

Santa Fe Baby Fund

SANTA FE
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION





**MAKING
SENSE OF**

play



Play is fun. It is also a critical aspect of a child's development. When children run, jump and climb, they develop strong healthy bodies, acquire coordination and agility and build physical confidence. When they engage in rich imaginary games and storytelling, they learn to negotiate, cooperate and resolve conflict. They discover what joy, persistence, resilience and empathy feel like. They develop independent thinking, research and inquiry skills and build the foundation for literacy. Play is their "work" and their way of **learning about the world.**



Play belongs in the classroom.

When teachers use play as part of a curriculum and allow children to follow their interests, **learning occurs.** When learning is self-directed, it goes deeper and lasts longer. The first years of life are a time of rapid development for young children with neural connections sprouting in the brain more quickly than at any other time of life. Play is the engine of this development. By **tuning into play,** educators and parents are supporting a child's development and helping to build a foundation for lifelong learning.

The Making Sense of Play exhibit explores the many ways that children make sense of the world through their play. The posters were developed by the Collaborative Teachers Institute, a group of early childhood educators in Santa Fe.



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Collaborative Teachers Institute is a group of early childhood teachers in Santa Fe, New Mexico interested in pursuing advanced and collaborative professional development. Participating programs and teachers study children's interests through a reflective practice approach.

CTI helps teachers achieve their potential so that Santa Fe's youngest children can achieve theirs.

MAKING SENSE OF

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Children explore sculpture of molecule.



Children on the sculpture.



In the art studio, children begin to construct a group sculpture.



THE MOLECULE PROJECT: BRINGING SCULPTURE INTO THE CLASSROOM

SCHOOL: La Casita Preschool
TEACHERS: Alison Cullen, Devon Corbet,
and Helen McDonald

AGES: 4-5 year olds

We took a walk to the molecule sculpture on the hill above our school. On our walk, the children recognized familiar landmarks in our neighborhood. We stopped to greet a neighbor and her dog. Some children thought we had traveled far to get there. Others said it was very close.

"That's where I live!" said one child, pointing to buildings across the street. Upon arrival, the children found many ways to interact with the sculpture. They climbed on the structure, made music on it with sticks and rocks, and drew with chalk on the concrete base. They also noticed variations in temperature, shadow and light.

At our morning meeting in the days that followed our trip, we talked about the difference between painting and sculpture discussing two and three dimensional aspects. The children made sculptures with their bodies at meeting time.

The sculpture and field trip inspired painting too.
Auntie, This is sculpture, teacher!

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www.collaborativeteachersinstitute.com

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A RED PLANK

SCHOOL: La Casita Preschool

TEACHERS: Alison Cullen, Devon Corbet,
and Helen McDonald

AGES: 3-5 year olds



A student at La Casita had the idea to place a red plank across the beam that separates the mulch from the turf on the playground. This created a fulcrum over which to navigate. Interest among other students grew quickly. Children experimented with walking from one end to the other, and they made a “see-saw” upon which they compared their size and weight, like a scale. Experimentation with the plank became increasingly risky, consequently students built trust and confidence in their peers.

Students’ dialogue:

Elan: “Look! I am heavier.”

Tristan: “Now I’m heavy.”

Brennan: “I am heavier because I am eating a lot of food.”

Telullah: “I can see the mountains!” when friend, Elan, weights the opposite end of the plank so that Telullah is aloft. She says, “I cannot see the mountains” when Elan gets off of the plank, and she descends.



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Making animal collages



Doing the research



Parking a train



Creating penguin habitats

WINTER HOMES FOR ANIMALS

SCHOOL: First Presbyterian
Child Development Center

TEACHERS: Evelyn Perea & Danielle Rael

AGES: 4-5 year olds

After an extensive research project about pets and their homes, the children became interested in animals whose homes are outside especially in snowy habitats. We decided we needed to learn more.

We learned about different fur types and animals that hibernate. The children were curious about the different places that the animals called home. They collected materials to make their own winter habitats for animals.

"Penguins live in the arctic so we need ice"
-Luke

"Bear caves are dark and bears need to gather a lot of fish before they go in their cave to hibernate."-Nathan

"I believe whole heartedly that children learn the most when they are free to construct, role play, use their imagination, and discuss research projects amongst their peers through unstructured play opportunities. The information sticks because they live it." Teacher Evelyn

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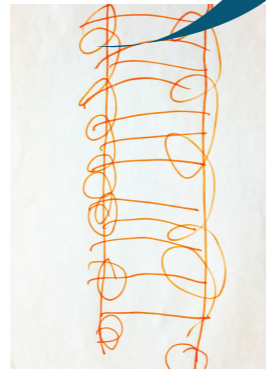


MAKING SENSE OF

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Arjan: "This is the Driver Rock!"



Arjan: "Chu chu train track"



Arjan: "A rock train,
it's the same (as outside)
...we're making it more
longer."



THIS IS THE DRIVER ROCK!

SCHOOL: Atalaya Elementary PreK

TEACHERS: Liz Mueller & Juliet Staveley

AGES: 4-5 year olds

What can we learn from observing children as they play? Children are natural explorers in their world. The world around them offers many experiences from which to make meaning, all they need is time to work together, discover a rhythm and comfort with materials.

In September of 2015, Arjan, a young 4 year old, led a group of children on the playground while collecting and placing rocks on the wood chip barrier. Their work took place over three days and continued indoors using different materials including clay, markers and other natural objects.

Throughout the year, we noticed the children being natural explorers. Their exploratory play often referenced the collaborative rock placing on the playground. There was a natural, open, playful spontaneity in the children's collaboration and construction of meaning and knowledge using the materials.

