



INCLUSIVE PRESCHOOL THROUGH THE SEASONS: LESSONS AND STORIES FROM 10 YEARS OF NATURE BASED PRESCHOOL

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Cover Illustration
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SEATTLE CHILDREN'S
PLAYGARDEN
A Garden for Everyone

PlayGarden
Everyone is welcome. We'll let you in.
We'd like to know your name so let's play a game.

We can be pirates in the treehouse
Or pilots on the swing.
We can play on the volcano
And eat lunch with our friends.

PlayGarden
We can pick some flowers
And let's be friends.
Eat berries all day long
And singing songs.

PlayGarden
Everyone is welcome
We'll let you in.
We'd like to know your name
So let's play a game.

music and lyrics by Jacob and Julaine Hall

For all PlayGardeners past, present and future who have taught us how to Play, Grow
and Learn together.

Visit our youtube page to see Jake and Julaine perform their song.





ABOUT THIS BOOK

At the Seattle Children's PlayGarden we follow the seasons and celebrate the natural world. This book is divided into monthly lesson plans with songs, books, art explorations, special topics, and monthly newsletters that make up our curriculum. You will learn from real students, real parents and teachers in a nature based setting.

The first section begins in August as parents, teachers and administrators prepare for the school year. September is filled with ideas on how to build an inclusive preschool. In this section you will meet our roster of children. In October we delve into risky play and conquering fears. November arrives and we turn our hearts and minds to practicing gratitude. In December, we write on how to make mealtimes meaningful and how to manage mealtimes for children with a diversity of eating and dietary needs.

We begin the new year in January by sharing how we practice art every day! February includes a discussion of just the right amount of structure, how daily routines can enable easier flow and how to handle transitions in the day. March is all about muddy, messy play and how parents, teachers and child care providers can see all behavior as a form of communication. In April we share the many benefits of having animals as a part of a preschool program. In May, we begin to help both parents and children plan for transition to a new school. Finally, in June we offer lessons on how to practice inclusion beyond school.

Our goal in presenting this book is to change people's hearts, minds and practices. Each reader will enter this book at a different starting place. We welcome you. We are here to support your efforts. We believe the time has come to create community-wide change, starting with a child's first school experience. Thank you for coming on this journey through a year in a fully inclusive, nature based preschool.





INTRO- DUCTION

WHY THIS BOOK?

We are thrilled that you are ready to learn more about how to develop a strong strengths based curriculum that includes all children!

This book has been created from ten years of providing nature based preschool programming to children with disabilities and without at the Seattle Children's PlayGarden. The purpose of this book is to support educators in their journey to dismantle the stigma of disability in preschool settings. It is common, even routinely accepted that children with disabilities cannot, and even should not, be included in preschool programs that serve "regular" kids. Nature based preschools, like many private schools, routinely deny access to children with developmental, physical, or medical differences. This practice is discriminatory and needs to stop. A 2017 survey conducted by the Natural Start Alliance, the Eastern Region Association of Forest and Nature Schools, the Northern Illinois Nature Preschools Association, and the Washington Area Nature Preschools Association revealed that, "The majority of schools surveyed reported having less than 5% of students that received special education services or were dual language learners. In the American education system as a whole, 13% of students receive special education services." (NAAEE, 2017)

What is a nature preschool?

The Natural Start Alliance defines nature preschools as schools that use nature as the organizing principle for their programs. Nature preschools require their teaching staff to have skills and experience in both early childhood educa-

tion and environmental education. A nature preschool program uses the natural world to support goals that address both child development (in all domains, including cognitive, physical, social, emotional, aesthetic, and spiritual) and the development of an ecological identity or environmental ethic. Nature preschool often allow the children's interests and curiosity to guide the day's activities and inform the curriculum. A significant portion of the school day in nature preschools is spent outside. Forest kindergartens are a type of nature preschool that takes place entirely outdoors. (NAAEE, 2017)

You may think that fully including children with disabilities is too hard, too expensive, too risky or too much work. You may think you don't have the training, enough staff or the right equipment. You may think that there are "special" programs for "those kids" so you don't need to accept them. You may think that including a child with a disability will slow the "regular" kids down. You may feel unprepared, insecure or scared and perhaps, most commonly, you may not think about kids with disabilities at all.

Thirty years ago, on a sunny summer day in July, 1990, President George H.W. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) into law. In his remarks, President Bush said,

And today, America welcomes into the mainstream of life all of our fellow citizens with disabilities. We embrace you for your abilities and your disabilities, for our similarities and indeed for our differences, for your past courage and your future dreams...And on your behalf, as well as the behalf of this entire country, I now lift my pen to sign this Americans with Disabilities Act and say: Let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down.



The ADA was an extraordinary achievement and a critical milestone in the removal of physical barriers and other impediments for people with disabilities, but gains remain to be made. We've come a long way in improving access, but have we achieved inclusion?

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide describes "inclusion" as "the action or state of including or being included within a group or structure... inclusion involves an authentic and empowered participation and a true sense of belonging (2014).

By this definition, we have not yet achieved inclusion. From the often heartbreaking stories that PlayGarden families share with us about their experiences with exclusion, to hard data about health and education outcomes for children with disabilities, the hard truth is that people with disabilities continue to be marginalized and segregated.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, children ages three to five with disabilities and or emotional and social challenges, while comprising just twelve percent of early childhood program populations, represent seventy-five percent of suspensions and expul-

sions (Nova & Malik, 2018). Children with disabilities are twice as likely to be bullied than their nondisabled peers (National Institute for Intellectual Disability, 2012). Children with disabilities are nearly twice as likely to be obese or overweight and spend much more time in isolated activities, such as watching television or using a computer (Mayo Clinic, 2017). This exclusion persists into adulthood and can be seen in the stunning unemployment rates for people with disabilities. In Washington state, less than 37 percent of disabled people are employed (Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, 2017).

Yet, thirty years later, people with disabilities are still looking for opportunities to prove themselves. We've made great strides in increasing access, but we have not achieved inclusion. Disability continues to be wrapped in fear and stigma. The shameful wall of exclusion has not yet come tumbling down. We need a change in attitude to pave the way for true inclusion and acceptance. We need to teach our community to expect inclusion and help community preschools feel empowered to say, "Yes!" to children with disabilities.



LANGUAGE USE: READING GUIDELINES

There is a lot to absorb in the following pages. The following guidelines break it down so that this book can be used in the way that best fits your personal and professional needs.

Read with Respect & Kindness

Read the highest level of respect and consideration you can. The stories from our teachers, the lessons and content in the special topic essays have come to us from direct experiences with preschoolers and their families. The people who told the stories shared them with the assumption that they would be used to broaden our collective understanding of the lived experiences of people with disabilities and their families and loved ones. Hold their stories with kindness.

Assume Positive Intent

Everything we included in the book was done with the children in mind. Our goal is to do right by them. Our words are here to amplify their voices and their experiences- in all aspects of a preschool program. There are places in the book where the tone shifts from a more positive frame of mind to a pragmatic frame of mind. The shift may feel abrupt, at first. Lean into the discomfort. Consider why you may be feeling uncomfortable. Is it because what is being said is true? Is it because what we are saying is sad? We wouldn't be doing right by the children if we only presented one side. We must accurately represent our current reality, and speak about it honestly, directly, and openly, for change to occur.

Embrace a Reflective Practice

Take time as you read to pause and reflect. Think critically about your day-to-day interactions with children and consider how you might adjust your personal and professional practices to be more open minded, curious, and supportive of all children in our community. This book is meant to actively engage you. Use it like a tool- print pages and bring them to staff meetings, re-read sections as the season approaches and have fun with it. Use it to start conversations, change your organizational culture, and shift attitudes.

Be Willing to Learn

Every single person reading this book is coming at it from a different place. It may be that you are new to the concept of inclusion and curious to learn more (in which case we welcome you here) or you have been advocating for inclusion for your whole life, or your child's life, in which case we hope this book will help those efforts move forward. Regardless of where you are, read with an open mind and try to learn something new.

Intentional Language Use

The words we chose to describe ourselves, others and the things around us influence our attitudes and beliefs about the word. We always have a choice in the language we use and can use that choice to bring about positive change. We recognize that EVERY person is unique and has their own unique way they like to be described. However, for this book, we used the following concepts to guide our writing:

As a guiding principle, we use the exact language that children use to describe themselves or the language their parents and teachers use.

Respectful Language

Most often, when we describe a child or adult with a disability we use what is called, Person-First Language or Identify-First Language:

Person-First Language puts the individual's personhood first and their disability is presented as one element of their identity such as, "a person with a disability" or "a child with Cerebral palsy."

Identity-First Language conversely, puts a person's disability first in the phrase, as it is considered a core element of who the person is. For example, "a disabled person" or "an Autistic person."

Self-Identification

We use both formats, because we recognize that every individual is different and has a different way of describing themselves. Not every person with a disability wants to be identified in one of these ways or even uses the term “disability;” people self-identify in many ways. People often self-identify with the area of their life they feel most connected to at that moment in time, such as their age, gender, race, ethnicity, linguistic background or by their hobbies and interests. For example, “I’m a teen” or “a PlayGarden Camper” or “a second grader.” We honor self identification. When speaking with someone with a disability it is always best to ask them how they self-identify and honor that language.

Intentional Photo Selection

We are learning more and more about the importance of authentic and diverse representation. Diverse representation of people with disabilities – in community spaces, workplaces, and positions of leadership - is critical to making a more inclusive society. We want to accurately represent the breadth and depth of types of disabilities that exist in our community. That is why every photo in this book includes a person with a disability, whether or not their disability is visible.

Who do you picture, when you hear the word ‘disability?’ Disability impacts people of all races, ethnicities, genders, ages, and cultures. Throughout this document, you’ll see that diversity reflected in the photos. Challenge your assumptions and you will begin to broaden your understanding of disability and thus of inclusion.

Understanding Key Terminology

Accessibility, Disability, and Inclusion are all terms that you will hear throughout the book. There are many other terms that are specific to the subject of disability and inclusion and may not be familiar to you. If you come across a term that is new to you or that you’d like to know more about, review the Glossary at the end of this book.

There are a few terms we want to define upfront:

Disability is defined in many ways, means different things in different communities, and varies depending on the circumstance and the person using the term. For the purposes of this book, we are using the definition that is used in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as “a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individuals.” In this book, we use the phrase “a child with a disability” often. This can refer to a child with vision impairment, deaf or hard of hearing, an acquired brain injury, or a physical, mental, intellectual, or developmental disability.

A disability may be present from birth or occur during a person’s lifetime. It may be used to refer to physical or mental attributes that some institutions, particularly medicine, view as needing to be fixed (the Medical Model). It may refer to limitations imposed on people by the constraints of an ableist society (the Social Model). Or the term may serve to refer to the identity of disabled people.

Accessibility is the “ability to access” and benefit from some system or entity. Accessibility relates to physical elements and a person’s ability to get to, through, and around an environment- such as access to classroom activities, learning spaces, bathrooms, reading materials, or communication systems. Accessibility brings benefits to everyone. For example, a curb cut that makes a street more accessible for a person using a wheelchair, also helps a parent pushing a stroller or a child riding a bike.

Inclusion goes beyond accessibility- it is the active and meaningful engagement of people with disabilities in all levels of society. The presence of people with disabilities does not constitute inclusion, unless people with disabilities are valued, seen as contributing members of the group, and feel a sense of belonging.

Intersectionality Though we may describe a child by only one social identifier such as a “child with a disability” or by their age, gender, or diagnosis, please try to remember that every child is made up of many overlapping and intersecting identities. As you read, try to remember how a child’s intersecting identities may influence their experiences out in the community.



THE BENEFITS OF A MULTI-AGE CLASSROOM

At the PlayGarden we have children aged three- to six-years old in the same preschool group. We made the choice of running a multi-age classroom because we know from experience that having a variety of ages provides our children with a rich socio-emotional environment where children learn new things from one another, and younger students receive social scaffolding from older students. Scaffolding allows younger students to try new games, ways of playing, problem solving and experience greater duration of play and greater sophistication in their play. All experiences that they perhaps wouldn't have if they were in a three-year olds only classroom. In a multi-age environment, older students have the experience of sharing new ideas and skills, passing on knowledge and know-how, and developing nurturance and empathy.

We believe, it's healthy and normal for everyone to have friends of all ages, just as it is healthy to have friends of all abilities. In an inclusive environment, this multi-age aspect plays beautifully into developing the philosophy for our students, and in ourselves, that we value everyone for where they are academically, socially, and physically. There is no one standard, only our personal best. We celebrate that best as often as we can!

As a teacher, the multi-age classroom means we have a solid understanding of the development of three, four, five, and even six year olds. It means, like planning for an inclusive curriculum, we are thinking about how children of multiple ages will interact with a project, activity, concept, or experience, and how we can make it interesting for all students.

It also means that we observe the arc of our student's experiences over two or three years. We observe the way they use our space and interact with their peers and us teachers differently. We get to see the shy three year old evolve into the bold five year old, who knows school in and out, and is happy to give any visitor a full tour of the PlayGarden, and can explain everything with confidence and knowledge.

For more information on multi-age classrooms check out this article from the Stanford/Bing Nursery School: [Mixed-Aged Classrooms Provide Optimal Learning Environment](#) by Peckie Peters, 2016.





MONTH 1
AUGUST



Special Topic

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GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL



In mid August, the preschool planning process begins. As a staff we come back together for our first meeting of the new school year, and begin envisioning the year ahead.

The process begins by reviewing our school roster. Each year, months before the school year starts, our Executive Director, Liz, and our Administrative Assistant, Rachel create the roster. Our roster is made up of returning students, new students (some of which are siblings of previous/current families) and both children with and without disabilities. When families apply, we prioritize children with disabilities, and families of color, in an effort to create a diverse class roster. We also strive for a gender balance, and a range of ages between three and six years old.

Additionally, when putting together the roster, we pay special attention to creating a balance between children with high needs and low needs. We define high needs as a child who needs one to one support either physically or socio-emotionally, such as a child with cerebral palsy who uses a wheelchair or a child with severe ADHD. A low needs child is mostly independent but needs support occasionally throughout the day with expressive speech issues or mild gross or fine motor challenges that only impact

only certain activities. After a family secures a spot for the coming school year, they fill out a “getting to know your child” questionnaire. This allows us to get a snapshot of each child’s likes, dislikes, favorite activities, comfort needs, therapies, and diagnoses ahead of time.

Additionally, and perhaps even more importantly to this planning period, we teachers begin to reach out to new incoming families to arrange a teacher/child play date in the garden. This is a 30-minute meet-up where we introduce ourselves to the children and caregivers to explore the space together in an unstructured way. It gives staff a chance to break the ice, laugh a little together and learn more about our students. It’s also a very important time for parents to share any initial excitement or concerns (of which there are many). Parents can ask and answer any questions about care routines, their child’s strengths and needs, their child’s current and past therapies, and/or the child’s previous school or group experiences.

Overall, it’s an important time for us to connect with the children and their story and build the initial relationship that will ease the big transition our families are making to a new preschool.

These questionnaires and play dates also allow teachers to adapt our space and activities for the specific needs of the current roster. Before school starts we will have gathered as much adaptive gear (i.e. a variety of extra supportive seats, special cups or utensils) as possible, as well as all of our standard supplies such as art materials, books, open-ended play materials, and pantry items.

Finally, the PlayGarden holds a preschool orientation for all the families a few days before school starts. Here we have snacks and mingle. Parents and children meet one another and kids get to explore our space. We also use this time to introduce everyone to the entire staff, our Executive Director/Founder shares the story of how the PlayGarden came to be, and then the lead teachers talk briefly about why inclusion is important and how we practice it in our classroom. We also go over our outdoor, seasonal, nature-based curriculum, why we value open-ended projects and art, and share our daily schedule and routines. We also go through our parent handbook and *clothing packing list* (see Appendix pg 176-177) with the parents, and answer any questions they may have (often about pottyng, food, and clothing concerns).

At this gathering, we also take our beginning of the year school portraits of students. These can be used on their journals, school bag tags, art projects, etc. Families choose an art journal together (a spiral bound unlined journal used for collecting the child's art throughout the year) and parents/family write a note inside to their child which we read and revisit throughout the year to remind them of their parent's love and presence.



PLAYGARDEN PRESCHOOL CLASS



Donovon



Jack



Winnie



Salma



Liam



Leo



Jaden



Gwendolyn



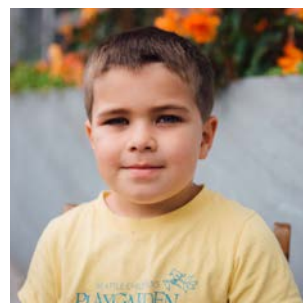
London



Teo



Lydia



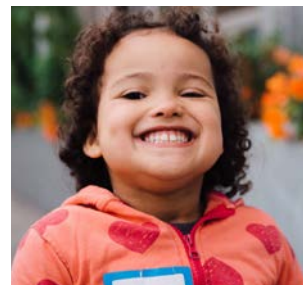
Park



Tristan



Chaya



River

SEATTLE CHILDREN'S
PLAYGARDEN
A Garden for Everyone

2019-2020 Preschool "Getting to Know You" Survey

Child: _____ Age: _____ Date: _____

Parents/Caregivers: _____

1. What are some of the things your child is noticing now with the most interest and enthusiasm?
2. When your child is upset, what is soothing?
3. What kinds of situations does your child find stressful or upsetting?
4. At this time, what could we do to support your child well related to:

- _____ eating and drinking
- _____ toilet use
- _____ managing clothes
- _____ preparing for naps and waking from naps
- _____ getting washed
- _____ playing alone
- _____ playing with others
- _____ switching from one activity to another
- _____ any specific frustrations related to being in groups

5. What have you noticed about your child's sensitivity, if any,

- _____ to touch - any physical sensations that your child wants or wants to avoid?
- _____ to light or brightness - any attractions or avoidance to light?
- _____ to sound - any attractions or avoidance to sound?

6. At this time, how does your child let you know, or how can you tell, if s/he is not feeling well or needs something?
7. Is there any information we should have related to food allergies, environmental health or safety, or any other individual safety needs?

PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE



By Sophie Barnett-Dyer, Lead Preschool Teacher, Seattle Children's Playgarden and Parent

The philosophy of inclusion means why we do it. The practice of inclusion means how we do it.

Philosophy of Inclusion

Inclusion means creating a positive sense of belonging, building friendships, community and empathy for others.

And, it also means the fundamental philosophy that diversity is an asset to all, and that we want Equal Play for Every Body.

And, the educational mandate that all children should be in the least restrictive environment possible. Or, as we like to think of it, it is a child's human right to have educational equity. *Every learner matters equally.*

And, it is the philosophy that all children benefit we we remove barriers in our teaching environment, whether those barriers are physical, social, emotional, or simply our attitudes and assumptions.

