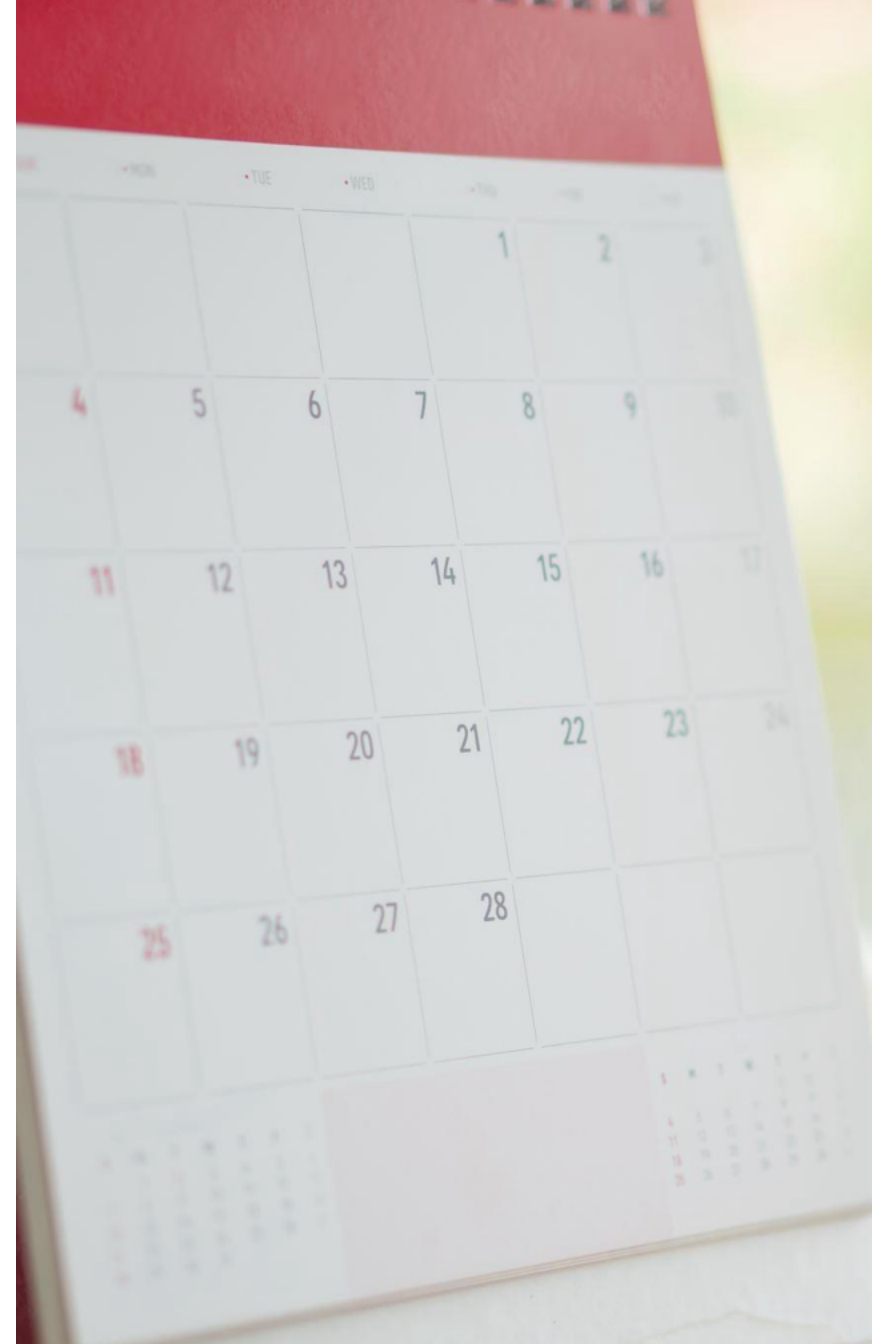


APRIL 25, 2025

PLAYFUL INQUIRY TEACHER COLLABORATION

OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

- In **September**, we met for the first time to explore What is Playful Inquiry Approaches
- In **October**, we held our first collaboration session and distributed the Line kit.
- Also in **October**, we met to explore Habits of Mind.
- In **November**, I visited your environments.
- In **December**, we met for our second collaboration session with a Color kit.
- In **January**, we gathered to examine the observation and assessment of Habits of Mind with Documenting Learning with Habits of Mind.
- In **February**, we met for our third collaboration session with a Loose parts kit
- And here we are in **April/May** with 2nd classroom visits on-going and at our fourth and final collaboration session.



