

Wild Roots

Nature-based Early Childhood Family Collaborative

A Snapshot of Some Program Moments

A Hammock

The children announced that we really need a hammock. The children were encouraged to check out the materials we had on site; they looked in our tool wrap and found a tarp and ropes, which the children thought could be used. Metal rings were added and we were ready to design. The children found trees that would support the hammock and determined how high up it should be suspended. Many alterations and testings were made until a set-up that worked was found. Other children were invited to try it out and directions on how to best get in and balance were offered by the children.



The set-up of the hammock is now a daily routine initiated by the children, one where they explore different ways to set up and play in the hammock.

What did children gain from this experience?

Children learned that their ideas are valued. They were a part of the planning process and their ideas were tested out. Sometimes things didn't work as planned but they kept trying. Learning that failure is not a bad thing is a disposition that helps us move forward – no matter what age we are. There were many examples of creative and critical thinking in the designing and use of the hammock. There were moments of collaboration with each other and adults.

The children also learned that you can create something with materials that are in your environment – you don't always have to buy new things. Thinking about the impact on the trees helps to build an ecological consciousness.

There were many opportunities for gross and fine motor skills to be further developed along with balance and coordination.

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Modelling



Following the example of Andy Goldsworthy's artwork, one of the program facilitators began collecting natural items and arranged them in an open area. The children were intrigued and joined in. The facilitator shared what she was doing and discussed shape, texture, smells, space, arrangement and more. By the end of the morning all the children had participated in some way.

The next day, the children found the creation and continued to work on it. Over time the creation was dispersed.

A week later two children were working with some branches. When asked what they were doing they shared that they were making art.



Zabe MacEachern visited our program and did some lashing with branches she found in our playspace. Children drifted in and out – some spending more time watching and trying some lashing.

A few days later one of the children tried lashing with some string and branches.



What do children gain from this experience?

Adults modelling activities and skills does leave an impression on children, even if they do not immediately imitate what they have seen. This is a way that children learned (and still do) in many cultures. Waldorf programs believe that it is important that the adults in children's lives recognize that children are observing what they do – and that the adults consequently engage in meaningful activities worthy of imitation.

It is also a way that heritage skills can be passed on. Check in with us to discuss why these skills should be fostered.

Both of these activities were also opportunities to discuss respectful collections of materials – to ensure that our impact on the rest of the natural world was minimized.