Practice of Inclusion

As a teacher in an inclusive program, the practice of inclusion means:

- Having a shared mindset and expectation that children experience and interact with the world in their own unique way
- There is no one standard- we hold each child to their own individual best

- We plan for a diverse group of learners/players, and that we are flexible and creative in that planning.
- We are process based in our planned activities- our focus in on the experience not on the product
- That we think about and welcome the use of adaptations and supports that will assist participation
- That we try new things as a staff and class
- We share information and are collaborative in our approach with fellow teachers, and our students' families
- We practice self-reflection, and ask ourselves questions like what worked today, and what didn't? Why did I say that that way? What were my assumptions? How can I do better? How can I be more inclusive tomorrow?
- We do not necessarily consider ourselves experts, but we are willing to try
- We scaffold social play and interaction
- We encourage children to speak directly to one another and ask permission: May I push your wheelchair, Liam? May I help with your G-tube, Chaya?
- We don't speak about a child who is present in the third person
- We use our voice as a teacher to advocate for children who cannot verbally advocate for themselves
- We use our voice to draw attention to shared interests or to create a meaningful narrative that enhances play and social interaction Wow, I see Leo is enjoying putting his hands in the mud just like you!
- We highlight and celebrate each other's successes, learning, and growth
- We make sure each member of our class has a turn being front and center, whether that means putting a child with a disability right in the middle of a play scenario, or taking time in circle to support a child in speaking up, sharing, or asking for a favorite song
- We draw from a solid foundation in child development, and that we always keep in mind the appropriate developmental stages and needs of our students, despite individual learning differences
- And finally, that we practice teacher supported conversation about disability and differences, using concrete information and language in our conversations, and that we highlight strengths and shared interests within these conversations. Winnie has Down Syndrome, so she sometimes learns things more slowly than another child, but have you noticed how good she is at catching the chickens and holding the bunnies? Wow! The core message in these conversations being We can't all do everything, but we can all do something! (We take our cues from parents as to what specific medical language or diagnoses we will reference in these conversations.)

Reflection Questions:

1. Which of the inclusive teaching practices do you already use in your interactions with kids?
2. What practices can you adopt into your organization right away?
3. What practices can you add with a little bit of intentional planning or restructuring of your organizational practices?



MONTH
SEPTEMBER





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DAILY TASKS

GARDEN

- Harvest basil
- Harvest potatoes
- Make flower bouquets
- Paint with feathers
- Harvest sunflowers and seeds
- Harvest cucumbers, tomatoes, summer squash, carrots and kale
- Push wheelbarrows around the garden



ANIMALS

- Learn about chickens, ducks, and bunnies
- Gather feathers
- Feed the chickens
- Rake chicken yard
- Harvest eggs
- Count eggs
- Feed the chickens, ducks, goose and rabbits



LET'S SING TOGETHER

I'm a Nut

I'm a little acorn round
Lying on the cold cold ground
Everybody steps on me
That is why I'm cracked you see
I'm a nut *click click*
I'm a nut *click click*

Called myself up on the telephone
Just to see if I was home,
Asked myself out on a date,
Picked me up at half past eight!

I'm a nut!
I'm a nut!
I'm a nut!
I'm a nut!
I'm a nut!

The More We Get Together

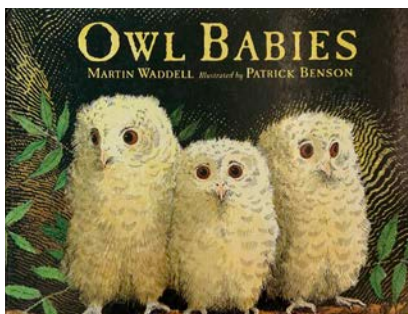
The more we get together, together, together,
The more we get together,
The happier we'll be,
For your friends are my friends and my friends are
your friends!

We have Winnie, and Iza and Park and Evan,
The more we get together the happier we be,
We have (Repeat until done with names)

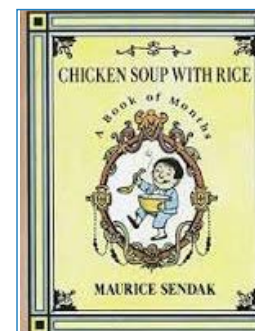
List four names
The more we get together the happier we'll be!



STORYTIME



Owl Babies by Martin Waddell is one of our favorite books to comfort our preschoolers who need a reminder that their caregivers will be back for them after school.



Chicken Soup with Rice by Maurice Sendak is used as an interactive approach to learning our months. We introduce each poem at the beginning of the month as a repeat after me.

Our other favorites:

Two Eyes, a Nose, and a Mouth by Roberta Grobel Intrater

Can I Play Too? by Mo Willems

My Wild Family by Laurent Moreau

Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn

RECIPE OF THE DAY

ROASTED POTATOES

Garlic rosemary roasted potatoes is one of the first garden to table recipes we introduce to the class each year. Harvest, wash, dry, chop, season, cook and enjoy!

Vegan, Gluten Free, Dairy Free, Nut Free, Egg Free

INGREDIENT LIST:

- 3 lbs. potatoes
- ¼ cup olive oil
- Salt
- Pepper
- 2 tablespoons minced garlic
- Rosemary

KITCHEN EQUIPMENT LIST:

- Scissors or clippers
- Cookie sheet
- Knife





COOKING INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 400F
2. Harvest, wash and dry potatoes
3. Cut the potatoes in half or quarters and place in a bowl with the olive oil, salt, pepper, and garlic; toss until the potatoes are well coated.
4. Transfer the potatoes to a sheet pan and spread out into a single layer.
5. Roast in the oven for 45 minutes to 1 hour or until browned and crisp. Flip twice with a spatula during cooking in order to ensure even browning.



CREATION STATION

POTATO PRINTS

This activity is far more than a painting project. At the PlayGarden this is one of our all time favorites and can build on itself for days. The activity begins by harvesting potatoes in the garden, washing and drying them, many of which get turned into Garlic Roasted Potatoes. The next day, the teachers cut out shapes into the potatoes and prep tables for printmaking.

Nature play, high sensory, messy, process and product based, colors, shapes, numbers, patterns.

OBJECTIVES

Students will...

- Explore colors, shapes, and patterns
- Have a sensory experience with the paint
- Create a piece of art to take home

MATERIALS

- Potatoes
- Butcher Paper or smaller paper for each child
- Scissors
- Washable Paint
- Trays for paint
- Large bath towel
- Washcloths
- Marker for names



How to Make a Potato Print

1. To prep a table or surface for printmaking, first put down a towel. This absorbs some of the extra paint. Then add a sheet of butcher paper. Secure the paper down with weights or tape.
2. Prep your paint trays with a small amount of paint per tray. Have your extra paint nearby to refill trays as needed.
3. Let the kids play in the paints and make their prints and hang the art to dry.
4. Use the potato print paper with the kids in the following days to wrap presents, cut out shapes to make collages, or large banner art to decorate your classroom.



Special Considerations:

Keep in mind that this is a high sensory activity. The goal is to allow for sensory play, not to make perfect patterns or prints. Some children love covering their hands (and arms and whole bodies) in paint while others methodically select the cleanest potato to use. Some may just want to watch.

For children that need a strong sense of control or order, doing communal art projects with their peers can be very hard. It is good to challenge children to be flexible and encourage dialogue for how children can work together on a shared project. However, it is equally as important to recognize when kids will be more successful if they have their own piece of paper to work on.

For this activity, plan to provide postural support for children that need it and have teachers available to support children with hand over hand support. To learn more about how to provide physical support to children with disabilities visit our [Online Learning Hub](#).

BUILDING OUR PLAYGARDEN COMMUNITY



The beginning of the school year is all about building our preschool community. Building a supportive preschool community starts from the very first day and continues throughout the year. Teachers are getting to know the students and their families. Parents are getting to know one another at pick up and drop off. The preschoolers are building relationships to their teachers, the other students, the garden, and the animals.

Here are a few things we do at the PlayGarden each September to help the students, teachers and families make this big transition to a new school year:

FOR THE STUDENTS

At the beginning of the year we help the students develop their sense of self, come up with creative strategies for easing transitions, and help them develop a sense of place at the PlayGarden.

Developing a Sense of Self

A sense of self is defined as the way a person thinks about and views his or her traits, beliefs, and purpose within the world. A child's sense of self changes and evolves as they develop more awareness of the world around them. Our job as teachers is to help their sense of self continue to grow and evolve.

To help students develop this strong sense of self we spend a lot of the first month of school sharing personal traits with one another. We start by talking about what we have in common. We do this by reading *Two Eyes, a Nose and A Mouth* by Roberta Grobel Intrater, and *Happy in our Skin* Fran Manushkin.

Next, we help the students to expand their notion of self to include seeing themselves as a part of the preschool class. We sing, "The more we get together the happier we'll be" each morning, and talk about what it means to part of a class.

Having conversations about roles within the preschool class also helps build community.

What is the role of a teacher?

What is the role of the students at the PlayGarden preschool?

How can the teachers and students work together to make a community?

These conversations further develop the idea that each child belongs and has a role to play in making our community.

We have conversations, read books and sing songs about the things that are unique to each child. Starting with their name. Student's names and photos are added to their art journal and their bag they take back and forth from school. They each receive their own chair with their name on it to use over the course of the year.

INCLUSIVE PHILOSOPHY & PRACTICES

At circle time, the teachers use this first month to introduce our inclusive philosophy and practices. ALL students are welcome and ALL students' ways of moving, thinking, communicating are beautiful and right. We talk openly about the ways in which different students in the class talk, move, and even think differently. We celebrate these differences and teach the students how to do the same. Teachers may prompt the students by asking a question like, "How does each child use their body to move around?" The following conversation will highlight that some students walk, while others may run, crawl, or use supportive equipment like a stroller or wheelchair to move around and a special chair to help them sit.

The teachers or a parent of a child may introduce special equipment to the class. For example, a teacher may say at circle time, "This is Wren's talker. She uses it to talk and show you what she wants to do." The teacher may ask the child to demonstrate how they use that equipment for the class. The teacher may ask something like, "Wren, can you pick a song for the class to sing?" This helps show all the other students in the class how the supportive equipment is used.

A child may notice that another child has something on his wrists. The teacher may ask if the child wants to explain his "wristies" or if he would prefer the teacher to do so. The teacher may say, "These are London's wrist braces. They help his hands stay steady when he eats or draws. Isn't that cool? What helps you when you are holding something?"

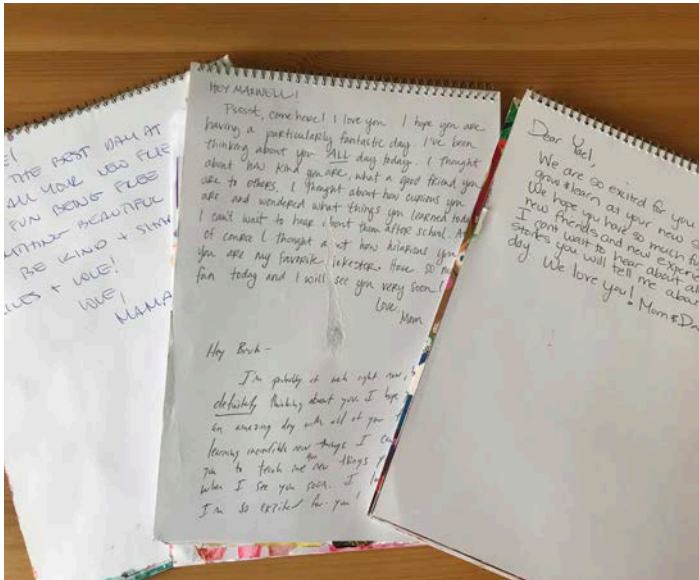
Over the first month of school, each child begins to share more layers of themselves to the rest of the class. Their sense of self grows by knowing what they have in common with their peers, how they fit into the structure of "going to school" and openly acknowledging the traits that make them unique.

Read more on Developing a sense of Self with Preschoolers (Resource: Early Childhood Emotional and Social Development: Identify and Self-Esteem by Angelea Oswalt).



Easing the transition

The start of a new school year is a big transition. For many of our three year olds, it is the first time they have ever been in a new environment, away from parents and caregivers. Many of our students are sad to say bye to their parents at drop-off and it takes time for the students to build new relationships with the teachers. The first thing we invite families to do is to write a letter to their child in their new art journals. The act of writing a letter, acknowledging this big transition, is designed to help not just the students but the parents as well. To further ease the transitions, we work with families to come up with pick-up and drop off routines that help each individual family ease into the day. For example, we may encourage a parent to come in to read their child a book when they first arrive so the child has something special to look forward to. Or we may encourage the parent to stay and do the art project alongside their child and the teachers. This helps the teacher connect with the child while their parent or caregiver is still there and can ease the transition when a parent needs to leave.



Although it is less of a transition to the space for the returning students, it is still a transition. They are now coming back to school as one of the returning PlayGardeners, with a new perspective and a new role in the classroom structure. They know what to expect and how the day goes. The returners show the younger students what they know, they model how to do certain projects and explaining how things work, like how to feed the chickens. This is a great opportunity for them to take on more responsibility. In doing so, their sense of self continues to grow. We talk openly about these new roles and how much students have grown over the summer.

We have learned that the transition from being at home to starting a school day is smoother for families when the students know which teachers will be at school on a given

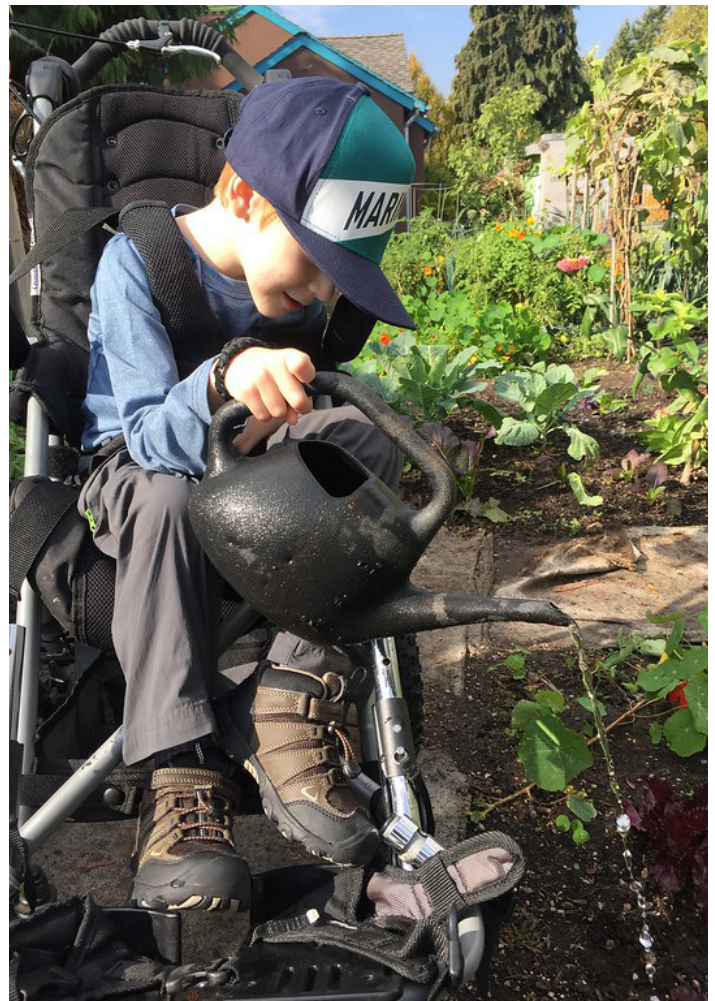
day. Sending home a simple list of the teachers with their photos and the days they teach can help the students know who to expect.

Developing a Sense of Place

A key part of helping students transition is helping them develop a sense of place. We do this by introducing the students to the names of the PlayGarden spaces such as the classroom, breezeway, playground, and wild-zone as well as introducing them to our flock of chickens, ducks, bunnies and resident goose, Hop. Setting up routines they can rely on such as routines for drop off, for circle time, and snack time, even how we wash our hands and sing hello help them understand how the space works for them each day. We also assign daily jobs to each of the students. The jobs help them connect with the space and feel part of the school community.

Examples of Daily Jobs

- Set the table • Pass out cups for snack • Water the plants • Feed the chickens • Feed the bunnies
- Collect eggs • Get the mail • Wipe down tables
- Ring the lunch bell • Beat the circle time drum.



THE PLAYGARDEN PRESCHOOL TEAM



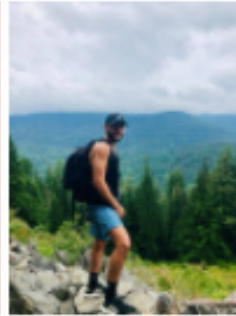
Hannah T/Th



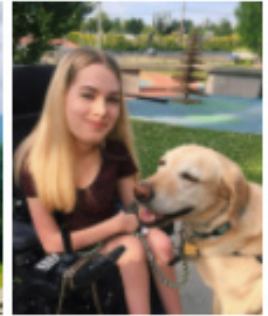
Sophie M/W/F



Mica, M-F



Jean M-F



Annie M-F



Asher M,W, F



Michaela T,Th



Nicole T,Th



Erik, M-F



Liz M-F



Rachel M-Th

THE PLAYGARDEN MANIFESTO

THIS IS YOUR **PLAYGARDEN**. YOU **BELONG** HERE. **BE KIND** TO YOURSELF AND OTHERS. **PLANT** SEEDS AND WATCH THEM GROW. **GROW** BERRIES AND **EAT** THEM.

LEARN WHY THE CLOUDS MOVE, HOW THE SUN WARMS THE EARTH, WHY LEAVES FALL, THE SIGN FOR I LOVE YOU. **PLAY** BY YOURSELF AND WITH OTHERS. FIND **TREASURES** AND THEN HIDE THEM FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO FIND.

INCLUDE EVERYONE.

TAKE TURNS, SHARE SHOVELS, TRUCKS, AND TURNS ON THE SCOOTER. TELL EACH OTHER YOUR IDEAS AND STORIES. WHEN YOU HURT SOMEONE ON THE INSIDE OR ON THE OUTSIDE, **ASK, "WHAT CAN I DO TO MAKE IT BETTER?"** USE TWO HANDS WHEN PICKING KALE: ONE TO STEADY THE STEM SO THE ROOTS STAY IN THE GROUND AND THE OTHER TO PLUCK THE LEAF. **NOT EVERYONE CAN DO EVERYTHING BUT EVERYONE CAN DO SOMETHING.** LEARN ABOUT WHAT THAT SOMETHING IS. CHICKENS AND WORMS CAN'T SWIM. BUT CHICKENS LAY EGGS & WORMS MAKE OUR SOIL. **YOUR HAND IS YOUR HARVEST BASKET.** PICK A HANDFUL OF BERRIES AND LEAVE THE REST FOR OTHERS. DO IT YOURSELF, IF YOU CAN. ASK FOR HELP IF YOU NEED IT. OFFER TO HELP OTHERS.