RETURNING TO WIRE

- Wire is flexible, bendable, transformable
- As you have participated in this cohort over the year, how have you bent, and flexed, and transformed?



COLUMBIA CITY - AN INSPIRATION



COLUMBIA CITY - A SURPRISE



MCBRIDE - AN INSPIRATION



LEWIS & CLARK - AN INSPIRATION

- Creating a space for big body movements to support our classroom

LEWIS & CLARK - A SURPRISE



LEWIS & CLARK





**SEASIDE ERIN
- AN
INSPIRATION
I WAS
INSPIRED BY
THE BOOK AND
THE KIT TO
EXPLORE
COLORS.**





**SEASIDE
ERIN - A
SURPRISE
WHAT
SURPRISED
ME WAS HOW
ENGAGED
THEY WERE,
HOW LONG
THEY STAYED
AT THIS
ACTIVITY
AND THE
DIALOGUE!**

**SEASIDE ERIN - A QUESTION OR WONDERING TO
GUIDE FUTURE PLAYFUL EXPLORATION - I AM
EXCITED TO HAVE STARTED HABITS OF MIND AND
EXCITED TO SEE HOW IT WILL INFLUENCE OUR
REFLECTIONS, CONVERSATIONS, AND TEACHING.**



SIMPLY KIDS - AN INSPIRATION



In an effort to stretch as an educator and step outside my comfort zone, we explored clay this week. Inspired by the book 'Mama Built a Little Nest' by Jennifer Ward, we have been experimenting with different art mediums to create bird nests. Every time I entered my storage room to gather supplies for provocations over the last two weeks, the clay exploration box that has been sitting on the shelf neglected for years kept calling to me. To be more precise, it was Christyn's voice I heard, encouraging me to take the leap and just do it. Today was that day.

SIMPLY KIDS - A SURPRISE

The clay was a hit, and of course, the conversations were funny, inspiring, and joyful. Did my skin crawl while working with it? Yes, of course, it did, but I did it, and in the end, my students reassured me that it was the right choice, as they think it is the best medium we have used to build nests so far.

Some standout statements that made me giggle and eased my own sensory aversions included:

While pushing as hard as possible on the clay to start forming its shape, Anthony exclaimed, "This is why I work out!"

At first touch, Elijah remarked, "No way! This is a rock, and we can't turn rocks into bird nests!"



ASTORIA - AN INSPIRATION

To watch the kids excitement and creativity, the way the kids think when they are able to have these hands on activities is inspiring to watch. The creativeness, exploring different ideas, and finding out their individual personalities through their play is a way we can also learn through them.



ASTORIA - A SURPRISE

How long they stayed engaged
with the activities that were
presented to us vs “just playing”



ASTORIA - A QUESTION OR WONDERING TO GUIDE FUTURE PLAYFUL EXPLORATION

I love all the ideas that were presented. Thank you Kim , for helping me come up with more ideas.. like, the use of black & white. When you said to have them look at themselves in mirrors and try to have them draw themselves. I appreciate all the ideas that help me come up with other ideas as well.



SEASIDE JEN - AN INSPIRATION



Everytime I go to "teacher school" I come back and share what I learned with my students. After our exploration of ripped paper and collage, we read Frederick and experimented with ripping and gluing paper and creating stories with it. So many ideas blossomed, and continue to! Our scrap paper bin constantly needs to be refilled, but their ideas and stories are endless!

SEASIDE JEN - A SURPRISE



Sometimes letting them explore new things is the lesson in itself, no pre-teaching required! One day I left out the paint bottles when filling their tins and they were inspired to fill them themselves the next time. Natural focus and determination happened! Same with the hole puncher, I set it out with materials to make lady bugs and they loved figuring it out!



This surprised ME one really hard day when I needed some joy and a reminder that it exists even on the hard days. Sometimes we just have to look a little harder for it to "stick" out.

