Coffee & Conversation for anyone caring for small children, 9:15-10:30AM in Courtyard Lounge. Facilitated by Renae Koehler.

Oct. 17 – Nature Explore Families' Club Details upcoming or email Chris Kiewra for more information at chris@dimensionsfoundation.org

Oct. 18 – First-Plymouth Annual Chili Cook-off Call 476-7565 for information.

Oct. 29 & 30 – No School

Nov. 26 & 27 – No School (Thanksgiving Break)

Dec. 9–10 – Parent/Teacher Conferences

Dec. 21 – Jan. 1 – No School (Winter Break)

Toddlers' world full of colorful explorations

text & photos by Kris Sieckmeyer-Hajny

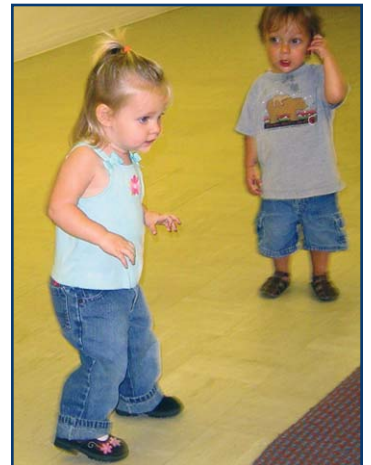
Toddler A began our year with an emphasis on color. We've been reading *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* and making books about color readily available in our Quiet/Story Area. The children are having fun exploring colors in various ways such as by using play-doh, colored blocks, crayons, and finger-paint. When you drop off your child, take a moment to notice their wonderful art work on the wall in our room. We will continue to focus on color.

The toddlers enjoy Music and Movement time, too. Our friend Hicky Ticky Bumble Bee (a hand puppet) helps the children learn the names of their classmates by singing "Hicky Ticky Bumble Bee, will you say your name for me?" while flying from friend to friend, stopping momentarily to hear their name. Some other songs we are using include "There's a little wheel a turning in my heart," and "Head Shoulders, Knees and Toes". We also liven things up by doing a great dance song, "Rock and Roll Freeze" (which, by a pause in the music, instructs us to "stop" and "go") and "Dum Ditty Dum" with shakers to enhance the experience. We finish our music time with our Traditional "Friends" song.

*Friends, friends 1, 2, 3
All my friends are here with me,
You're my friend, you're my friend,
You're my friend, you're my friend.
Friends, friends 1, 2, 3
All my friends are here with me.*



Gavin uses play-doh to explore the color "brown."



Top: Gavin watches Sydney dance to "Rock and Roll Freeze" during Music and Movement time. Below: Kenzie and Lilly show their dance moves during Music and Movement Time.



Butterflies continue to fascinate toddlers

text & photos by Katie Mezger

Even though our butterflies were released several weeks ago, the toddlers are still talking about the life cycle of butterflies! They have been acting out the different stages (egg, caterpillar, chrysalis and butterfly) by using their bodies. The children have also created their own caterpillars with paint and cottonballs.



Toddlers use markers on coffee filters to make beautiful butterflies!



Finn uses his body to become the egg stage of a butterfly.

Resources

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? by Bill Martin Jr. & Eric Carle

Caterpillar to Butterfly by Melvin & Gilda Berger

The Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn

The Secrets of Trees by Ann Reilly

The Secret Life of Trees by Chiara Chevallier

A Seed is A Promise by Claire Merrill