LISTEN TO THE RAIN, THE BEES AND EACH OTHER. **DRESS FOR THE WEATHER.** ONLY CLIMB THE STRONG TREES, THOSE WITH THICK BRANCHES THAT DO NOT BEND. THE PAPA GOOSE IS NOT MEAN OR BAD, HE IS PROTECTING HIS FLOCK. **WE ALL HAVE A PURPOSE.** YOUR

FRIENDS ARE MY FRIENDS AND MY FRIENDS ARE YOUR FRIENDS. **PLAY** MORE.

Getting To Know and Love the Garden!

September is a rich time in a vegetable garden and is a perfect time to introduce students to gardening. In our first week of school we introduce harvesting projects with the students such as making kale chips, garlic roasted potatoes and pesto. The students start to see the garden as a place for them. They know they are allowed to play, harvest, and taste from the garden and explore it with ALL their senses. We model two garden rule for our students:

1. **Your Hand is your Harvest Basket.** This helps students understand how much they are able to harvest in a sustainable way and in a way that leaves enough for others.
2. **Use a Two Hand Harvest.** One to steady the stem and one to pick the leaves or berries. This helps students learn how to harvest without pulling up the whole plant.



Games like I-Spy and monthly scavenger hunts help the students become more accustomed with the garden. These activities help show the students what is growing, provide opportunities to talk with the students about how we can respectfully harvest from the garden and further encourage the student's independence in exploring the one-acre space.

As the children begin to develop their sense of place at the PlayGarden they also develop their sense of belonging. As we say in our PlayGarden Manifesto, This is your PlayGarden. You belong here.

FOR THE TEACHERS

Just as it is important to help the students build community and a sense of belonging during this time, it is equally important to create that sense of community with our teaching staff.

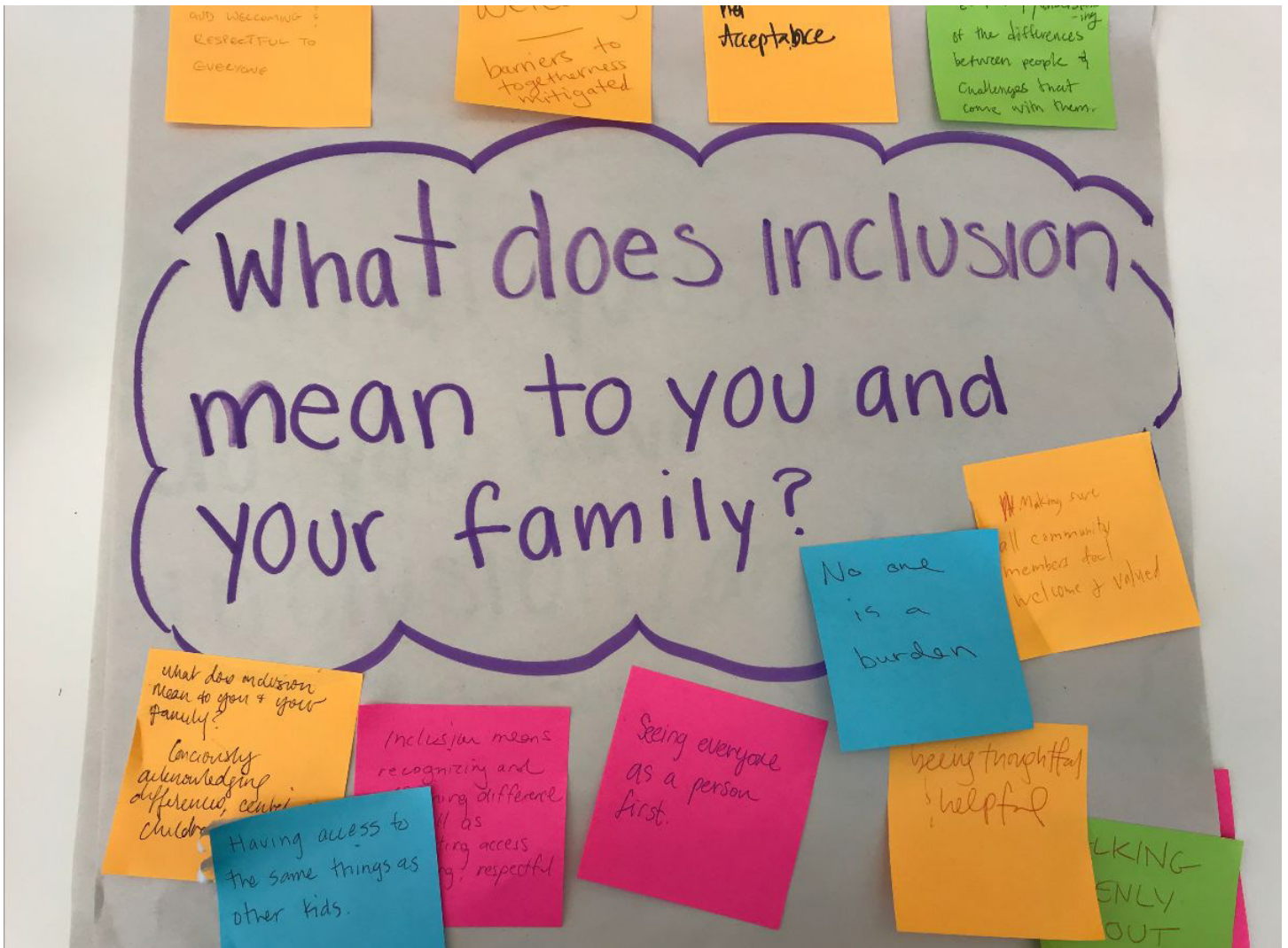
To support the teaching staff we have frequent check in meetings between the two lead teachers to ensure consistency and continuity between teaching days. Lead teachers also check in daily with the teachers assistants.

The teaching staff go over the roster of students weekly or bi-weekly. We talk about what we see going on with each individual child and reflect on emerging group dynamics. We talk about what each child appears to be enjoying, who they are playing with (or not playing with) and why. We also identify what areas they need support in and make a plan for how to provide that support.

The teaching staff frequently review information shared by parents to be sure that all information is communicated to the whole team, not just one teacher. For example, parents may send or share information on a child's current feeding routine, bathroom routine, or something that may be going on at home that may be influencing how they are acting at school. It is key that all teachers know that information.

We work collaboratively with our adult staff with disabilities and their job coaches to come up with meaningful task lists that ensure they are being fully included into the preschool community. For example, we have staff who help greet preschool families, staff that help cook snack and lunch with the preschoolers and staff who help add students' art to their art journals and prep the preschool art projects each week.

The teaching staff hold monthly planning meetings. In these meetings we discuss each child, what themes we want to cover in the coming month, art projects, cooking projects,



songs, books, free play activities, sensory activities, and garden activities we hope to do. We make a list of all the projects that need to be prepped, identify who will help prep what, and identify the materials and groceries we need. *See an example of our monthly planning document in Appendix (pg 180-181).*

FOR THE PARENTS

Families chose to send their children to the PlayGarden for a variety of reasons. Some choose it for our inclusive teaching philosophy and practice, while others may choose it because it is close to their house, or because they love the nature-play based curriculum. Some of our families have a lot of experience with disability while others may have very little or no experience of issues regarding disability and inclusion. For these reasons, it is important to bring together the whole preschool community at the beginning of the year to clarify exactly what it means to be part of an inclusive preschool community.

At the PlayGarden we do this by having a Mandatory Parent Discussion night on the topic of inclusion.

Things to consider as you plan a meeting

- Select the date long in advance and send a save the date so families can plan for it.
- Pick a date and time during a weekday evening when most families would be able to attend given work obligations, needs of their other children and bedtime routines.
- To ensure that you have equitable representation from all of the families you serve, be sure to offer free childcare during the meeting. As families RSVP, ask if they will need childcare so you can anticipate how many students you will have and how much childcare you need to provide. Anticipate that in an inclusive school setting some children may need more one-on-one support. Be sure to have this in place to avoid a rough first event at the school for the family.
- Have a parent or staff member take meeting notes so that anything discussed can be shared back with the parents and anyone who may have missed the meeting.

Where to start a parent discussion night on inclusion?

- Create a sense of belonging by bringing all voices into the room. Use interactive facilitation techniques that encourage parents to share personal stories, concerns, hopes and any unique expertise they may have.
- Write out a prompt on butcher paper and have everyone write answers on post-it notes and add it to the butcher paper. For example you could ask, “What does inclusion mean to you and your family?”
- Set some time aside in the meeting for the parents to hear directly from the teachers and administrators of the organization. This time is valuable for educating the parent community on the schools mission, philosophy, and teaching practice along with key lessons they have learned about inclusion over the years.

It is equally important for the parents to be in discussion with one another, to have time to share about their child and what they are hoping to get out of the preschool school year.

The PlayGarden Discussion Night topics and questions:

- What does the philosophy and practice of inclusion look like at our school?
- How do teachers talk to students about disability and inclusion?
- As parents, how would you like other parents to talk to you about your child?
- How can you help your child understand another child's behavior?
- How can we create a supportive preschool community outside of the classroom?
- What makes for a successful playdate?
- How can parents support each other?
- How do we want to be in touch with one another?

Google Group

To help families build community we set up a Google Group with all of the parents and staff. This is a place where parents can share resources with each other, ask each other questions, set up playdates, and for teachers and our administration to communicate important information to the whole community.

Preschool Yearbook

To help the kids and parents get to know each other we have a parent volunteer put together a preschool family yearbook. In the yearbook families share information about their child, their family, and anything specific about a child's development, behavior or disability they want the community to know about.



SEATTLE CHILDREN'S
PLAYGARDEN
A Garden for Everyone



September Newsletter Check Out What We've Been Up To!

Greeting PlayGarden Families!

What a beautiful and rich first month we have had at preschool. Cool September mornings have turned into sunny and warm September afternoons. We have been fully enjoying these light-filled days and the bounty of the changing seasons. Movement and exploration has been woven into every moment of every day: Running and rolling through the dahlia-lined paths in the garden, digging potatoes, watering our new veggie starts, laying in the sun on our new "forever lawn" on the playground, pulling friends in the wagon, finding a shady spot to cuddle and read books on the quilt, playing hide and seek, What Time is it Mister Fox, Sharks and Minnows, doing yoga on the basketball court, morning stretches in circle, walking hand in hand, learning to hold a chicken, and getting close, but not too close to Hop the goose.

This September has been a time at preschool when we are all getting to know one another, the space, the animals and garden, and ourselves. For children, new friendships are forming and old friendships are rekindled and strengthened. It's a month of the children trying new things, and discovering new parts of themselves; parts that are braver and bigger, and stronger than we ever knew. Everyday we celebrate these new moments of growth. Whether it has been a new word spoken, a new behavior strategy, a new climbing skill, or being able to say goodbye to a parent in the morning without tears, it has all been noticed, and the children themselves have been very excited and observant about seeing this growth and change in themselves and their classmates.



This month we have also harvested zucchini and kale from the garden, and made muffins, fritters, roasted potatoes, kale chips and pesto. We have also used leaves from the grape vine, maple tree, and chard to make leaf rubbings that we hung in our classrooms. We've made leaf crowns in celebration of the Fall equinox, and lavender bouquets to take home. We've experimented with potato stamps, painted in our journals, and mixed food coloring and orange essence into fresh play dough. We have also been learning all about the rabbits, chickens, ducks, and goose - what their names are, how they behave, how to care for them, and how to be respectful.

In October, we will explore pumpkins, spiders, crows, and bats. We will make pine cone spiders, bird art, and paint little pumpkins. We will revisit one of our favorite book *Go Away Big Green Monster* by Ed Emberly, and make watercolor monster paintings. If children want to wear costumes to school they are welcome to.



Important Dates:

Please Join us on Tuesday, October 9th 6:30-8:00pm for our mandatory parent education discussion night about the importance of inclusion to our mission and curriculum.

Also to look at:

Check out our PlayGarden calendar located on our website under the News and Events tab for scheduled Open Play hours and activities. The calendar is updated weekly. You can also see what is happening by following us on Facebook.

Gentle Reminders:

October tuition is due on 10/5 or the first Friday of the month.

Loving all these preschool photos? Check out our SmugMug page for more!

And finally, a big, heart felt THANK YOU to everyone for all you do, and for being a part of our PlayGarden Community.

Peace and Love,
The PlayGarden Teachers!





MONTH
OCTOBER



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Importance of Risky Play

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DAILY TASKS

GARDEN

- Find spider webs
- Build worm bin or adjust contents by adding new worms, shredded paper, food scraps, and compost
- Add food scraps to worm bin including tea bags, coffee grounds, banana peels and egg shells
- Build a harvest table
- Harvest beans, leeks, kale, broccoli
- Carve pumpkins
- Make an Andy Goldsworthy leaf path
- Plant garlic
- Harvest hops and dry
- Harvest lavender for drying to stuff into sock
- Make a different texture/color leaf path on the basketball court



ANIMALS

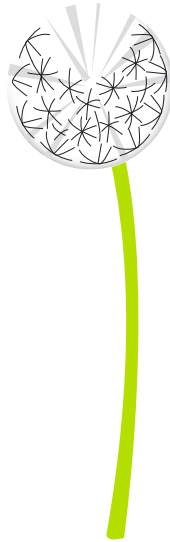
- Feed pumpkins to the chickens
- Fill the duck pond
- Scrub the animal water buckets
- Find shiny objects to keep the crows out of the garden
- Learn about spiders, crows, and bats
- Explore worms and pill bugs



LET'S SING TOGETHER

Five Little Pumpkins

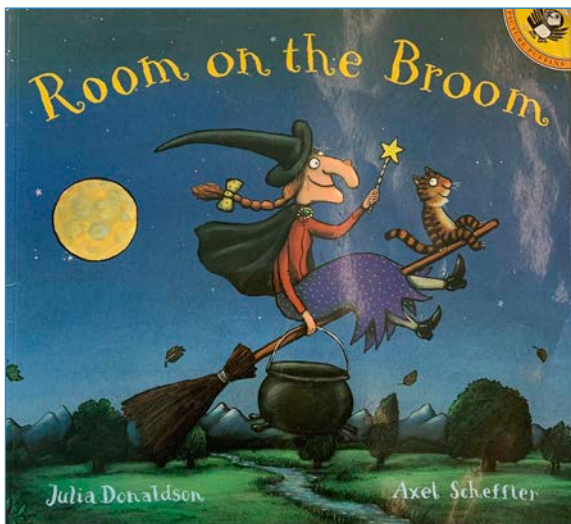
Five little pumpkins sitting on a gate
The first said "Oh my its getting late"
The second one said "There are witches in
the air"
The third one said "But we don't care"
The fourth one said "Let's run and run and run"
The fifth one said "Were ready for some fun!"
Then woosh went the wind
And out went the lights
And the five little pumpkins rolled out of sight



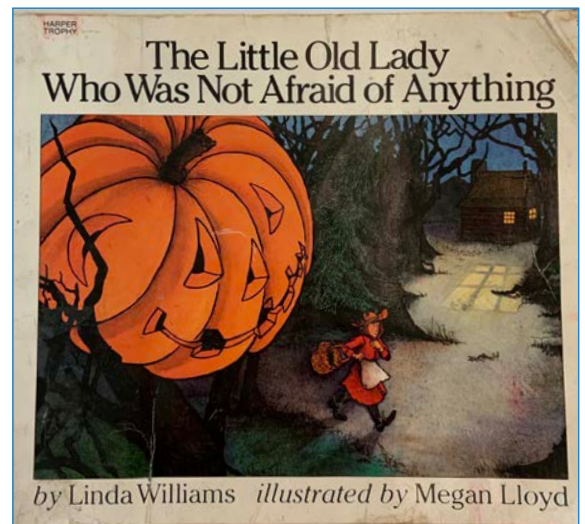
Toe Knee Chest Nut

Toe Knee Chest Nut (head)
Nose I Love You
Toe Knee Chest Nut
Nose I Love You
That's what Toe Knee Nose
(*Touch each body part as you sing*)
Repeat faster and faster

STORYTIME



Room on the Broom by Julia Donaldson is a fun, seasonal story of friendship and inclusion.



The Little Old Lady Who Was Not Afraid of Anything by Linda Williams is a great story about conquering fears.

Our other favorites:

- Stellaluna** by Janell Cannon
- Go Away Big Green Monster** by Ed Emberly
- Mystery Vine** by Cathryn Falwell
- Seed, Sprout, Pumpkin Pie** by Jill Esbaum

RECIPE OF THE DAY

APPLESAUCE

Every Fall we look forward to getting cases of second apples from our local farmers market and making apple and pear sauce with our preschoolers. The kids love to eat it warm or cool and get extra excited if they get to sprinkle the cinnamon on top themselves.

Vegan, Gluten Free, Dairy Free, Nut Free, Egg Free

INGREDIENTS:

- 20 Apples
- 3-4 cups water
- 1 cup sugar (adjusted based on preference)
- 4 tsp cinnamon

SUPPLIES:

- Large saucepan or instapot
- Sharp knives or apples cutters
- Vegetable peelers
- Mason jars to store applesauce

DIRECTIONS:

- In a saucepan, combine apples, water, sugar, and cinnamon. Cover, and cook over medium heat for 15 to 20 minutes, or until apples are soft.
- Allow to cool, then mash with a fork or potato masher or in a blender.





CREATION STATION

PINECONE SPIDERS

One of our favorite October art activities is making pinecone spiders. It is a hands-on activity that helps us explore the animals we love through a 3D art experience. After they are finished the spiders are carried throughout the garden as we continue our exploration of webs, insects and other garden creatures.

Low fine motor, high pay off, expand to dramatic play

OBJECTIVES

Students will ...

- Learn about spider and arachnids and new vocabulary
- Practice counting when adding eyes and legs
- Learn how to assemble something in a multi-step process
- Engage with their imaginations and in dramatic play

MATERIALS

- Pinecones
- Googly eyes
- Glue





How to Make a Pinecone Spider

1. Gather pinecones
2. Gather small dishes of glue, googly eyes, pipe cleaners, string, and tape
3. Write kids name on piece of tape and add to string
4. Assemble spiders

Ways to expand the play

- Allow time for dramatic play with the spiders to unfold
- Sing songs about spiders
- Make spider webs in the garden with balls of yarn
- Make a spider family.



The Importance of Risky Play



The PlayGarden preschool is full of opportunities for risky play. Not dangerous or hazardous, but healthy risks. Preschoolers walk along a seat wall around our basketball court. They place one foot in front of the other in a single file line, careful not to jostle the child ahead of them. Preschoolers climb up and over handrails. They run full speed down the slope in our “Wild Zone”. Some even climb atop and across a tall grape arbor. They feel strong, confident and proud as they navigate these risks.

According to Mariana Brussoni, Department of Pediatrics, at the University of British Columbia, “Risky play in early childhood can help develop a child’s self-confidence, resilience, executive functioning abilities and even risk-management skills. And Brussoni’s work in injury prevention research shows that engaging in risky play can actually reduce the risk of injury, too.” (Brussoni, 2012)

There are many ways we incorporate risky play in our day. We climb ladders to reach the bird feeder, we use hammers and nails to build things, carrot peelers and cheese graters to prepare snacks, and even hot glue guns. All of

these tools can be used safely by preschoolers with supervision at first and then, once skills are perfected, independently. When a child attempts an activity that involves physical, or psychological risk, like entering into a new play situation, they look to their adult for a sense of security. Teachers can help children by offering space and by using encouraging and instructive language.