SEASIDE JEN - A QUESTION OR WONDERING TO GUIDE FUTURE PLAYFUL EXPLORATION

Ideas for creating inspiration with blocks and building, that invites collaboration, sharing of materials and working together for a shared outcome.

NESTUCCA SOUTH - AN INSPIRATION



Bringing out mirrors and templates to encourage my students to create themselves was inspiring for us all.
~Teacher Cindy

NESTUCCA SOUTH - A SURPRISE



Simply bringing magnifying glasses outside with us opened up a whole new world for our students. ~Teacher Cindy

NESTUCCA SOUTH - A QUESTION OR WONDERING TO GUIDE FUTURE PLAYFUL EXPLORATION



How do I incorporate more natural, messy playful exploration into our everyday play without feeling overwhelmed by the mess?
~Teacher Cindy

GARIBALDI - AN INSPIRATION



We bought nature inside and planted sunflower seeds. The kids are invested in their growth and care. They are super impressed with how tall they have gotten and are excited to observe them daily.

GARIBALDI - A SURPRISE

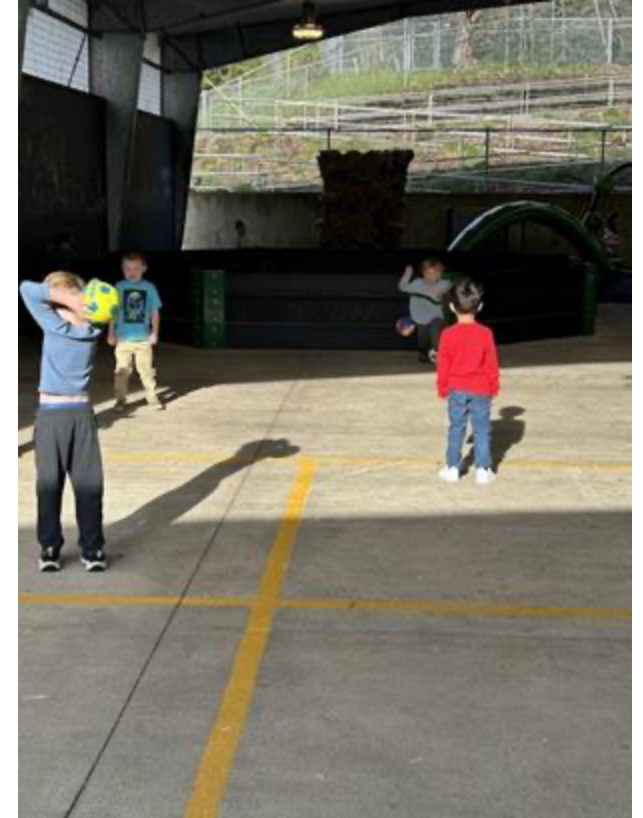
I switched my schedule up so students go straight from morning recess to center time. This has had so many surprising benefits: students have had more time to play and explore, teachers feel less rushed with the transition, and we are able to settle students with a story before heading out to lunch recess, which is necessary for some. I was surprised that such a little and easy change had such great benefits for everyone in the classroom.



GARIBALDI - A QUESTION OR WONDERING TO GUIDE FUTURE EXPLORATION



Our lower (covered) playground has lots of cement and limited storage! We bring out balls and a fairy bucket and there is limited equipment to climb on (due to the size of the preschoolers - they can't reach, they can't climb). Mostly there is just room to run. How can I bring more to the outside play experience - more imagination, more hands on 'stuff', more things for the kids to do?





NEHALEM - AN INSPIRATION



We were really inspired by the play setups. We have noticed how inspired the students are and how they gravitate towards those play areas to build on.

Nehalem - A Surprise



After our site visit, one of the questions was what interactive activities we could set up with our large windows. We had originally had it set up for one kid to do a nature hunt, and it was surprising to watch students naturally work together to check off the nature hunt items. One student would look through the binoculars and the other would check off the list.



Nehalem - A Question or Wondering to guide future playful exploration

■ We have a play structure, basketball, sand/water table, bikes, trikes, cars, but I would love to find more balancing activities, climbing, etc.