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*"I would like to order spaghetti."
"I'll have eggs."*



*"This restaurant is the
"Messy Cook". People be
eating our food and messing
up our restaurant!"*



*"I made a candy apple because
I saw them and wanted to see
what they tasted like"*



*"Pizza with white sauce and crust-\$5"
"Pizza with mushrooms and sauce-\$5"*

THIS RESTAURANT IS THE "MESSY COOK"

SCHOOL: Santa Fe School for Arts and Sciences
TEACHERS: Suzanne Maheshi Shakespeare-Jones
and Aurora Hvidsten

AGES: 3-5 year olds

Have you ever walked into a preschool classroom and wondered why the room is divided into different centers? You might see a space for blocks and another for dress-up, a center that's been set up like a doctor's office or another as a grocery store. Why is this? Young children learn about their world by experiencing it through play. Through play, children organize and understand the world around them.

This last school year, a group of students found old file folders in our recycled art area and used them as pretend menus, as if they were in a restaurant. We decided to add pictures of food and paste them to the menus they made to see if it would deepen their play. We used play-dough and various tools and created drawings and sculpture of our favorite foods. This intentional process with the pretend restaurant and food deepened our learning and especially, our joy.

"Pizza! Who wants pizza?"

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LANGUAGE OF A PAINTBRUSH

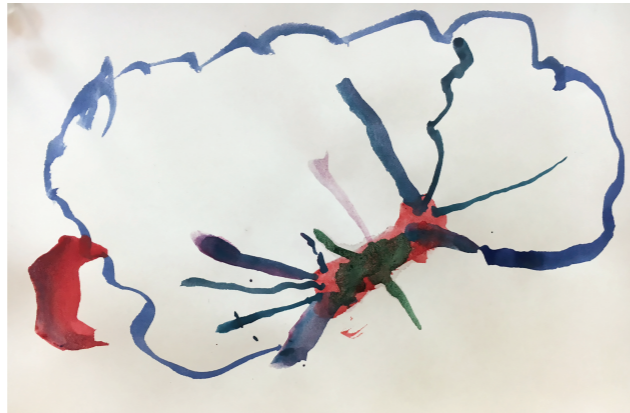


Old brushes



New brushes

SCHOOL: Santa Fe School for Arts and Sciences
TEACHERS: Suzanne Maheshi Shakespeare-Jones
and Aurora Hvidsten
AGES: 3-5 year olds



This school year I bought the classroom real artist brushes. We had been offering students “school supply” paintbrushes, with big wooden handles and thick course or plastic hairs. We had heard for many years about the importance of offering real tools to students, as we started to implement the Reggio Approach.

We wondered if sophisticated materials would allow more opportunity to discover a language of watercolors. We observed the students pick certain brushes to make intentional marks and noticed that their work became more detailed and sophisticated.



Santiago, age 4: “I am using the flattest brush. It make a water line. It make big lines and tiny lines. It speak like ‘blup blup blup’.”



Alex, age 4: “It’s a fan brush. It made a rail line, a train line. It says, ‘smooth, smooth, smooth’.”



Xenia, age 4: “I’m using a thin brush. It makes a fat line and then a thin line and then this little kind of line,” (shows me the medium thin line that is disconnected from the long line she first painted). “It speaks English.”

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Upon investigating the ants in their natural habitat, the children drew their observations and interpretations of ants.

Juniper: "Ants in houses."



Observing insects and their natural habitats



WHAT MAKES A HOUSE A HOME?

SCHOOL: United Way Early Learning Center at Aspen

TEACHERS: Ian Schiefelbein & Sarah Nelson

AGES: 4-5 year olds

It all began as an interest in building homes for our plastic pigs and then developed when we noticed insects on neighborhood walks and wanted to bring them back to the classroom. As the children observed the insects back in the classroom, they wondered what they need to live. At first children thought about insect homes in relationship to their own experiences, drawing and building areas that hold importance to them, such as bedrooms and kitchens. After observing insects in their natural habitats, they wondered about the areas of the homes they couldn't see and came to realize similarities and differences between their homes and the real insect homes.

What makes your house a home?

Iris: "Dos arboles. Mi mamá está viendo las hormigas. Una pelota amarilla, y una piedra."

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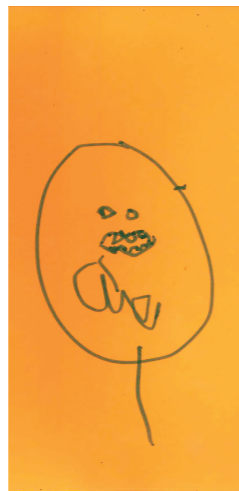
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“My shield is going to look like a lion. The lion has swords. The hair is on fire. The lion got too cold because he forgot to close his window because he didn’t like the fire so much.”

– Annabelle, age 4



“Mine’s not falling because I’m building it with strong textures. We have to build the base so no one can get in.”

– Jaxson, age 5

GOOD GUYS AND BAD GUYS

SCHOOL: United Way Early Learning Center at Aspen

TEACHERS: Jennifer Salinas & Yolanda Jasso

AGES: 4–5 year olds

This year children explored a topic common to the early childhood classroom—good guys and bad guys. Research began with the creation of tools such as masks and shields. Later, as children began forming good guy and bad guy teams, they built bases strong enough to protect the entire team from their opponents. In the spring, after children had spent more than six months exploring this topic together, the idea of protection began to reach out even farther, now extending to include new roles such as fathers protecting their babies from the bad guys or a team tasked with the responsibility of safely delivering a family of fish back to their home.

Children see the roles of bad guys and good guys on a daily basis in movies, books, and the local news. They use play to help them make sense of the complex subject. Each child brings their own curiosities, questions, and perceptions of these roles. Together the children develop new understandings in their play.

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