Here are some things you can say to a child instead of “Be Careful!”

“What’s your next move?”

“Take your time.”

“I’m here if you need me.”

These statements allow a child to feel more in control and encourage children to manage the risk ahead by pausing, looking for a moment, and planning out their next steps instead of feeling nervous or insecure. (Toole, 2021)



Six categories of risky play are listed in the [European Early Childhood Education Research Journal](#)

- Play with heights, such as climbing trees or structures
- Play at high speeds, such as a fast game of tag or riding a bike really fast
- Play with tools, such as building a fort or whittling a stick
- Play near elements, such as playing near fire, water, a cliff or something that a child could fall into
- Play with a chance of getting lost, such as wandering the neighbourhood with friends unsupervised, or simply hiding in the bushes for younger kids
- Rough-and-tumble play, such as play fighting

It is important to know your students abilities and to provide the appropriate amount and type of support. Keep in mind that all children benefit when they engage in risky play including children with disabilities. They may need closer supervision, physical support or encouraging words but they do not benefit from over protection and should not miss out on the opportunity to feel strong, proud and exhilarated by risky play.

SEATTLE CHILDREN'S
PLAYGARDEN

A Garden for Everyone



October Newsletter Check Out What We've Been Up To!

Hello PlayGarden Families!

The days in Seattle are undoubtedly getting shorter and darker as the season changes, but there is no shortage of light and love being shared at PlayGarden! Every day your kids show up ready to play, laugh, learn, make friends, try new things, and move their bodies! It is SO WONDERFUL to be a part of it!

The October days are filled with colorful leaves, gusty winds, foggy mornings, and gloriously sunny afternoons. The shift in seasons led us to search for and count spider webs, rake, and re-rake the leaves, talk about why the leaves change color and where they go when they decompose. These conversations led us to the worm bin and talking about the difference between our worm bin and the city compost.

This past month we talked about what it means to be a friend and how to be unfriended with the help of stories like *Go Away Big Green Monster* and *The Little Old Lady Who Wasn't Afraid of Anything*. The older kids in the class have started their own "reading club" where they go into the classroom unprompted and practice reading together. It is so sweet to hear them encourage each other with words like, "You can do it!", "See the letters, they make these sounds that you can make", and "I know you will read someday because I used to not be able to read and now I can!" The kids have also taken to bringing books into the garden, the grape arbor, onto the volcano and out to the playground to get in their precious story time. They are not only reading but they are imagining what it would be like to be an animal, live in another place, another time. To the bright-eyed and eager to learn preschoolers, everything and anything is possible!



Risky Play: Sawing, Hot Glue, Chase and Bumper Cars!

At the PlayGarden we believe that ALL kids need time to practice taking risks, trying new things, and opportunities to overcome challenges. We also are helping ALL our kids learn to be proud of what they can do at that moment - no matter how big or small, ask for help if they need it, play at the level that feels right for them, and learn how to communicate with their friends when something if a game isn't working for them. The kids learn these things when they are engaged in risky play. Risky Play allows opportunities for challenge, testing limits, exploring boundaries and learning about injury and risk.

We incorporate risky play at school by practicing carpentry and wood work skills, playing active games like tag and chase, and bumper cars on the bikes and letting the kids climb.

With the carpentry, EVERY preschooler got the chance to practice sawing, sanding, hammering, using a hot glue gun, and painting their own piece of wood. To some, these tasks were very difficult - it was hard to hold the saw or make it through a whole piece of wood without giving up. But with encouragement they succeeded. They offered to take turns with the sawing and pointed out to each other that the glue gun was hot.

Likewise, the preschoolers have been practicing their climbing skills - in and out of the truck, up and down stairs, on railings, and on the wooden houses in the garden. They learn how high they can climb and still get down on their own and how to ask for help when they climb to high.



They encourage each other and offer each other climbing tips with phrases like “try putting your foot there” or “Watch me. This is how I did it” or “you might have to try a couple times first but you’ll get it!”

Happy Planting, Harvesting, and Eating

Every day, we harvest something from the garden for snack or lunch. The kids help prep the food and table for both meals - chopping veggies, peeling apples, setting out cups and plates, and wiping down the table. There is so much enthusiasm around helping with meals that by the end of the year, I wouldn't be surprised if the kids were doing it all themselves! We have also been staying warm with our new recipe for PlayGarden Communi-Tea!

Loving all these preschool photos? Check out our SmugMug page for more!

And finally, a big, heart felt THANK YOU to everyone for all you do, and for being a part of our PlayGarden Community.

Peace and Love,
The PlayGarden Teachers!





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MONTH
NOVEMBER



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Special Topic

- Celebration of Life & Death p. 60
- Parent Teacher Conferences

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DAILY TASKS

GARDEN

- Do a soil investigation by sorting soil contents into egg cartons (sticks, bark, dirt, rocks, leaves)
- Harvest kale and broccoli
- Rake the leaves
- Make tree stump peg-boards
- Pull up dead sunflower stalks
- Harvest greens and rosemary
- Plant eeks
- Make marigold chains
- Notice the beauty berries
- Make red twig dogwood wreaths
- Put planks over mudpit and practice balancing



ANIMALS

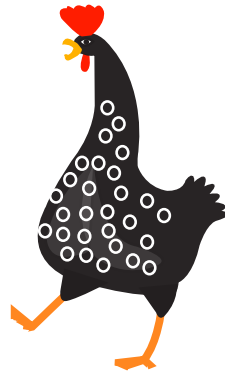
- Play “Simon Says” like Playgarden animals
- Build animal homes such as dens, barns, webs, caves, burrows, hives
- Measure earthworms
- Investigate walking sticks
- Play with bunnies
- Put the heat lamp in the chicken coop for winter



LET'S SING TOGETHER

I'm a Little Acorn Round

I'm a little acorn round
lying on the cold cold ground
Everybody steps on me
That is why I'm cracked you see
I'm a nut
Snap Snap
I'm a nut
Snap Snap



Way Up in the Sky

Way up in the sky
The little birds fly

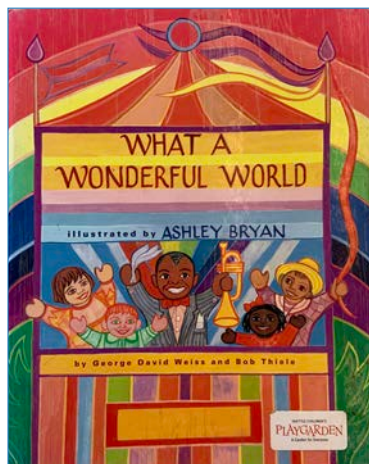
While down in their nest
The little birds rest

With a wing on the left,
And a wing on the right
The little birds sleep, all through
the night.

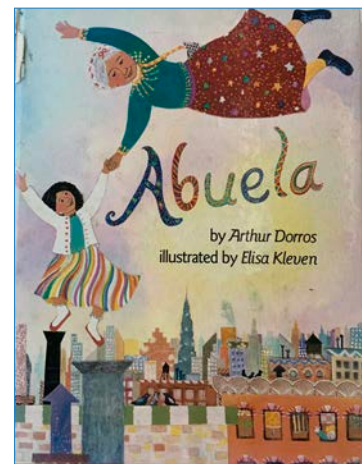
Sh-h-h they're sleeping!

The sun rises up,
The dew melts away,
"Good morning, good morning!" the
little birds say.

STORYTIME



What a Wonderful World by George David Weiss and Bob Thiele is an interactive song book, that is a great sing along for the whole class.



Abuela by Arthur Dorros is a book that ignites imagination and describes a beautiful relationship between a grandmother and granddaughter.

Our other favorites:

The Dead Bird by Margaret Wise Brown

Clatter Bash by Richard Keep

Thanks for Thanksgiving by Julie Markes

My Favorite Book: Animals in the Home by Sonia Goldie

RECIPE OF THE DAY

COMMUNI-TEA

After a rainy cold fall morning, we love to come together to make Communi-tea. Each child gets to add a special herb to the pot and share how they contribute to making our community stronger.

INGREDIENTS:

- Water
- 2-4 tea bags (peppermint, camomille)
- Fresh or dried herbs (lavender, rosemary, mint, sage)
- 2 Tablespoons honey
- Fruit (a few apple slices, berries, lemon or lime wedges)

SUPPLIES:

- 1 or 2 water pitchers
- Strainer
- Kettle, stovetop or microwave
- Tray and small bowls to hold ingredients





DIRECTIONS :

- Set up trays with small portions of each ingredient.
- Heat up water and pour into water pitchers.
- Have each child add one ingredient to the pot of tea. As they add their ingredients, have them say one thing they are adding to the community.

**THE TEACHER CAN PROMPT THE CLASS
WITH QUESTIONS:**

How can we show each other kindness?
(High fives, helping each other out, taking turns,
giving each other hugs, etc)

What was the best part of your day?

How did we work together today?

CREATION STATION

COMMUNI-TREE

Communi-tree is a beautiful multi-day or multi-part project that guides the class through conversations about family and community.

Collaborative, community building, multi-day

OBJECTIVES

Students will

- Share about their family members
- Learn the word "community"
- Express their hopes and concerns for the class
- Explain how they intend to treat others in the group, and how they wish to be treated
- Practice sharing in front of others
- Gain expressive language skills when sharing back about their family

MATERIALS

- Large butcher paper
- Markers
- Tape or glue sticks
- Paint
- Trays to put paint into and washcloths to clean up
- Family photos & photos of each individual child

PREP

1. To prepare for the project, ask families to send in a family photo and a photo just of their child. Have those photos printed and cut out ahead of time.
2. Draw out the outline of a large tree on butcher paper.



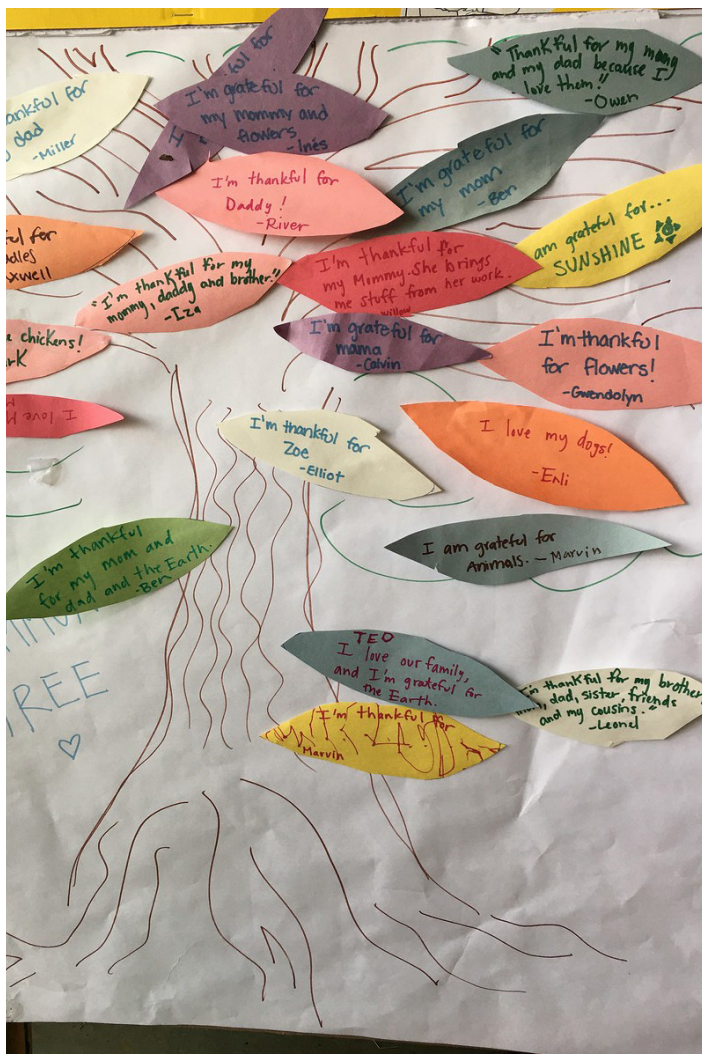
ACTIVITY PROMPTS

Part I: What do the roots of a tree do?

They help the tree get the nutrients and water it needs to grow big and strong. The roots also help the tree to be safe and secure. Who helps you grow big and strong? Have the students add photos of their family members to the root part of the tree.

Part II: What does the trunk of a tree do?

The trunk connects the roots to the leaves. You have learned a lot at home from your family about how to work together. How will you act at school so everyone can play together? Have the students talk about actions they can take to support the class (ie: behavior wise such as give high fives, help each other, ask if someone is okay). Here you can introduce the concept of “acts of kindness.”



Part III: What do the leaves and fruits of a tree do?

The leaves also feed the tree and the fruits of trees can feed other people and animals. You are going to feed our school by being uniquely you. We need each and every one of you to make our tree bright and beautiful! You can ask the students, what will you bring to our school? (ie: personal characteristics, attributes such as humor, love, kindness) then have them add their photo to the top.

Part IV: Making hand prints with enthusiasm

At the end all of the students can make handprint leaf prints at the top with encouraging energy. For example, the teacher can say to the whole class, “Are you ready to be part of our super awesome school community? An enthusiastic “yes” and paint high-fives can follow.

Special Considerations:

In an activity where kids are asked to share things verbally, such as talking about their family members, children who are non-verbal may not have the ability to share with the amount of detail they deserve. The teachers are thinking of this as they introduce an activity and are thinking of creative ways for a child that is non-verbal to share in a meaningful way- not just with the teacher, but in a way that is meaningful with their peers. In the case of building a communi-tree, having photos of the child’s family is one more tool that can help the child express themselves on their own or with the assistance of a teacher. The teachers may also ask the class, “What do you think Leo loves about his family?” Then watch their body language, gauge if the ideas they share seem to resonate. This teacher-led facilitation helps the other kids in the class connect with their non-verbal classmates on a more personal level.

Ways to expand the play

Pair Communi-tree with making Communi-tea. Read *Here We Are* by Oliver Jeffers, *What a Wonderful World* by George David Weiss and Bob Thiele or and talk about being part of a global community

Photo (left bottom): L is a mostly non-verbal five year old child with autism. To help him share, the teachers provide gentle physical support to guide him to the activity. They also use the photos as tools to help him express himself.

Celebrations of Life and Death



Embracing Gratitude and Talking About the Circle of Life

In November, we explore Gratitude and The Circle of Life. While these may seem like large concepts, if we frame them in relatable, concrete ways, our children can connect to these ideas in their own meaningful ways.

In our exploration of gratitude, we introduce a lovely activity we call Communi-tea. In this activity, we have a tray set up with a pitcher of hot water, a few herbal tea bags, and a small bowl of herbs from our garden, like rosemary, mint, chamomile, or lavender. We also have honey, a long spoon, and enough cups for the entire class. We begin by gathering everyone for circle time, on a blanket, or at the table. Then we explain that we are going to make Communi-tea. We talk about what the word community means, and what we need to make a strong, loving, happy community. Then, we take turns (with teachers going first to demonstrate) choosing a pinch of herbs to sprinkle into our tea, while sharing what we want to add to our community. Some great answers that we've heard over the years are music, dancing, ice cream, don't hurt nature, take care of animals, mommy or daddy, love, my sister/brother/grandma/grandpa, thank

you Mother Earth.... The idea is that we start thinking about, and identifying with the children specific things that make their/our lives better/happier/safer, and which we can share to make the lives of others around us happier/safer/more loving. It is from this place of concrete understanding and empowerment that we want to connect with the idea of what gratitude really means. Instead of starting our conversation with the question, "What are you grateful for?," we want to start the conversation with an exploration of "What is good in our lives?" and put language to that. Then, over the course of November we'll continue to weave the idea and language of gratitude and community throughout our conversations, including Thanksgiving discussions, and one of our other favorite preschool explorations, Dia De los Muertos.

Celebrating Dia De Los Muertos has brought us another amazing opportunity to delve into some rich concepts with our preschoolers, like community, gratitude, love for life, our ancestors. We talk about and honor of family and culture, connect to our past and tradition, as well as art, cooking, and music. Making our ofrenda (alter to our ancestors) and placing photos of our loved ones/family

members who've died, as well as their favorite foods, and decorating it with flowers, candles, and artistic esqueltos (skeletons), brings a beautiful opportunity to share about our families, hear stories, and learn more about one another. It also brings a heightened aesthetic, beauty and experience into the classroom. During this time we bring in a wide range of children's literature about the tradition and meaning of Dia de Los Muertos. This brings a rich learning experience to preschool.

This is also an opportunity for discussion around the big concept of the Circle of Life. This is a topic that fits beautifully into our nature based/outdoor curriculum, where we experience the process of life unfolding in the vegetable garden, in the natural world and animals that visit the garden (hawks, seagulls, crows, small wild birds, squirrels, wild bunnies, etc.) around us, and with the chickens, ducks, goose, and rabbits.

At school, the cycle of life is a recurring topic of conversation and exploration. Like our other conversations around concepts like gratitude and community, we try and keep it concrete and relatable, while leaving room for the children to explore it on their own terms. A few years back in preschool, we had a new baby chick get sick and pass away. This was a sad event for all of us, and it provided an immediate pivot from the joy of having a flock of new chicks

to observe and care for, to having a few school days of mourning for our little feathered friend. As teachers, this is a situation where we are required to step out of our curriculum, and be totally immersed in this emerging learning opportunity.

Sharing the news at circle, examining the chick's body, or taking a peek at it in its cardboard box (we wouldn't have done this if there was blood or damage to the body, as that might be too upsetting), and having an open ended discussion about how this loss makes us feel, what we think happened, and asking the children what they think happened, is where we always begin. Then we read a favorite preschool book, *The Dead Bird* by Margaret Wise Brown, which tells the story of a group of children who find a dead bird in the park and decide to bury it, sing a song, and decorate the grave with flowers. This book is a great jumping off point for asking our students what they would like to do to honor the animal's life. Like in our book, burying the animal's body, putting flowers in and around the grave, singing a song (like "Remember Me" from the movie *Coco*, as one of our preschoolers suggested, or even a spontaneous song), saying good thoughts or prayers for the animal, or expressing gratitude for the animal, are all ways our childrens have responded.





As teachers, what we find most interesting is observing the feelings of reverence, and compassion that naturally arise, and are understood by the children. Allowing the children to direct or participate in the burial and ceremony or honoring, gives them a tangible sense of control during the experience of this loss, which is a critical part of what we hope to offer our preschoolers during this sad time.

This experience of death, sometimes also opens us up to larger philosophical conversations and brings bigger questions, or debates like: Do we go to heaven? Do we reincarnate? Do we turn to ghosts?)