FAMILY EXPLORE

A TOOL TO SUPPORT
PLAYFUL INQUIRY
APPROACHES

A BRIEF HISTORY



FAMILY EXPLORE PRINCIPLES

- Focused on big concepts or “Big Ideas” into which multifaceted exploration and learning might occur.
- Easily incorporated into regular family routines.
- Using materials commonly found in a household OR natural elements that might be found on a walk.
- Emphasizes role of adults in noticing and wondering with the child.
- Links between explorations, habits of mind, and school success.



FAMILY EXPLORE SUITES

Collections of resources to engage children and families

FAMILY EXPLORE BIG IDEAS

Line (s)

Color (s)

Texture (s)

Water (s)

Nature (s)

Light and Shadow (s)

Sound (s)

Who Am I? (s)

Emotions

Transformation

Detail (zooming in, zooming out)

Story explore

Math explore

A SIMPLE FAMILY "HANDOUT"

Family Explore!



What do
you SEE?



Exploring
Nature
with children



What do
you
NOTICE?



Teaching Preschool
Partners

Helping Children Notice & Explore NATURE

Nature is waiting just outside your door. Nature and natural materials are full of opportunities for exploration and conversation.

What kinds of living things do you find? Maybe trees, ferns, flowers, leaves. What kinds of creatures do you see? Maybe bugs, or spiders, or birds, or squirrels or even cats and dogs. What do you notice about the weather? How does the sun feel on your face? What does the rain sound like? What is the wind doing to the leaves in the trees? As you talk with your child about nature, you are helping them **Develop and Contribute Ideas** to a conversation. Sharing ideas with others helps children participate in learning discussions in school.

Encourage your child to **notice details** in natural materials. Noticing and exploring details helps children to focus and think. When children can **Focus Attention**, they will be able to learn more from their teachers.

Look at this leaf. Do you see the drops of water on it? I wonder where the water came from?

Support your child to make connections between the details they find and other ideas or objects. You can share your ideas as well. When children have practice **Making Connections**, it will help them connect what they know to the new things they learn in school.

Do you see the white stripes in the purple flowers? Those look like fairies to you? How interesting! I think it looks like the flower is wearing a scarf.



Teaching Preschool
Partners

FAMILY EXPLORE PRACTICE NOTES

Family Explore Extras: Nature



Exploring Nature

Research has shown that spending time with nature reduces stress and increases positive mood. Being with nature does not mean that you have to head out into the woods. It can include spending time a park, going for a walk in the neighborhood, or even looking at a tree out of your window.

Do you hear what I hear? Being with nature can engage many of the senses. What do you and your child **see**? You might observe squirrels chasing each other up and down a tree or notice a robin as it hops across a lawn listening for worms. What do you **hear**? Do you hear birds chirping? Or maybe the pitter pat of rain falling as you listen through an open window. Do all flowers have a **smell**? Do trees have a smell? What about dirt? What does a pine cone **feel** like? How about a rock? Can you find a soft and fuzzy leaf? As you spend time with your child and nature, consider each of the senses and, together, share your experiences and observations.

Look closely. Nature is full of small details. When you look carefully, what details can you and your child find? Zoom in on leaves or flowers or ferns. What designs do you see? Can you find patterns in rocks or in tree bark? Take a picture of a flower or leaf with your phone and enlarge it. What details emerge when you can look closely? Some children (and some adults!) are nervous about touching natural materials. Phone photos can help children observe and get close without touching.

Take pictures of your nature explorations with your phone and, with the photos, talk about your experiences later during a bedtime routine or with family.



When you experience nature with your child, you are helping them **gather information through their senses** and using that information to make sense of the world. When focusing on details in nature, you are supporting your child to **tune out distractions** and focus their attention.



Tinkering in Nature

What can you and your child create with natural materials? Can you make a face with stones or build a tower of rocks? Could you build a house for bugs with sticks? Or, maybe with leaves? You and your child could build a fairy house or a nest and invite the birds to visit.

For nature building inspiration, search for rock balancing on YouTube. You'll find videos of people balancing rocks on top of each other to create delicate columns. What kind of rock column could you build with your child? How many blocks can you balance at one time?



Building with nature can be both rewarding and challenging. When you encourage your child to continue through the challenges, you are helping them develop **persistence** and discover the rewards of accomplishing a personal goal.

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Math Explore: Natural Materials

Nature is full of opportunities for math and exploring math concepts in a meaningful way. Follow your child's lead when exploring math. What are they noticing or interested in?

Opportunities for counting: How many dandelions can you find in the lawn? How many butterflies did you see on your walk? If you were to bring a special rock home for each member of the family how many would you need? Once you have two special rocks, how many more do you need for the whole family?

Opportunities for measuring: If you line up pinecones, how many pinecones long is your foot? How many pinecones tall is your child? Try to give a big tree a hug. Do your arms fit all the way around? How about the arms of your child? How many people do you need to get all the way around the tree?

Opportunities for sorting and categorizing: Create small collections of natural materials - leaves, sticks, stones, flowers. How many different ways can you sort the materials? For instance, are some leaves more round while others are oval? Or, are some leaves a dark green, while others are a lighter green or maybe a red color? How might you sort sticks? Maybe by length, or width, or texture?



Counting, measuring, sorting and categorizing are all math skills that your child will use at school as they explore and learn math concepts.



Story Explore: Sharing Stories with Nature

There are many children's books that tell the story of characters from nature. You can find stories of trees, of animals, diaries of worms, even of tales of bugs. What story can you and your child create with a character from nature? You could tell the story of a bird family and their adventures or the story of what a tree might be thinking. Your goal is to have fun and engage with your child in an experience of imagination and wonder. If your child is interested, they can draw, illustrate or act out their story.

If you and your child do some nature tinkering and building, you could help your child tell a "how to" story of how you built your tower or structure. What did you do first? What happened next? How did you keep going when it didn't work quite according to plan?



As you build a collaborative line story, you are helping your child find the words to **communicate their thoughts and ideas**. Your story conversations with your child will help them feel comfortable communicating their ideas in school. Stories about *how to do something* are a part of writing instruction in school. Your story experiences will help children feel confident during these lessons.



Nature Resources

Why do squirrels bury things? Where do bees go at night? Why do leaves change color? You can learn more about most everything in nature through a quick internet search. If you add the term "for kids" to your search, you will see more child- and family-friendly results.

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EXPLORING

Explore includes opportunities to see, touch, taste, smell, hear.

Exploration prompts include ...

What do you see? What do you notice?
What do you think? Tell me about? What happened? I'm curious...



Exploring Lines

With your child, go on a scavenger hunt for straight lines both inside and outside of your home. We're going on a line hunt, we're going to find a line..."

You may find toothpicks, straws, chopsticks, twist ties, pencils, popsicle sticks, or maybe even items like spaghetti, or yarn, or string. Outside you may find lines such as sticks, blades of grass or stems.

What other lines do you spy in your home and neighborhood - like telephone poles, or shower curtain rods, or street lights?

STORY EXPLORE

Story explore offers opportunities to tell stories, talk about events, imagine worlds and adventures.

Story Explore prompts include ...

What happened next? Why did they ...?
How will they...? What happened the next day? Tell me about ...



Story Explore: Does Your Line Tell A Story?

In the story, "Harold and the Purple Crayon," Harold uses his crayon to draw a moon and then a world in which he goes for a walk, a ride in a boat, and a balloon adventure. He draws a town, an apple tree, a dragon, a picnic, and finally his bed to go to sleep.

What line story can you and your child create? All you need is a piece of paper - it could be notebook paper or the back of an envelope - and a pencil, pen or marker. As you move the pen across the paper, you begin your story.

"Once upon a time there was a ..."

"One day, the dog decided to ..."

TINKERING

Tinkering includes opportunities to build, create, invent, solve a problem with materials, figure out how something works.

Tinkering prompts include...

How might we...? What happened? How did you think of that? What does it do? How does it work? What did you discover?



Tinkering with Lines

With a small collection of line objects (pencils, pens, twist ties, yarn or string), ask, "What can we make with these?"

Your child may have ideas right away. If not, you can make a couple of suggestions both serious and silly - "I can make an airplane." "I can make a mustache." Or, you can provide a challenge, "I wonder how we could make a rocket ship with our lines."