We welcome these conversations, our goal being only to facilitate respectful dialog. But we let the children lead this conversation, and make their own connections, only sharing the facts that we know for sure (bodies decompose and turn into food for worms to compost and then eventually soil/food for plants. We eat the plants, the plants become us, and the cycle continues. We allow everyone to share stories or their own beliefs. We take these moments as an opportunity to embrace the unknown, and be open with the children that even we as adults don't know everything, saying often, "I don't know the answer to that, but it is sure interesting to think about."



PARENT TEACHER CONFERENCES



In November, we meet with families for our annual parent teacher conferences. We hold these conferences on weekday evenings to ensure that working parents are also able to attend. Each individual thirty minute conference is an opportunity for the parents to ask questions and share any concerns they have about their child. During the conferences, the teachers share our observations from the first couple of months of preschool. We share our observations around all areas of preschool, including: social interactions/friendship, circle time, mealtimes, art and activities, communication, participation, areas of strength and growth, and challenges. We share stories about their child that have impacted us, and we ask questions like:

“How are things going at home?”

“What does your child share about school at home?”

“Does your child talk about any of the other children?”

“What therapies is your child participating in now, and how are things going?”

“What are your goals for your child at preschool?”

We also share our goals for the coming months, and strategize solutions and approaches for any issues that may have arisen. We always welcome any questions that parents have, and follow up when needed as we move forward in our school year.

Our goal for these conferences are: to share our knowledge, learn from the parents, strengthen our connection to the families, as well as deepen our understanding and awareness of each child, and go forward with a clearer picture of our teaching goals.

SEATTLE CHILDREN'S
PLAYGARDEN
A Garden for Everyone



November Newsletter Check Out What We've Been Up To!

Dear Preschool Families,

Happy Saturday! What a beautiful week of preschool - it was full of the friendship, time in the chicken coop, making holiday decorations and cooking up some delicious food - like fresh pear sauce, homemade pizza, and apple crisp.

The holiday break seems to be fast approaching - but before we get there, we want to take some time to share some of our highlights from November and this first week of December.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM NOVEMBER

Dia de Los Muertos

We spent the first week of November celebrating Dia de los Muertos. This was a beautiful way for us to talk about family, what the word ancestor means, and for our preschoolers to share about their grandparents and important people in their lives. We read the beautiful bi-lingual and adventurous book *Abuela*, written by local author Arthur Dorros and used it to help us talk about adventures we go on with our families while learning some Spanish. If you haven't read this book we highly recommend it.

*If you dropped off a photo with us to add to our ofrenda we would love if you come pick up your special photos.



Animals in their Homes

In the second week we built off of our conversations about family and began to talk about the concept of a home. We read *My Favorite Nature Book: Animals in their Homes* written by Sonia Goldie as a way to think about the variety of types of homes that animals use like a burrow, nest, cave, den and cove. In these conversations we talked about animal adaptations and pondered why animals may have the kind of home they have with questions like....What do animals need in a home? What do we need in a home? Are those things the same or different? We also made pinecone bird feeders to keep our birds happy in the winter.



Puerto Rico Heritage Week

We continued our theme of family by getting to learn about where Teacher Jean is from and where he grew up. Jean helped us celebrate Puerto Rican culture, language, food, geography, and history during Puerto Rico Heritage week in the second week of November. Jean brought flags for the kids, helped them learn how to tell the difference between the U.S. and Puerto Rican flag and introduced us to a traditional Puerto Rican meal made by his aunt. Thank you Jean for sharing your culture with us!

If you would like to share any part of your family heritage or culture with us at school please reach out! We would LOVE to continue to teach our preschoolers about different cultures, languages, traditions, and places around the world.





Month of Gratitude

Through a couple different activities, like Communi-tea, Communi-tree and making gratitude beads, the kids shared with us what they are thankful for. And boy did they share some sweet sentiments! They are overall very thankful for each other. They are grateful for all of you and their siblings. They are especially grateful for their pets, and expressed a simple and sincere gratitude for our earth - for bringing us sunshine, rain, animals, plants and so much more!

Similarly, we are so grateful for all of you and the love, kindness and understanding that you bring into our community each and every day. Thank you for taking the time to meet for conferences, share what is going on at home and for offering guidance and support to one another.

Transitioning from Fall to Winter & What We are up to in December

As we move from Fall to winter, the colors in the garden begin to shift once again. The bright oranges, reds, and yellows begin to darken to deep browns, blacks and grays. And suddenly the rich dark green of the evergreen trees, the purple and red berries begin to stand out. During this time, the garden can seem bare. At first glance, it may feel even empty and cold. But in fact it is still full of things to explore - it just takes a keen eye. The eye of an outdoor preschooler.

What is it that they may find in the coming weeks?

Our preschoolers have started to go mushroom hunting in the wild zone and flipping over stumps in search of invertebrates. They have clued in to the flock of pigeons that sit on the electrical wires above the PlayGarden - watching us go through our day.

The Pacific Northwest would not be what it is without the majestic Evergreen trees! We will spend the next couple weeks learning about these trees by reading *Where Would I be in an Evergreen Tree* by Jennifer Blomgren and *The Tallest Tree* by Robert Lieber. We look at PNW field guides, sing C is for Conifer, make holiday wreaths, paint with evergreen branches, and make pinecone bird feeders.

In December, we will also talk about the night sky, owls, and other nocturnal animals, explore winter scents, such as orange cloves, and peppermint and wrap up the month celebrating the winter solstice to welcome in Winter.





Events Outside of Preschool

Winter Solstice Campfire

Come bring in some holiday cheer and celebrate the coming of the winter solstice with us at a family-friendly and inclusive campfire. We will have s'more fixings and hot chocolate. Don't forget to bring your own mug, a guitar or instrument if you play and a fun song to sing.

Holiday donation drive for Treehouse!

Treehouse is an amazing organization that serves children in foster care. We are collecting new and gently used items for children of all ages, including teens. There is a donation barrel in our classroom, and we will be collecting items until December 13th.

And finally,

A big heart felt thank you to everyone for all you do, and for being a part of our PlayGarden community.

Peace and Love,
The PlayGarden Teachers





**MONTH
DECEMBER**





Daily Tasks

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Songs & Stories

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Recipe of the Day

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Creation Station

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Special Topic

Making Mealtime Meaningful p. 76

Sample Newsletter

p. 78

DAILY TASKS

GARDEN

- Decorate the topiaries
- Make fizzy puddles
- Trace shadows
- Explore winter scents: witch hazel, peppermint, orange, cloves, rosemary, eucalyptus

ANIMAL

- Make bird feeders
- Explore how animals get ready for winter
- Practice walking using Fox Feet
- Learn about arctic animals: polar bears, arctic foxes, penguins, and puffins



LET'S SING TOGETHER

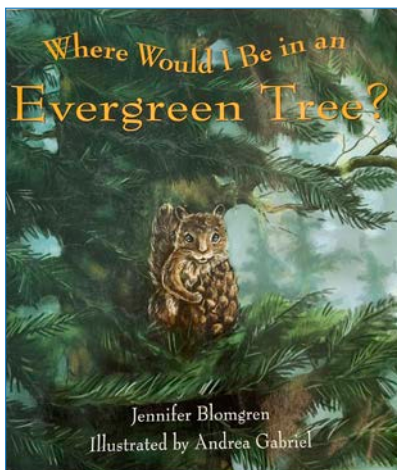
This Little Light

This little light of mine
I'm gonna let it shine
This little light of mine
I'm gonna let it shine
This little light of mine
I'm gonna let it shine
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

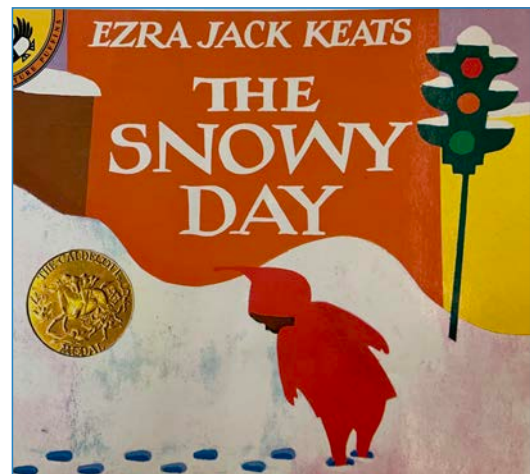
De Colores

De Colores
De Colores se visten los campos en
la primavera
De Colores
De Colores son los pajarillos que vienen
de afuera
De Colores
De Colores es el arco iris que vemos lucir
Y por eso los grandes amores
De muchos colores of many bright colors
Me Gustan a mi
Y por eso los grandes amores
De muchos colores
Me Gustan a mi

STORYTIME



Where Would I Be in an Evergreen Tree by Jennifer Blomgren is all about describing what an evergreen tree is and sets the stage for our art projects involving evergreen branches and wreaths.



The Snowy Day by Ezra Jack Keats is a fun book all about the magic of winter and exploring your own neighborhood. A great book for the transition to winter and winter break from school, keeping nature exploration a theme even outside of school.

Our Other Favorites:

The Mitten by Jan Brett

Owl Moon by Jane Yolen

The Shortest Day by Wendy Pfeffer

Little Hoot by Amy Krouse Rosenthal

RECIPE OF THE DAY

CHALLAH BREAD

Throughout the school year, we invite our preschool families to share important aspects of their family's cultural identity with the class. Challah bread is one of those special cultural foods that parents will come in and cook with our class. Challah bread is usually braided and typically eaten on ceremonial occasions such as Shabbat and major Jewish holidays, except for Passover.

Recipe thanks to All Recipes

INGREDIENTS:

- 2½ cups warm water (110 degrees F)
- 1 tablespoon active dry yeast
- ½ cup honey
- 4 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 3 eggs
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 8 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon poppy seeds





DIRECTIONS :

- In a large bowl, sprinkle yeast over barely warm water. Beat in honey, oil, 2 eggs, and salt. Add the flour one cup at a time, beating after each addition, graduating to kneading with hands as dough thickens.
- Knead until smooth and elastic and no longer sticky, adding flour as needed. Cover with a damp clean cloth and let rise for 1 1/2 hours or until the dough has doubled in bulk.
- Punch down the risen dough and turn out onto a floured board.
- Divide in half and knead each half for five minutes or so, adding flour as needed to keep from getting sticky.
- Divide each half into thirds and roll into a long snake about 1 1/2 inches in diameter.
- Pinch the ends of the three snakes together firmly and braid from middle.
- Either leave as braid or form into a round braided loaf by bringing ends together, curving the braid into a circle, and pinch ends together.
- Grease two baking trays and place the finished braid or round on each.
- Cover with a towel and let rise for about one hour.
- Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C).
- Beat the remaining egg and brush a generous amount over each braid. Sprinkle with poppy seeds if desired.
- Bake at 375 degrees F (190 degrees C) for about 40 minutes. Bread should have a nice hollow sound when thumped on the bottom. Cool on a rack for at least one hour before slicing.

CREATION STATION

LUMINARIES

In the wintertime when the days are short. Luminaries can bring warmth, light and beauty to the garden and classroom. Luminaries are great for wintertime decoration and make for great winter gifts.

Messy, high sensory, celebratory

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Explore different textures of tissue paper and glue and what happens to the colors with the glue on the paper
- Strengthen fine motor skills holding onto a paintbrush to apply the tissue paper and glue
- Learn about Winter Solstice

MATERIALS

- Containers or trays to hold tissue paper and glue
- Tissue paper
- Elmer's Glue
- Water
- Paintbrushes
- Modge Podge
- Mason Jars
- Wire & Beads
- Wire cutters
- Tinsel
- Tea Candles (battery powered or real)





PREP

1. Rip tissue paper into small pieces and place in small trays
2. In small trays with edges, mix together Elmers glue with 1 tablespoon water.
3. Put out jars, paintbrushes, tissue paper, and glue on tables.
4. Decorate the jars and let dry.
5. Add a layer of modge podge to each jar.
6. Make your handle with tinsel or wire.



Ways to expand the play

- Hold a solstice sing-along with the preschool families. Sing songs like “This Little Light of Mine” or “All I Really Need” by Raffi.
- Take a luminaire garden walk.
- Send luminaries home with the children to give as gifts or use as decorations.

MAKING MEAL TIME MEANINGFUL

“The teachers’ responsibility is to create interesting educational contexts in which the encounter with situations and objects takes place in a way that is not trivial or lacking curiosity.”

From *The Languages of Food: Recipes, Experiences, Thoughts* by Stefano Sturloni Atelierista,
Preschools and Infant-toddler Centers Istituzione of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia



Sharing a meal together is an important part of our time together, just as important as circle time, free play exploration, or art. When we gather for lunch at preschool, we are sharing a moment of togetherness. Mealtimes are an opportunity for us to put everything we know about inclusivity into action and challenge ourselves as teachers to think creatively and pull from our collective resources. We as a school are saying: there is room for everyone at our table.

Mealtimes are a time to nourish ourselves, but if we expand our scope we also see that it serves us on many other meaningful levels. Mealtimes allow us to connect as a com-

munity, and provide us a time to pause our own individual agendas. Mealtimes are also a time to have an aesthetic and sensory experience that provides a deeper connection to the joys of good food served in a beautiful way.

It is also a time for children to participate as cooks (the children, too) in the caring of others and a time to share the bounty of our garden. It is a time to try new foods and tastes, a time to learn sustainability practices (like sorting our leftovers into compost), and a time to develop important self-care skills. Mealtimes are vital to the success of our model. It is a key time to think creatively about how we can best support our whole preschool community in having an enjoyable, empowered, positive mealtime experience.

Given the principles at play, it is no surprise that it takes our entire teaching team, including our supported employment staff, to make our mealtimes happen in accordance to our inclusive standard. Preparing the food, setting the table, gathering the children, washing hands, and getting everyone seated is a team effort. The lead teacher, assistant teachers, and supported staff all have a role to play in making mealtimes meaningful.

Lunch at the PlayGarden is a family style affair. We set one big table (usually outside) with a long colorful tablecloth, plates, utensils, cups, and child sized water pitchers. At times, we decorate the table with flowers from the garden, or even a beautiful found object, or piece of art, for a heightened and novel aesthetic experience. We always start our meal with a moment of gratitude to thank the cooks (all the teachers, supported staff, and children who helped prepare the meal) and our favorite PlayGarden blessing:

**We love our bread, we love our butter,
but most of all we love each other!**



We generally serve our food family style, and most of the children help themselves as much as possible from a communal tray of food. We always make sure that there is enough for everyone, and that meals are balanced nutritionally, texturally, and flavor wise. We account for picky eaters and any allergies that our students may have. We include as many home grown items as are seasonally available. Eggs, basil, potatoes, grapes, Asian pears, cherry tomatoes, peas, cucamelons, broccoli, kale, edible flowers, corn strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, apples, zucchini, cucumbers, lettuce and carrots are all foods we've grown in our school garden. We also provide the children with ample opportunity to participate in cooking and preparing our meals: peeling carrots, chopping apples, making pizza, smoothies, pasta, biscuits, pumpkin pie, or cookies, spreading nut butter or sun butter and jam for sandwiches, flipping French toast or pancakes, pureeing apples into sauce.

Taking time to appreciate food, and where it comes from, is part of a larger philosophy of care for our community, our earth, and ourselves. We hope that it will support our children to develop a culture of healthy eating and valuing mealtimes as a time to practice self-care and check-in with one's self (Am I hungry? Am I thirsty?) as well as time to

connect with those around us. Teachers always join our students at the table and take time to talk, ask questions, and support the children in feeding themselves, signaling, or asking for what they need, noticing one- another and socializing with their peers, and cleaning up after themselves to the best of their abilities. We prioritize making mealtimes as unrushed, and relaxed as possible, while juggling a wide range of needs, abilities, and approaches to food and mealtimes.

It should be acknowledged that a beautiful, social, satisfying communal meal can sometimes be a challenge to achieve as fully as we would like. Mealtimes may look different day to day.

In an inclusive environment, many of our children may be facing individual issues around eating and mealtimes. Some of our students can be sensory avoidant, food textures can be unpleasant for them, and some may be sensory seeking, dumping water on the table or onto other children's plates. Some may be bouncy and active at the table, and find sitting still impossible. Some of our students may require close physical support to feed themselves, or some may use a g-tube, making a 1:1 aid during mealtimes essential. Some



of our children may become overwhelmed at a big table, and do best with a seat away from the group at their own table.

We as staff have to approach these mealtimes as an opportunity to be innovative, strategic, and responsive to the needs of the individual children and of the whole group. For us, that means thinking about seating choices, and putting children in a position at the table that allows them the most independence and comfort. For instance, a child who uses a wheelchair should be seated where she can easily access food and move her chair to and from the table. It means utilizing adaptive items, like a seat insert, or supportive clip-on chair. It means finding cups, utensils, and dishes that work well for our individual children, and support their independence in feeding and helping themselves. It means creating a seating plan that accounts for children that need more space to feel calm and participate, and having staff sit next to children who need extra support of any kind. It means working hard to bring some students to the table. It means making sure everyone has a buddy to eat with, and that children aren't clustering at one end of the table and leaving another child to eat alone. It means,

helping to start or carry on conversation between students, so that we are noticing and speaking directly to one another. It means working with families around healthy meal choices for their individual children, whether that means being allergy safe, serving children food exclusively prepared at home, providing favorite familiar foods, encouraging children to try new foods, working on increasing calorie intake, or monitoring over eating.

Our approaches and strategies to providing our preschoolers support and positive interventions at mealtimes can be broken down into a few helpful categories in the chart below.

With planning and a team approach, mealtimes at our preschool can bring everyone to the table. It is a daily opportunity for us to enact our values of inclusion, and for all to share in the simple pleasures of a delicious, healthy meal in the good company of peers and teachers. Whether a child can sit and eat for three minutes or thirty, we make the most of this time at the table. Bon appétite!



Areas of Concern	Intervention Strategies
Positioning	What support is needed for stability? The position needs to be upright and as similar to the other children as possible.
Foods and Liquids	Check on the texture of foods such as purees, solid or something in between. Consider transitions to solid foods, food temperature preferences, the child's ability to make choices, and liquid consistency. Be aware of chewing and swallowing problems and the risk of choking or aspiration.
Adaptive Equipment	Determine need for any adaptations based on child's need. There are a variety of cups with handles, straws or cut out edges. There are a variety of spoons such as nylon, thick plastic, rubber coated or built up handles. Other adaptations may include; a universal cuff to assist in holding a utensil, plates and bowls with raised edges for increased scooping, and Dycem to stabilize the plate or bowl.
Environmental	Things to think about lighting, noise level, temperature, space needed, and relaxation techniques.
Child Specific	A child may need oral motor stimulation, jaw control, lip closure techniques or activities to reduce gag reflex or facilitate swallowing. Partial participation and teaching methods for developing independence will need to be explored.



December Newsletter Check Out What We've Been Up To!

Greeting PlayGarden families,

We hope this winter break has been good to all of you, and that you are feeling rested and ready for the New Year! Now that we've officially rung in the new year, we wanted to share what we've been up to at school, and what the preschoolers can look forward to in January at PlayGarden.