What can be made with bendy lines (string, twist ties)? Can you make the letters of the names of people in your home? Can you make a smily face?

MATH EXPLORE

Math Explore offers opportunities to count, compare, sort, pattern, connect.

Math Explore prompts include...

How many do we need? How many do we have? Are they all the same? Is it as long/short as ...?

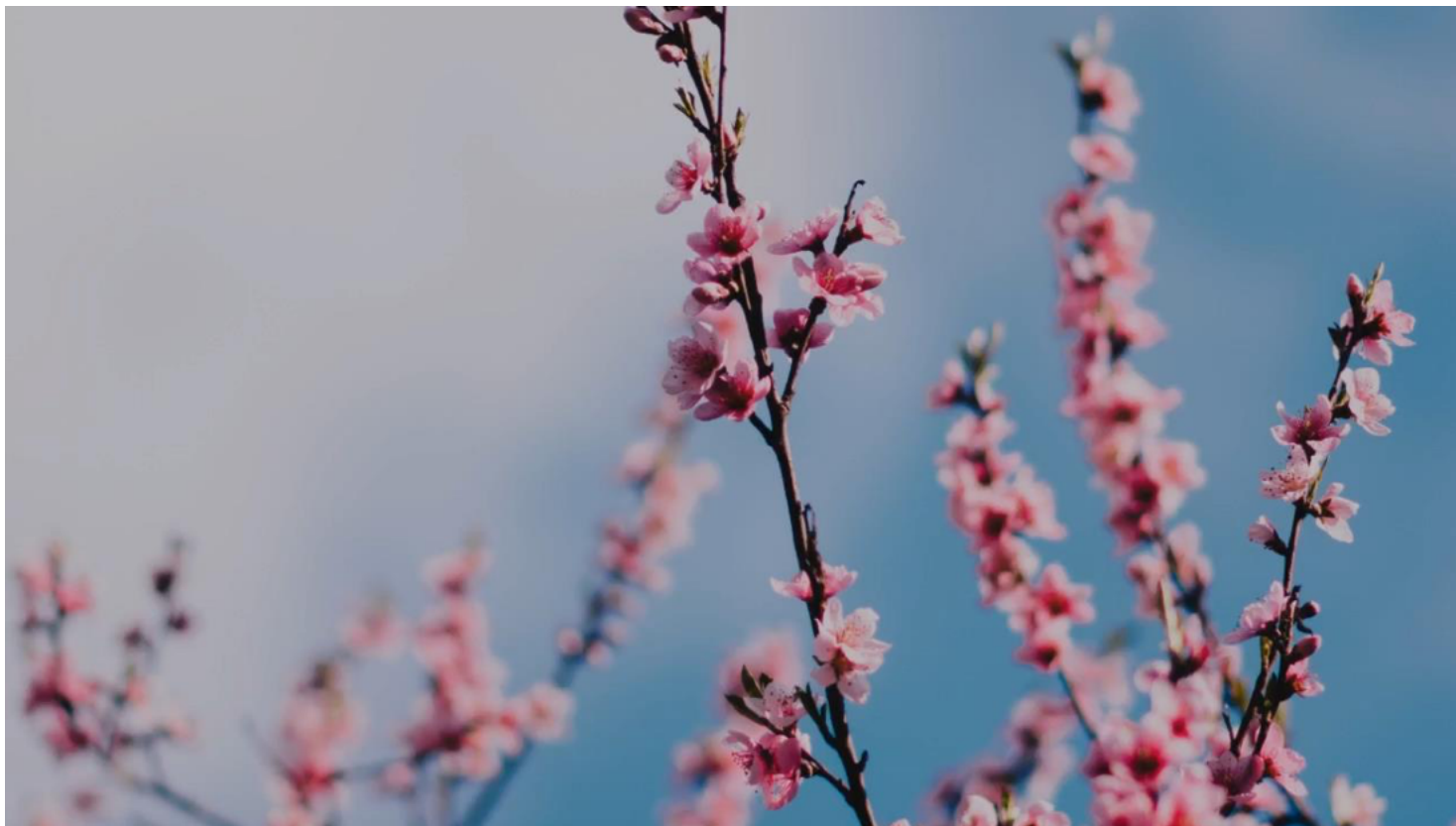


Math Explore: Lines and Length

How many lines did you find in your scavenger hunt? How many lines did you find in your home? How many lines did you find outside? Did you find more lines outside or inside?