December was a beautiful month at preschool. Frosty mornings and chilly temperatures meant slipping and sliding like penguins down the mountain, and treasure hunting for ice in the garden. It also meant noticing how the cold and foggy mornings could transform before our eyes into sunny afternoons, and that we couldn't all predict what the weather would be (though we tried!). It also meant feeling how the textures of the garden changes from crunchy and frost kissed to melty and damp.

In circle, we discussed how different families choose to celebrate or not celebrate the winter holidays. The children shared their favorite holiday songs, and we sang Jingle Bells with gusto. We also lit a menorah for Hanukkah, and the children had an opportunity to share their own blessings. We talked about the winter solstice being the longest night of the year and the first official day of winter. And we pretended to be hibernating bunnies and sang, "Where Are All the Sleeping Bunnies?"



Throughout December we also explored our themes of owls, evergreens, the night sky and the solstice. We had a blast making owls from feathers, barks orange peels and acorns, and we made lanterns from glass jars and tissue paper to light up the long winter nights. We used all of our sense to explore evergreen trees, made wreaths and painted with tree boughs. We read *Where Would I Be In An Evergreen Tree* and learned a new evergreen song.

In January we will explore puffins, penguins, polar bears, and arctic foxes and experiment with ice cubes. We will also explore sensory play and make peppermint play-dough, cloud dough, and bring out our sensory bin. Finally, we will investigate the pussy willows growing in the garden. January is shaping up to be another fun and interesting month at PlayGarden!



Important dates:

Please note, preschool will be closed in honor of Martin Luther King Day

Also:

Please check our PlayGarden calendar, located on our website for Open Play hours and activities

And finally, a big heart felt Thank You to everyone for all you do, and for being a part of our PlayGarden community. Wishing you all health, happiness, and loads of play in the new year!

Peace and Love,
The PlayGarden Teachers





MONTH
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DAILY TASKS

GARDEN

- Investigate the pussy willows
- Look for frozen ice
- Make nature faces

ANIMALS

- Learn about woodland animals:
skunk, fox, raccoon, squirrels
- Feed the chickens mealworms
- Fill the bunnies' boxes with
Timothy Hay
- Clear any ice from the duck pond
- Sprinkle dried lavender in the small
chicken pen
- Check the heat lamp in the coop to
make sure its on



LET'S SING TOGETHER

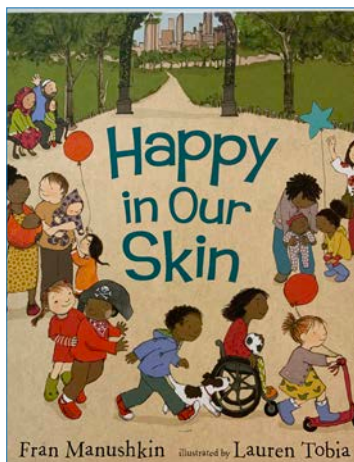
Boots Song

Red boots Red Boots
(identify the type or color of the student's boots)
Sam wore his red boots
(tap your boots together in time to the music)
Show us what your red boots can do
(pause while the child makes a motion with
their boots)
Boo boo bee doop
Repeat for each child in the circle.

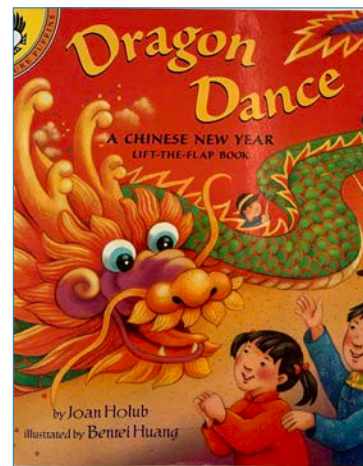
Three Little Birds

Don't worry about a thing,
'Cause every little thing gonna be all right.
Singin' "Don't worry (don't worry) 'bout a thing,
'Cause every little thing gonna be all right!"
Rise up this mornin',
Smiled with the risin' sun,
Three little birds
Pitched by my doorstep
Singin' sweet songs
Of melodies pure and true,
Sayin', "This is my message to you-ou-ou:"

STORYTIME



Happy in Our Skin by Frank Maushkin is a wonderful story that celebrates diversity among us and is a great book to initiate conversation about Martin Luther King Jr.



Dragon Dance a Chinese New Year Lift the Flap Book by Joan Holub is a beautiful introduction to the customs of Lunar New Year.

Our Other Favorites:

Puffing by Margaret Wild

Snowballs by Louis Ehlert

I Have a Dream MLK Paintings by Kadir Nelson

RECIPE OF THE DAY

PANCAKES

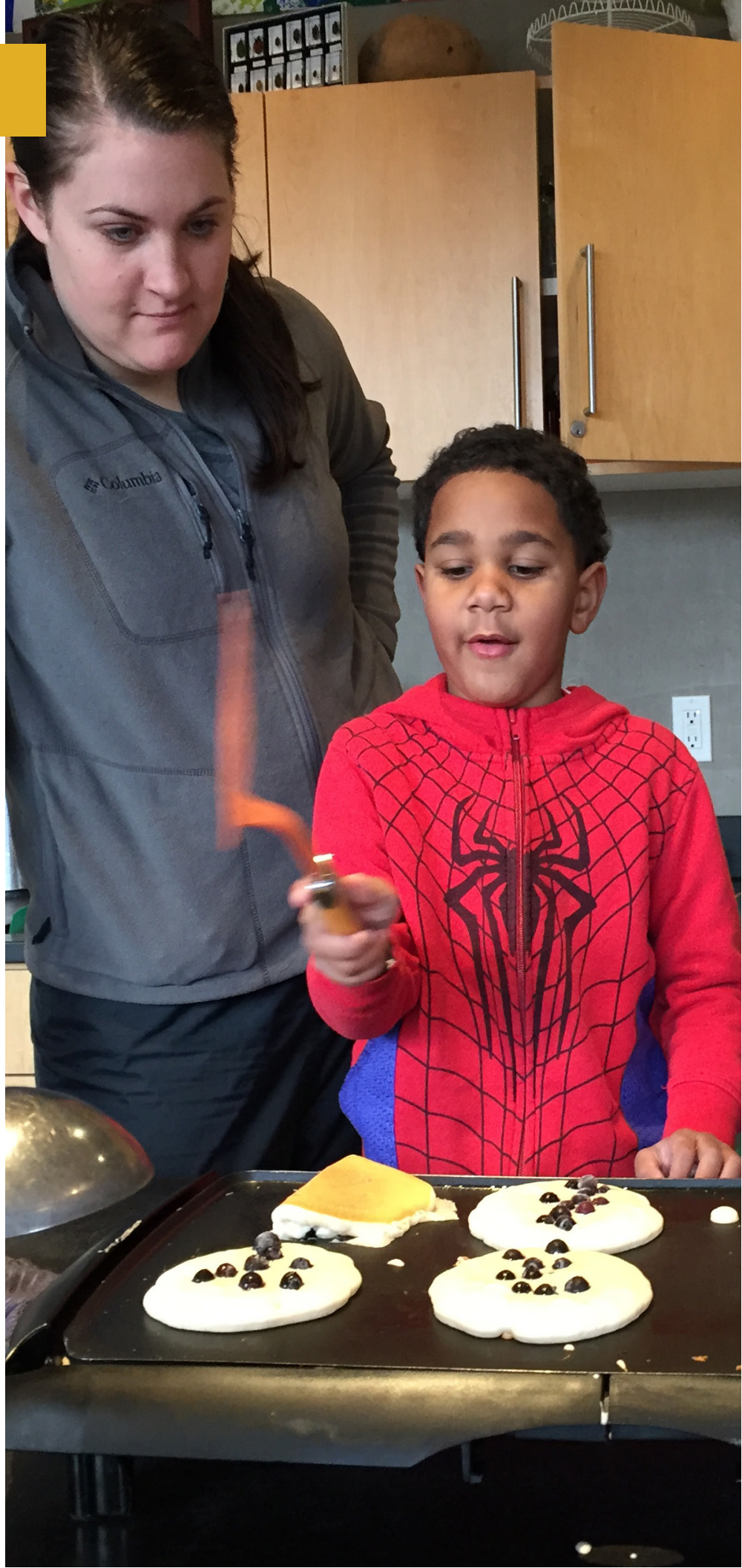
No matter the kind, children love pancakes! From mixing the batter to flipping cakes on the griddle there is something for every child to do. They can be made gluten free, casein free and nut free.

INGREDIENTS:

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons and 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 2 tablespoons white sugar
- 2-1/2 cups milk or milk alternative
- 2 eggs
- 1/4 cup and butter or non-dairy alternative

KITCHEN EQUIPMENT:

- Mixing bowls
- Spatulas
- Griddle or frying pan
- Measuring Cups
- Teaspoons
- Cutting boards and plastic knives for students to chop fruit
- Cookie cutters to shape pancakes





INSTRUCTIONS:

1. In a large bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder, salt and sugar.
2. Make a well in the center and pour in the milk, egg and melted butter; mix until smooth.
3. Heat a lightly oiled griddle or frying pan over medium high heat.
4. Pour or scoop the batter onto the griddle, using approximately 1/4 cup for each pancake. Flip when bubbles start to appear.
5. Brown on both sides and serve hot.

ADD TO THE EXPERIENCE

- Reading the “Oh There Once was A Puffin” by Florence Page Jaques, originally published in *Highlights* magazine
- Use cookie cutters to cut pancakes into all different shapes such as trees, hearts or stars
- Mix in berries, chocolate chips or nuts to change the flavor

CREATION STATION

PEACE & FRIENDSHIP SIGNS

Throughout the year we teach the students about concepts of fairness, equality, inclusion, acceptance, diversity and kindness. These concepts are woven into our daily interactions. In January we bring what we have learned so far as a class together to honor Martin Luther King Jr Day by going on a peace parade around the PlayGarden. This parade renews our commitment as a class to treating each other kindly, with respect and fairness for the second half of the school year.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Learn the terms peace, love and justice
- Share their ideas for how to make the world better for everyone

MATERIALS

- Butcher paper
- Cardboard cut into different shapes
- Tape
- Paint
- Trays for paint
- Paintbrushes
- Washcloths
- Thick Sharpie

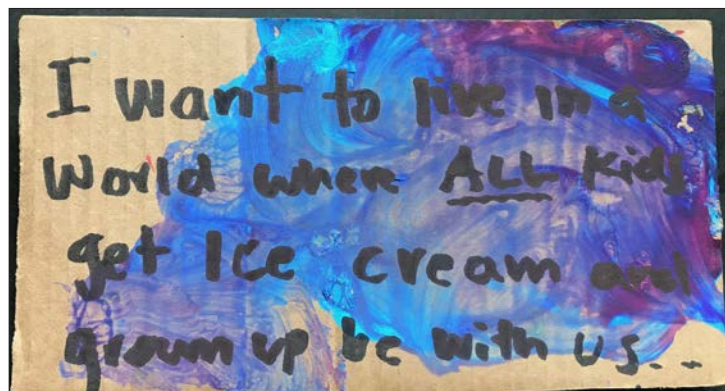




HOW TO MAKE A PEACE/FRIENDSHIP SIGN

- Make big signs using butcher paper and tape letters that the whole class can work on decorating and holding in the parade.
- Have each child make their own sign. Have the children first paint their cardboard, after it dries add the child's words for a better world with a sharpie.
- To help the children express themselves, the teachers can prompt the students with questions like:

What does it mean to be a good friend?
 What/who do you love?
 What do you want to keep safe in our world?
 How can we take care of _____?
 How can we treat each other with kindness?



SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Out in the world, children with disabilities are often the last to get to do an activity because it can take them longer to complete certain tasks. In an inclusive school, this is on the forefront of the teachers minds. For example, if you are leading a Peace parade, be sure that the children that move slower or need one-to-one support from a teacher get to be in the front of the parade so as not to get left behind. Talk with the class about why that child gets to go first.

ART EVERY DAY!



Whether it is drawing chalk murals, reading poetry, singing, painting, making music, sculpting, or creating nature designs, art is a cornerstone of our preschool program. We do art every day and often multiple times a day.

Art is one of the most common activities that educators can use to engage students. With some planning and flexibility, all types of art activities can be made to be made accessible and inclusive of children of all ages and abilities. Here are eleven strategies for how to plan for inclusive art experiences.

1. Before you begin, ask yourself *why* you want the children to do this art experience

- Why am I choosing this activity for the class or this individual?
- What might this activity spark for the students? Creativity? Problem-solving? Group play?

These types of questions can help you become clear on your goal and scaffold the activity for each child to meet that goal. If a child is choosing an art experience for themselves, ask yourself,

- Why might they be drawn to the materials in that way?
- How can I meaningfully help this child continue this exploration without getting in the way of their creative process?

2. With inclusion in mind, think through the location, materials and set-up

Anyone who has worked with preschoolers, knows to expect the unexpected. Plans can change with a simple change in a child's mood. However, that does not mean that planning is not useful. In fact, it is the opposite. The more prepared you are, with your set up, materials, and

staging, the higher your chances are to engage ALL students in your class in the art experience.

There are endless possibilities for where to set up an art experience. Try setting up on easels, fences, boxes, tables, and the floor.

Location

- Where are you going to do this art activity? Inside or outside? On tables or the floor?
- Is it a place where all students in your group can easily access the materials?
- If it is in a less accessible place, what do you need to have thought of ahead of time to help you get all your students to the location?
- Can you offer the art experience in a unique location that may be more conducive to the comforts of all your students?

Materials

- Before you start an activity, a teacher should do the whole project-start to finish.
- As you work through the project or activity, imagine yourself as a kid doing the project. How would a child interact with a big tray of paint? Or a big ball of yarn?
- Make a list of all the supplies you will need including, supplies to write names on the art and select a space to hang it to dry.
- Be sure to have enough supplies so the students have the options to make a second.
- Gather all your supplies ahead of time and have them separated into easy to access : baskets, trays, or cups.



C choosing, or a teacher suggesting to C to paint directly on J's tray. This proximity allows J to not only participate in the painting experience with C, but creates an opportunity for the two children to bond.

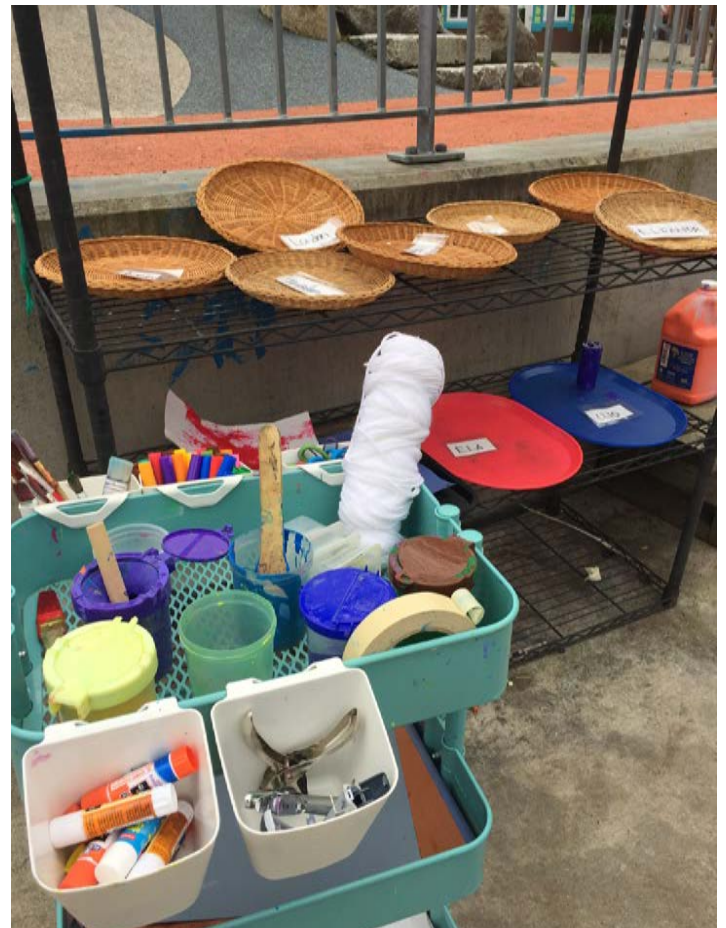
Set-Up

- Display art supplies in a way that make the activity look exciting. You are creating an art experience and the environment makes a big difference.
- Have space available on the surfaces for students to be able to start working right away.
- If the table is too crowded with supplies, students can become overwhelmed and your art area will likely become messy very quickly.
- As the students move through the experience, slowly introduce new materials.

3. Accessibility: Table heights and placement

Make sure the child can access the art materials comfortably. Proper placement of tables, chairs, and art materials are all key to a successful art experience for any child.

- What kinds of surfaces do you need for this art experience to be successful for ALL students in your group?
- If it is at a table, is there space for a child in a wheelchair to sit?
- Is there space between the tables for students to move between them with ease?



Example of an art cart and individual trays with name cards for each child.



Wheelchair accessible tables allow R to join the art table with ease alongside her peers.

- If the art is happening on the ground, is there a way to provide support to a child that needs help sitting up such as bringing out a supportive chair?

- If you have a child that needs 1-1 support, is there a comfortable place for the adult to also sit and support that child?

Seating Options

- Does this activity need to be done sitting down? Or can students stand up to do it?

- Do the students have enough structural support for them to do this art experience well?

4. Don't do the project for them

The students in your group will all have different strengths and challenges. It is okay to prep materials so the child can enter into the art experience with ease, such as by helping to tie a bead to the end of the string or cut out the smaller shapes, but be careful not to do the art for them.

This often happens when teachers are approaching the art experience with a more “product-based” mindset or when teachers are trying to recreate something they have seen on Pinterest. Avoid that trap.

Doing the project for a child can also happen when a teacher has low expectations for a child and assumes that because of a child's limited ability, be that limited fine motor skills or attention span, that it is just better, easier or simply faster for them to do it for the child. This does very little for the child's growth and development. An inclusive teacher on the other hand, finds creative ways to support the child in the experience by providing hand over hand support and working through challenging parts of the art activity together.

5. Assess skill levels and how much assistance each of your students/participants may need.

Even when you are doing a process based experience, some students really need some structure to get started. You can provide this structure by writing out or telling the group the steps of the experience before you get started.

6. Find out how each of your students communicate

Absorb this information. Take the time to learn if they prefer to be given options, or need visual or verbal cues.

7. Identify the students that are most independent, students who need some assistance, and students who need one-to-one assistance

Keep in mind that every child has their own unique way



L is sitting a bit low at this table to do this activity well. If he was supported with a booster seat or a more supportive chair he would be able to blow bubbles more easily.

of doing a project, regardless of the structure you provide initially.

8. Help the more independent students get started. Next help your students who need some level of support get started.

Walk through the first step with them. Observe anyone who may be struggling. Try to figure out why they are struggling. Is the space too overwhelming? Are they crowded? Can they access the materials easily enough? Do they need someone to support them physically in the activity? After making an appropriate accommodation for the children that need it, demonstrate the next step of the lesson or experience.

9. Move through your group and give a few minutes of one-on-one time to the students who need it.

This is a perfect time to adapt the experience to each individual child by making an activity more challenging, playing around with different materials, or incorporating the students' ideas into the activity. Move to the next step of the lesson. Continue to observe and provide any help your participants may need.

10. Praise artwork uniquely

Build intrinsic motivation and a sense of accomplishment. Instead of saying, "Great painting" customize the praise by saying, "I like the way you used your red and yellow colors for the trees to make it look like fall." Or, instead of "Nice job," be more specific and say, "I can tell you are putting a lot of effort into your clay project."

11. Be persistent and keep experimenting!

Kids may struggle with handling art materials. This can be for many reasons, such as limited fine or gross motor skills, an aversion to how a material feels, smells or looks such as the stickiness of clay or messiness paint. Give them enough opportunities to keep trying and experimenting with different mediums of art over a large span of time. If you are doing an activity with scissors but you have a child who can't hold onto scissors allow them to rip pieces of paper to make more of a collage. If you have a child that has a hard time holding onto a paintbrush, let them paint with their hands. If you have a child who can't get close enough to the table to work on an art project try putting the materials directly on their tray instead.

Process based vs product based

At the PlayGarden, we focus more on process-based art experiences. In process-based art, the value is in the experience of creating the artwork and exploring materials and techniques. This is in contrast to product-based art where the emphasis is on creating something specific for an end product.

In process-based art,

- There is no right or wrong way to do the project.
- Children focus on creatively exploring the materials, tools, and techniques at their own pace.

For example, that can mean letting a child explore just holding the scissors and making small snips or letting them paint with things other than the paintbrush.

- The role of the adult is to encourage and support children's creative process with phrases like, "Can tell me about what you are making?" or "I notice you chose blue, what do you like about the blue?"

- Every finished product will look different.

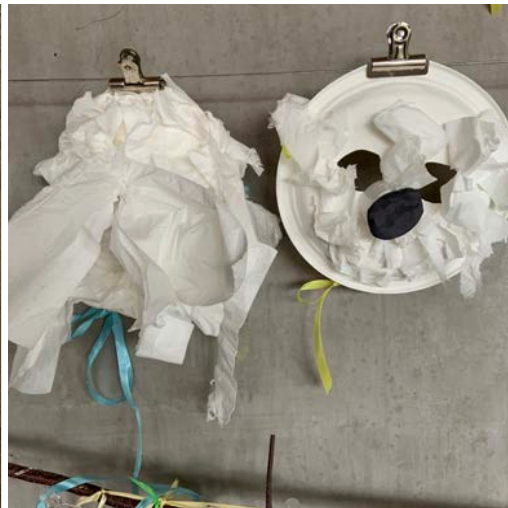
Art experiences can be both process and product-based based on the teacher's facilitation of the experience. Let's look at the following projects:



Left: G plays with paint, glitter, and pom poms on the floor on a big piece of butcher paper. This multi-media process-based art experience of G's turns into our Chinese New Year Dragon. Right: With the dragon, the class can then go on a Lunar New Year parade and learn about Dragon Dancing.



E is engaged in the process of making some kind of chicken-inspired art. His art will look different from every other child's art and that is the beauty of making art, each person has their own style, pace and connection to the materials. We celebrate this variety at the PlayGarden. E will also go at the pace that works for him. Slowly and methodically, exploring the glue, paint, scissors, and paper. At the end, you have a whole range of chicken-like art products for the children to take home. Or, a whole lot of beautifully diverse Puffins and Polar Bears.



Look at these different polar bear masks:

The one on the left, was made by the teacher (mimicking a craft she likely saw on Pinterest). The one on the far right, was made by a child trying hard to mimic the teacher's "final product."

Now, let's look at the mask in the middle

If this was a product-based art experience, the child didn't make the "intended product." There are no eyes to see through on the mask, no black nose, no ears- and sadly, many adults would say it looks messy. However, if we consider this to be process-based art experience, the child has more than succeeded. The child played with the materials for longer than most other kids at the table, worked with purpose and urgency to create his own unique piece of art.

Process-Based Art and Inclusion of Children with Disabilities

One of the reasons why process-based art is so critical in an inclusive setting is because it directly relates to how we see and interact with our students. Let's learn from the following reflection:

"As the teacher in this art experience, I got pulled down the pinterest rabbit hole, and got excited about making these masks. We were learning about animals in the wintertime and I thought that the masks would spark the kid's imaginative play and they would be a fun addition to our polar bear parade we were going on later in the day. I knew that it was more product-based than we normally do but still felt like it was worth it."

The morning started and I watched nearly all of my students struggle to engage with the activity. They liked glueing the about three cotton balls to the plates but got frustrated when their fingers got sticky. The noses kept falling off since the glue wasn't drying quickly enough. Pretty quickly most of the students were disinterested. Meanwhile their masks

looked "incomplete". It felt like I had chosen something that was a waste of materials.

We took a break from the project. A couple hours later, I got the class excited about the Polar Bear parade and a few kids started working on their masks again. I watched the kids trying to mimic the mask I had made. Why was that ever the goal?

Then one child in my class who normally has a hard time sitting down and doing art with the class, sat down to make his mask. Right away, he started pulling materials quickly from all across the table. He was pulling at a whole roll of toilet paper and smashed it onto his mask working with fever. Since I had gone into the activity with a "product-based" mentality, my first feeling was one of frustration. This child was not doing what they were "supposed" to be doing and was making it harder for the other kids to participate.

I was so focused on what the mask should look like and worried how one child's seemingly erratic behavior was going to impact or even distract the rest of the group that I lost sight of what was actually happening. The child was focused, engaged and having fun with his art project. He was exploring textures of materials and had a vision for his art. A huge success for this child.

As he worked, it became clear that the child was engaging with the activity in a much deeper and more profound way than the other students who were simply trying to copy the example I had made. When I finally asked him to tell me about his art, all he said was, "It is a polar bear in a really really big snow storm."

In those thirty minutes or so of observing him do this art experience, I had failed him. My stomach sank. I knew that my assumptions about his behavior were not only totally off but highly detrimental to the inclusive school environment

we work so hard to create at the PlayGarden. I had mentally labeled a child's behavior as "disruptive" and made assumptions about his motives that were not true. Worst of all, embedded in my assumptions were hidden low expectations. It is incredibly painful to admit that I fell into a trap. I saw a set of behaviors and made a quick judgment.

Necessity of Being a Reflective Educator

If we don't admit and confront our faults, our blind-spots, our hidden biases and assumptions we hold as teachers, we cannot grow, and we certainly cannot create an inclusive environment for our students and families.

To learn more about how to counter biases, assumptions and judgement toward children with disabilities check out our lesson "What is the biggest barrier to inclusion children and parents face?" in our online learning hub.

So why not embrace art activities with a process-based approach?

If you want children to gain content knowledge they will get that through the conversations you have during the craft. Yet by being less rigid and less literal through the connection between the "content" and the art project, their art will be distinctly their own. In the process, there is inherent diversity- of approaches, in the feelings an experience can create for a child and in the final products. Having examples of diversity in art projects is a perfect way to segway to talking about the term diversity as it relates to individuals and throughout every part of our world.



Seasonal Nature Art

At the PlayGarden the garden is our classroom. Every day there are new colors, textures, and scents to explore. Spring seeds turn to buds and summer flowers. Come Fall, the flowers begin to fade away and leaves fall to the ground only to freeze into the ground come Winter. The daily changes in the natural environment, the changes in weather and the seasonal changes in the plants, animals and colors lead themselves perfectly to creating nature art.

In the Fall we make leaf paths, in the winter we paint with evergreen boughs and look for frozen soil, icicles and treasures and in the spring. We make friends with all the spring plants and animals.

Some of our favorite Nature-Art Ideas:

- Andy Goldsworthy Art
- Painting with pine needles, feathers, and leaves
- Leaf or flower prints
- Nature-Playdough sculptures
- Flower Cuffs and Crowns
- Shadow Drawings
- Grass-heads
- Thankful Rocks
- Flowers in Ice
- Nesting Balls
- Painted Sticks
- Nature-Weaving





Preschoolers make Matisse inspired collages together. L likes to take his art inside to a quieter place to work.

Introduce different artists and styles

Another way we like to introduce art every day to our preschoolers is by introducing the students to different artists and different art styles. Some artists and art techniques we like to teach preschoolers about include:

- Jackson Pollock's abstract technique of pouring or splashing liquid onto surfaces.
- Wassily Kandinsky's technique of using shapes and lines to create abstract art.
- Georgia O'Keeffe's technique for painting flowers.
- Van Gogh's technique of painting with flurries of thick brushstrokes made up of vivid colors.
- Henri Matisse's technique of using color blocks to make bright collages.

Our motto and goal at the PlayGarden is that every day, everyone, students and teachers alike, go home tired, dirty and happy. Incorporating art every day helps achieve this goal.

Our favorite art activities include:

- Marbleized paper
- Painting letters of our name
- Carrot foot and hand prints in journal
- Watercolor Monster Painting
- Carpentry Project with Birds
- Marble painting
- Pinecone spiders
- Pinecones dipped in wax and glitter
- Thank-You Tree
- Bark Owls
- Salt dough stars with evergreen impressions
- Lantern Making
- Superhero Capes
- Rainbow pasta necklaces
- Homemade wrapping paper
- Kites
- Fishing Poles
- Womerries

To learn more about these activities visit our PlayGarden Pinterest page by searching Seattle Childrens PlayGarden.



January Newsletter Check Out What We've Been Up To!

Dear Preschool Families,

My takeaway from this past month of preschool: It's amazing how much fun you can have during an entire month of rainy days!

Puddle jumping, riding bikes, car washes, umbrellas, slipping and sliding, mud pit play, playing airport, a hundred changes of clothes, cozy time on the couch, playdough, blocks, feeding the bunnies, holding hands, high fives, wind in your face, singing in the rain, bubbles, making pancakes, art projects, dancing, playing restaurant, watching the sky.

The days fly by and we do so much!

We explored and celebrated two holidays: Martin Luther King Jr. day and Lunar New Year. For the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday we read to great books, *I have a Dream* by Martin Luther King Jr., with illustrations by Kadir Nelson, and *We March* by Shane W. Evans. Both books provided an age appropriate and engaging jumping off point for exploring the concepts of fairness, justice, equality, and love in a social justice context. When talking with preschoolers, I always like to explore the idea of how we can be peaceful warriors and work towards fixing a problem we see in the world, or making a wrong into a right, just like Dr. King, and all the other people who were part of the civil right movement then, and now. And that Dr. King was a great teacher for all of us, even today. He taught us how to be a friend to the world and to turn love into an action of care towards all people. We also worked on making our own signs with messages of love for our MLK Day march, and created a love chain made from linked messages about love and our wishes for the world.



Lunar New Year also brought us some wonderful children's literature and activities. Among other books we read *Lion Dance: Ernie Wan's Chinese New Year* by Kate Water, and *Dragon Dance* by Joan Holub and Benrei Huang. We also worked on our fine motor skills and used scissors, staplers, and glue to make paper chain dragons, paper lanterns, paper kites, and tried our hands at homemade long life noodles (that were delicious).

In February, we are exploring sensory play with shaving cream marbled prints. We are also having fun making valentines wreaths and cards, and writing lots of letters. We'll cook up some valentines treats as well. And we'll explore woodland animals, like owls, foxes and racoons.



Friendly Reminders

Preschool will be closed for Mid-winter break
Summer camp registration opens end of February and
Open play will begin on Earth day!

A big, heart felt Thank You to everyone for all you do, and
for being a part of our PlayGarden community,

Peace and Love,
The PlayGarden Teachers





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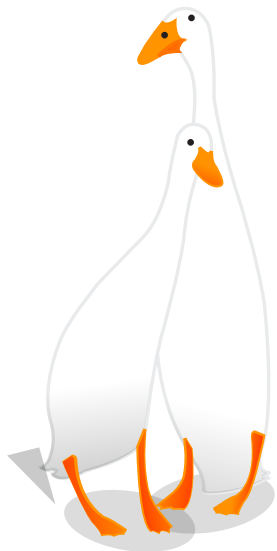
DAILY TASKS

GARDEN

- Plant pea seedlings indoors in egg cartons
- Explore the fragrances of lillies, witch hazel, wintergreen berries, and rosemary
- Sweep the paths in the garden
- Fix broken bikes

ANIMALS

- Fill bunny boxes with Timothy Hay
- Learn about birds owls, finches, chickadees, sparrows
- Replenish dust bath for the chickens with dried herbs
- Scrub chicken's water buckets



LET'S SING TOGETHER

Skidamarink

Skidamarink a dink a dink,
Skidamarink a doo,
I love you.
Skidamarink a dink a dink,
Skidamarink a doo,
I love you.

I love you in the morning
And in the afternoon,
I love you in the evening
And underneath the moon;
Oh, Skidamarink a dink a dink,
Skidamarink a doo,
I love you, and you and you!

Bomdeyada

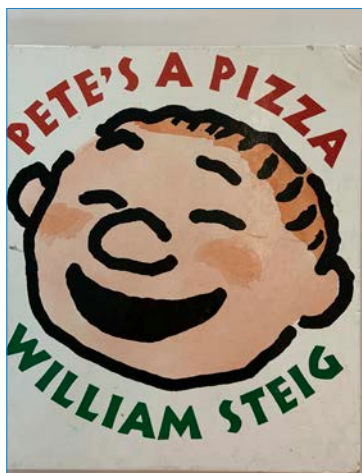
I love the mountains.
I love the rolling hills.
I love the flowers.
I love the daffodils.
I love the fireside.
When all the lights are low.

Boom dee ah dah. Boom dee ah dah.
Boom dee ah dah. Boom dee ah dah.
Boom dee ah dah. Boom dee ah dah.
Boom dee ah dah. Boom dee ah dah.

I love the flowers.
I love the daffodils.
I love the mountains.
I love the rolling hills.
I love the fireside.
When all the lights are low.

Boom dee ah dah. Boom dee ah dah.
Boom dee ah dah. Boom dee ah dah.
Boom dee ah dah. Boom dee ah dah.
Boom dee ah dah. Boom dee ah dah.

STORYTIME



Pete's A Pizza by William Steig is a great book to talk about our different emotions and the love of our own families. What does your family do to cheer you up?



Hello Goodbye Dog by Maria Gianferrari is learning all about what a service dog is and what a service dog does.

Our Other Favorites:

Guess How Much I Love You by Author
I Love You Sun, I Love You Moon by Author
Not A Stick by Kadir Nelson
Sheep in a Jeep by Kadir Nelson

RECIPE OF THE DAY

ALPHABET SOUP

Our version of chicken soup with rice is with ABC pasta. Be sure to sing the silly ABC's as you eat and help the kids read the words that appear in their spoons.

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 tsp olive oil
- 1 cup carrots, peeled and diced
- 1 small onion diced
- 1/4 tsp each: garlic powder, onion powder
- 1/8 tsp salt or celery salt
- 32 oz vegetable or chicken broth
- 2 cups cooked chicken, diced small

SILLY ABC SONG

A-B-C-D-E-F-G

Wash those gras stains off of me
Mamma's got the chicken pox
Daddy's got the measles
What about...
Ha ha ha ha ha chew

(Goal : to encourage children to sneeze into their elbow)





INSTRUCTIONS :

1. In a large pot, over medium/medium-low heat, saute the onion carrots in the oil for 3-4 minutes.
2. Stir in the garlic powder, onion powder and salt.
3. Pour in the chicken broth and add the chicken base, stir to combine.
4. Turn the heat up to medium/medium-high, and bring the pot to a simmer.
5. Add the Alphabet soup noodles and cook for 8-11 minutes, until the noodles are cooked through.
6. Taste for additional seasoning.

WAYS TO BUILD OFF THIS RECIPE :

- Read *Chicken Soup with Rice* by Maurice Sendak
- Read *Martha Speaks* by Susan Meddaugh
- Sing the ABC's and the Silly ABC'S

CREATION STATION

MAKING VALENTINES

Come February we spend the month making valentines for one another. We weave valentine making into conversations about what it means to show love to others, how to share acts of kindness and how to live in reciprocity with one another.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Practice how to give and receive a gift from a friend
- Learn what an act of kindness is
- Creatively express themselves

MATERIALS

- Colorful paper, blank and patterned
- Glue
- Scissors
- String
- Stamps, stickers
- Markers, crayons, pastels
- Paper bags
- Paper plates

POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES

Paper bag decorating

Twig hearts

Heart Hats

Love paper chain with hand prints

Love potions

Bird feeders

Heart beads with salt dough

Building a mailbox to collect letters

Making and delivering flower bouquets





DURING THE ACTIVITY

When passing out valentines, plan to alternate between children with and without disabilities. If you do not alternate you will likely have typically developing children begging to go first, second and third which means that children who cannot advocate for themselves, or cannot move themselves are left waiting until the end. Alternating models for the class how everyone gets to participate not just the children that can read names or walk themselves around the circle.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

For children with limited fine motor skills who have short attention spans for doing table time activities, making valentines can be frustrating. In an inclusive school setting provide a variety of art mediums and allow a variety of methods to be used. For example, some children may struggle using scissors but really enjoy placing stickers onto cards or simply ripping the paper. Some children may not want to use cards, markers, stickers at all. Instead, their valentine is giving a high five to their friend or picking flowers to hand out. As teachers, we can highlight how each different method for sharing love is beautiful and right.

WAYS TO EXPAND THE PLAY

Set up a letter writing table for a full week. Encourage the students to make and send valentines not just to their classmates but to other people in their life or in the community.

Create an acts of kindness jar. Have the students come up with ideas for how they can treat each other with kindness. Write them down. Add them to the jar. Then over the course of the month have the students pull ideas from the jar.

JUST THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF STRUCTURE



Preschoolers are set up for success and authentic friendship building in this train play because the teacher has: 1. Taken time to think ahead about all her students 2. Centered the child with a disability in the location of the activity 3. Provided appropriate physical support for the child that needs it 4. Gave space for the children to take it from there.

One of the most beautiful parts about teaching at the PlayGarden is observing the children play when they are deep in their own flow. In these times, the children are often playing independently or clustered in pairs, or small groups. They are directing their own play, have found roles for themselves and each other and are deeply immersed in what they are doing. As a teacher, it can feel like you hit the sweet spot in your day. You feel proud of your teaching and proud of the experiences your students are having.

So how do you get to that sweet point?

Everyone wants to get to that point in their teaching day where things feel a bit smoother, where the children have settled in and are playing well together. To get to this point however, there are a couple things teachers need to do.

1. Find a balance between structured and unstructured play time.
2. Have strategies at hand to help children transition between activities.
3. Reserve time to observe each individual child and assess what they may need in a given moment.
4. Simultaneously balance the needs of the whole group.

Finding the balance between structured and unstructured play

In a preschool program, finding a good balance between structured and unstructured play is key. At the PlayGarden, less than half our day is spent in structured play activities such as circle time, snack and lunch, while the other half is spent allowing the kids to engage in unstructured, child-directed free play. Preschoolers need both.