With your child, see if you can arrange the line collection from shortest to tallest.

Use one of your lines (for example: a pencil) to be a unit of measurement. How many pencils tall are you? Your child? The cat? The couch?



A SHORT VIDEO



VIDEO 2: RSG PARTNERSHIP

FAMILY EXPLORE MATERIALS ON OUR PROJECT PAGE

[Our Approach](#) ▾

[Our Partners](#) ▾

TeachingPreschool
PARTNERS

[Resource Library](#) ▾

[Support and Connect](#) ▾

Family Explore Suites

Family Explore Water



Water / el Agua

All Resources: Water

Todos los recursos: agua

Family Explore!

Exploring
Light &
Shadow



That shadow is
striped
like a
Zebra!

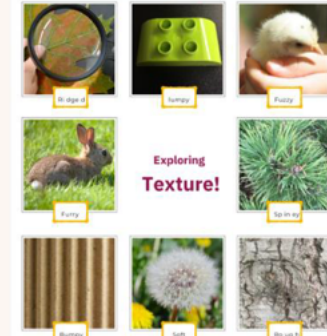
Can you make
your shadow
taller?
What shape does
your shadow
make?

Light and Shadow / luz y sombra

All Resources: Light and Shadow

Todos los recursos: luz y sombra

Family Explore!



Texture / Textura

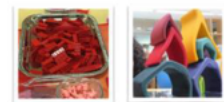
All Resources: Texture

Todos los recursos: Textura

Family Explore!



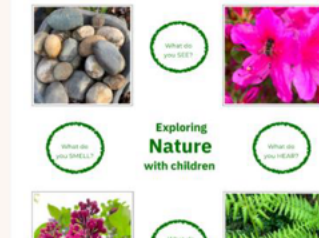
Family Explore!



Exploring
COLOR!

As **RED** as a
brick.
As **BLUE** as a
bead.

Family Explore!



EVALUATIONS

TeachingPreschool
PARTNERS

Playful Inquiry Cohort Evaluation

Please evaluate this session based on the questions listed below. Circle the response that corresponds to your experience. Add additional comments in the space provided as desired.

Evaluation of Session Objectives:

Human Growth and Development

In this cohort, I engaged in an in-depth study of the ways in which early learning environments and experiences are influenced by child development, playful learning, child exploration, and knowledge construction.

<input type="radio"/>	A. No, Not at all	<input type="radio"/>	B. A little bit.	<input type="radio"/>	C. Somewhat	<input type="radio"/>	D. Absolutely
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In this cohort, I constructed strategies to support children's development and learning aligned both to principles of playful inquiry and to my program's current curriculum and operations.

<input type="radio"/>	A. No, <u>Not</u> at all	<input type="radio"/>	B. A little bit.	<input type="radio"/>	C. Somewhat	<input type="radio"/>	D. Absolutely
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Diversity

In this cohort, I examined how culturally and linguistically responsive playful inquiry practices support belonging and connection to preschool children's stories, experiences, families, cultures, and languages.

<input type="radio"/>	A. No, <u>Not</u> at all	<input type="radio"/>	B. A little bit.	<input type="radio"/>	C. Somewhat	<input type="radio"/>	D. Absolutely
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Learning Environments & Curriculum

In this session, I evaluated the elements of an engaging and responsive environment that contribute to the growth of vibrant learning communities.

<input type="radio"/>	A. No, <u>Not</u> at all	<input type="radio"/>	B. A little bit.	<input type="radio"/>	C. Somewhat	<input type="radio"/>	D. Absolutely
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In this cohort, I had an opportunity to evaluate and rearrange my classroom/program environment to align with the characteristics of playful inquiry approaches.

<input type="radio"/>	A. No, <u>Not</u> at all	<input type="radio"/>	B. A little bit.	<input type="radio"/>	C. Somewhat	<input type="radio"/>	D. Absolutely
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CLOSING AND NEXT STEPS