Take a look at our daily preschool schedule

The parts in blue are structured times when we come together as a full class, while the parts in black are unstructured time where there is a mix of child-directed and adult-directed play opportunities. Notice how our structured group time is broken up by unstructured free play time. Do you notice the difference in time lengths for each of these different parts to our day? Circle time (a structured activity) is usually about thirty minutes while free play (an unstructured activity) before lunch is an hour and a half.

Daily Preschool Schedule

9:00-9:45 Drop off, morning project (optional) & free play

9:45-10:15 Morning circle

10:15-10:30 Snack (optional)

10:30-12:00 Free PlayGarden exploration includes time doing art projects, visiting animals, reading books

12:00-12:20 Lunch

12:20-12:45 Free Play

12:45-1:00 Closing circle

BENEFITS OF STRUCTURED PLAY

Structure gives kids a sense of order, can help teach them how to follow routine, and can help kids feel secure. Clinical psychologist Dr. Laura Markham explains, “A predictable routine allows children to feel safe and to develop a sense of mastery in handling their lives.”

At the PlayGarden we add structure to our day by having circle times, snack and lunch at the same time every day following a similar routine. However, the teachers also provide structure for each individual child throughout the day by providing kids with clear options of what projects they could choose from, inviting them into various activities, and using teaching tools such as picture schedules and timers, to help the kids feel more at ease.

Why Use Visual Schedules With Preschoolers?

A picture schedule is a symbol or picture representation of a series of activities. A picture schedule is a great teaching tool to use with your whole class or with individual children.

Visual schedules can help...

- Children with communication disabilities that use the visuals to help them communicate what activities they do or don't want to do.
- Children with Autism, ADHD or behavioral disabilities that benefit from a little added structure and direction in their day.
- Children who are toilet training stay on a consistent schedule.
- Children transition from one activity to the next and can help children stay engaged in an activity for longer periods of time.
- Reduce anxiety. For example, for children that are anxious about when their parents will come back, a visual schedule is a tool that can help them see the sequence of the day and count-down until their parents come back.
- Review what happened that day for kids who cannot tell their parents what they did.

How a make a picture schedule

Picture schedules can take many forms. Some of our own favorites include laminated sheet that can be drawn on with dry erase markers or where each part of the schedule can be removed using sticky back velcro. An adjusting schedule can help the child understand how they are progressing through the day.

How a Picture Schedule Helps Sophie

Let's take a look at an example picture schedule for a child named Sophie. Sophie is non-verbal and has a hard time joining social activities on her own. She finds comfort in the garden and likes to pick flowers and blueberries. Providing Sophie with a picture schedule can make a significant difference in her day. With it she can better communicate with her teachers and peers. For Sophie, having a schedule that shows her a variety of options is key for her having a variety of experiences. Sophie likes to play with bubbles but because she has a hard time knowing how to join a group of other children, she will often avoid the bubbles and go back to the activity that she knows well, picking blueberries. With the help of a teacher and a picture schedule, the possibility of bubbles becomes more readily available to her. See an example on the next page.

Sophie's PlayGarden Schedule



1. Circle Time



2. Pick Flowers



3. Animals



4. Bubbles



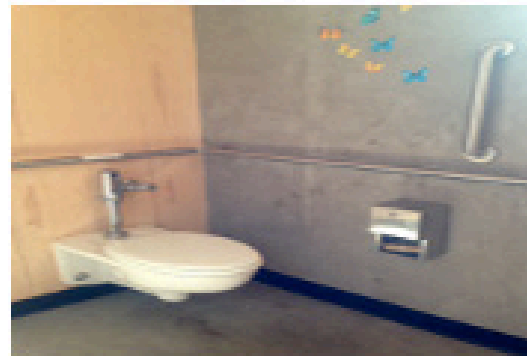
5. Snack + Lunch



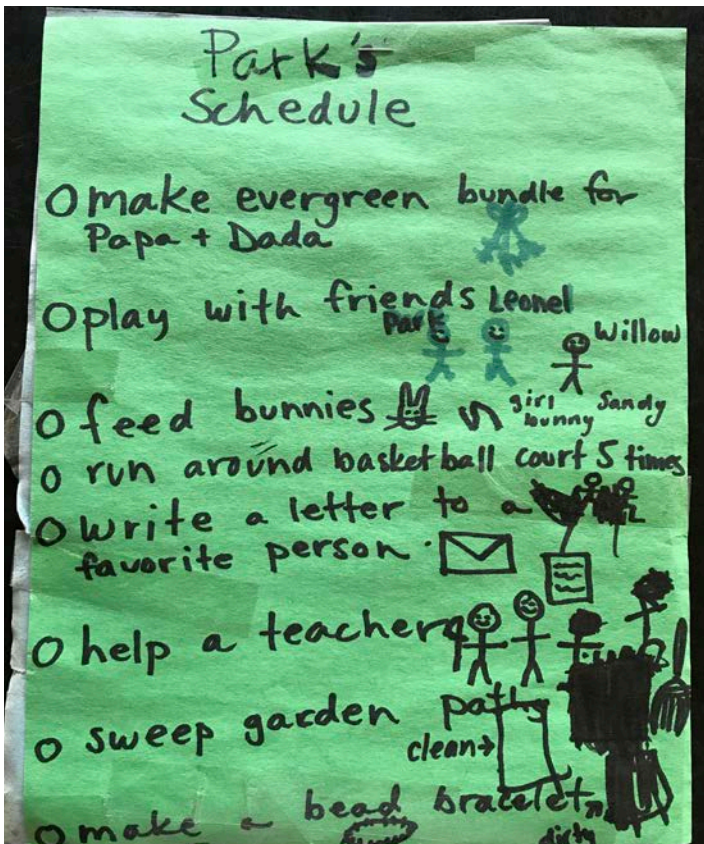
6. Playground



6. Pick Berries



7. Use Bathroom



Examples of "On the fly" daily schedules for individual children

Making a Picture Schedule on the Fly

If you are short on time, have a child whose interest changes quickly, or a daily schedule that changes frequently you can make a schedule on the fly and write out a daily schedule with the child themselves. This is a great option for teachers because it is quick, easy and can be adjusted on a daily basis.

How a Picture Schedule Helps Park

The two picture schedules above were made on the fly with one of our preschoolers Park when he first arrives at school. Writing the schedule with Park gives him more autonomy over his day. Park gets to say what he wants to do in the day, such as feed the bunnies. The teacher also gets to add in some areas that they want Park to practice such as "playing with friends." Having Park participate in making his own schedule makes a huge difference in his willingness to follow the schedule. We revisit the schedules regularly throughout the day. By the end of the day, it is way more than a schedule: it is a piece of art that he is proud of. And a detailed list of all his accomplishments. At the end of the day, Park would enthusiastically asks if he can show his list to his Papa.

What to do when the day starts to go awry

Finding the sweet spot in teaching where the ALL students are happily engaged in their play takes scanning and a high level of awareness. It is important every fifteen minutes or

so to take a pause and scan over the whole classroom. Take note of what each child is doing. You may notice that some of your students are engaged in their play and doing just fine. However, you may also look up and see that one child may be wandering, seeming a bit lost or off on their own. You may realize they have been that way for a while. You may notice that the students are starting to fight with one another or make a bigger than normal mess of the materials. You may even look up and realize that many of the students feel a bit lost. As a teacher, you probably feel lost at that moment too. That's where the pause comes in.

You can assess individual children or the class as a whole and make the decision about what it is that would help the class get back to that sweet spot. Maybe there has been too much unstructured time and the students are craving some direction. This is a time to start a group game or bring out an art experience. If you notice that it is just an individual child seems a bit lost, this is the time when you can help that child by giving some amount of structure or direction. Ask yourself:

What is their behavior telling me they may be needing or wanting?

What is it that they would enjoy?

Is there another student in the class I can pair them up with? Or do they need some solo time?

What could help them feel more connected - either to the garden, the animals, the teachers or their peers?

Transition Strategies

Anyone who works with children knows that children move through the world at the pace that works for them and their bodies. Picture a group of kids and you can easily picture the child that moves like a hummingbird through their day, zipping from thing to thing with zeal. It is just as easy to picture the child that moves more like a sloth, slowly, thoughtfully moving from one place to the next. Children's natural pace is not something teachers can change. The children are who they are.

In an inclusive environment, the teachers work with individual children to help them move through their day at a pace that works for them while still balancing the needs of the whole class. This child-centered approach is gentle. It requires teachers to be flexible, patient and open to using a variety of methods to help each child. However,

this balance can become even harder when children have a hard time transitioning from one activity to the next or one place to the next. Transitioning can be particularly hard for a child when they are asked to transition from an activity they are very interested in to an activity that they are less interested in. For some children, transitions are the hardest part of the day.

There are many transition strategies teachers and parents can use to help.

Transition Strategies for Kids

1. Prepare them: give the children advance warning for how long an activity will last. This can help them know what to expect. They can start to make their mental map for the day.

2. Help them know what to expect: Use “first, then” language: for example, “First we will do a circle, then we will come back to the playground.” This works particularly well if you can find a way to bring them back to the activity that they want most.

3. Try kind commands with fun options instead of questions: In many cases, if you are trying to transition a child to something they are not ready for or are not yet interested in doing, if you ask them “Do you want to go to the bathroom?” You will likely be met with “No- I don’t want to!” Try instead, a command with some clear options. Such as “It’s bathroom time! Do you want to use the butterfly or birdie bathroom?” This gives them the options of which bathroom to focus on rather than the thought of being around going to the bathroom at all or not.

4. Make the transition fun: The more fun you can make a transition the more likely kids will be able to make the transition with ease. Use the child’s interests and your imagination to guide you in what kind of game you choose. If they like trains, make it a railroad from where you are to where you want the children to go. If they like animals, pretend to be those animals. Some games we like include Red, Light Green Light, Follow the Leader (with different kids being the leader), and Simon Says.

5. Try using puppets: Puppets are a fun way to help young children transition. The novelty of a different character asking them to do something rather than their teacher or parent can help break pre-existing power dynamics that manifest around common transitions.

6. Consider alternate kinds of movement: Sometimes a simple change in how the child is being asked to move or switch from activities from one place to the next can help. At the PlayGarden we offer wagon rides, wheelchair rides, piggy back rides, airplane rides, skipping, running, for-

wards, backwards or sideways, racing, or making something an obstacle course are acceptable ways to move from place to place or activity to activity.

7. Use a transition object: For some children, having their special stuffed animal, toy, blanket or even a food with them can smooth transitions. This is especially true in the case of a child transitioning from one location to another such as from home to school or from home to preschool. If a child is having a hard time leaving school, think of items they can bring back and forth from school to home.

8. Use a visual schedule: This makes it clear what a child can expect and what is coming up next.

9. Use a timer or a visual countdown system: Have the kids set the timers and remind them of what it means when the timer goes off before it goes off.

10. Use transition songs: transition songs are a great way to help kids move from one activity to the next. Songs are light-hearted and can shake up the energy. They give kids a cue for what is next and are a great way to switch up communication channels, which can be especially helpful if a child responds less to verbal instructions.

11. Choose transition activities: Things that can be done in between two other things such as skipping over to the car or counting to ten before moving on to the next thing.

12. Allow for extra time: If you’re rushing, your child will pick up on your energy. This can make them feel even more agitated or anxious. Giving yourself extra time can help keep everyone feel calmer and have more time to adjust to the change.

13. Use social stories: For children who have a particularly hard time with transitions, preparing them with relevant social stories can be helpful. **To learn more about social stories visit Section 3 in our Inclusion Toolkit.*

14. Maintain consistency: As much as possible, try to stick with the schedule and routines that you have laid out.

IMPORTANCE OF UNSTRUCTURED PLAY FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Unstructured play is a key to the healthy growth and development of every child. In unstructured play kids ignite their creativity and imaginations, they are given the freedom to explore, create and discover without predetermined rules or guidelines. They are able to relax, dream, think, and move at the pace that is right for them at that moment.

Despite the many benefits of unstructured play, children

with disabilities have far fewer opportunities for unstructured play than their peers without disabilities. Persistent exclusion from nature-based programs like outdoor preschool programs where unstructured play time is more often built into the curriculum, community-wide stigma against children with disabilities, and the misconception that children with disabilities always “need to be learning something” are a few reasons why unstructured free play time for children with disabilities is so limited.

Children with disabilities move through mind boggling days filled with school, therapy, medical appointments and tutoring. Almost every part of this busy schedule is adult-directed time and by nature, these parts of a child’s day such as therapy, are work for the child. Children with disabilities are asked to listen and respond to adult direction pretty much constantly throughout the day. They are often asked by teachers, parents, and therapists to correct their behavior, adjust how they are interacting with peers, adjust their language or pay more attention to their bodies. Though this intervention comes from a good place, there are times when adult intervention or support can limit a child’s autonomy and independence. This schedule leaves very little time for a child with a disability to simply be a kid and to play.

Teachers can also fall into ableist teaching traps that further limit access to unstructured play. For example, a teacher may believe the dangerous misconception that their students with disabilities are in some way “behind” their peers and therefore teachers assume the child will benefit from more adult intervention. As subtle as direction like, “hold the shovel like this” or, “not like that, this is how you put the dress up on” may be, frequent adult intervention interrupts the child’s play. A teacher may also believe the misconception that children with disabilities need to be taught how to play since the ways in which they are playing may look unconventional. Again, this intervention limits the child’s ability to uniquely be themselves and home in on their individuality. Another misconception that limits children is the notion that children with disabilities may be seen as fragile. With this mindset, it is easy to forget that kids are kids first and foremost. Just because a child has a disability that may for example influence their physical ability to do things without wobbling or falling doesn’t mean that they don’t benefit from risky play or benefit from mastering a new physical skill like jumping off high things on their own. Space has to be given for ALL children to grow, and to fall.

As educators we can do our part to remove these barriers by changing the way we think about disability, accessibility and who nature-based programs are “designed for”.

Unstructured Play at the PlayGarden

At the PlayGarden the students receive hours of unstructured child-directed outdoor free play in the sun, rain, ice, and snow. They become gardeners planting seeds, watering seedlings, harvesting, tasting, and picking. Through their play they also become caretakers and stewards. They learn how to take care of our animals along with the wild animals we encounter on a daily basis. The students grow a deep appreciation for the garden and each other and in their time engaged in outdoor free play, they develop profound connections to the world around them.

To see examples of what unstructured play can look like for children with and without disabilities in a nature-based program we invite you to visit the PlayGarden and watch a few of their videos on the Seattle Children’s PlayGarden YouTube channel.

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It can be hard as adults to really let go and give the students the time to engage in unstructured play. Teachers have lots of knowledge, ideas, and projects to share with the students. It is also hard for many adults to let the children guide the learning and play. One resource we love that has helped our teaching staff learn how to be an adult supporting a child in unstructured play is the Wild Zone Toolkit. Check out this excerpt on the next page:

Excerpt from The WildZones Toolkit

by David Hawkins and Karen Payne

These guidelines can be the basis for training that encourage adults to explore ways of being with children that allow them to discover and engage in free play. They are designed to help adults re-learn the joy of unstructured play and feel comfortable with a child-led agenda, with a focus on how to foster rather than regulate play - and how to let kids find their own way, in their own time.

Some of these suggestions will not come easily to adults because we are usually expected to instruct young people in the right way to do things and to regulate all aspects of children's lives. People will find different aspects of these guidelines come naturally or feel challenging - the diversity of adults in your play space can support each other in exploring new ways of being with children.

Don't unwrap the child's presents for them

- Give children time and space to explore what's there without trying to engage them in something that you think they would enjoy.
- Kids are so used to being told what to do and the right way to do it, that it may take some time (and perhaps some frustration) for some kids to find their intrinsic motivation and find out how they want to direct their own activities.
- Tolerate children's uncertainty or boredom-don't try to solve it for them. Don't show them how to play with their presents

Don't show them how to play with their presents

- Let kids discover for themselves how to do things even if it takes them longer or they don't do it in the most efficient manner.

No Gold stars are needed

- Interact with kids in a way that expresses interest in what they want to tell you about what they are doing, but avoid praising or passing judgement. Even positive judgement takes it out of the realm of play and into the realm of pleasing others, rather than doing something for the intrinsic pleasure of it.
- Find alternatives to standard phrases for praising, such as 'Good Job!' or 'Well done!' For example: 'That looks like fun' or 'What did you enjoy about making that?' Or anything that authentically expresses your interest in the child's project rather than your judgement of it.

Be Playful Yourself

Enter into the joy of unstructured play. Engage in your own play or activity but be aware of what is happening with kids and be ready to leave what you are doing to respond to what is happening with the children. This concept is called "parallel play" - it is a proven method of encouraging children to play in creative ways. You can dig a hole or skip stones or daub mud on your arm or stack stones or build something...anything... as long as it is truly interesting or fun for YOU - not just something you think would be fun for a kid.

Be interested, but respect the inner life of the child at play

It is not always possible or useful to put important experiences into words. Falling in love, grief from the loss of a loved one, relating to nature- these are private experiences and it may not be appropriate to explain them to someone else. Avoid questioning children in order to satisfy your curiosity about what this experience means to them.

Refrain from the “teachable moment”

Allow the child’s own meanings or interpretations to take priority over the “teachable moment”-whether it is about science, math, ecology or other forms of knowledge.

Be curious, share memories, be excited or amused or touched, but hold back from suggestions, instructions, advice or commentary.

Explore ways to feel comfortable with a child led agenda

Think about times when you have solved a problem or met a challenge without someone else giving advice or instructions. Use these memories as motivation for allowing children to be self directed in their play and projects.

Allow children to find a way through their own conflicts and challenges.

Play is an excellent context for learning about how to manage conflicts without adult arbitration.

Other children may step forward to improve a situation

As in all parts of life, please do interrupt bullying, racism, cruelty, or violence.

Trust (This above All)

Children’s brains and emotions are designed to learn much of what they need to know by playing. Most studies on the value of free play emphasize its crucial value in developing social skills and all forms of cognitive and emotional development.

Unless someone is hurting themselves or hurting others, or taking a risk that may truly lead to injury, try not to interfere. Self directed play is a key to lifelong learning and evaluating risk is an important survival strategy.

Read the full Wildzones How to Create and Enjoy them A Toolkit by David Hawkins and Karen Payne.





February Newsletter Check Out What We've Been Up To!

Dear Preschool Families,

What a rich month February has been for us at preschool! In this short month we've covered a lot of ground and found so much to celebrate in our work together. We used beautiful patterned paper, stickers, punches, glue, scissors, envelopes and stamps to make Valentines and notes for our families and friends.

We admired the newly emerged pussywillow buds, and the last of the magenta apricot blossoms. We celebrated the Lunar New Year, and tried our hand at making cherry blossom trees with black watercolor paint and tissue paper flowers. We did science experiments with vinegar, baking soda and paint, and used droppers and vials to mix and pour the fizzing overflowing liquid. We also got out the carpentry benches and used tools and saw wood. And in our optimism, we planted our first batch of flower and veggie starts so that we can grow sweat peas, golden beets, kale, and snap pea in our spring garden. And finally, we began the big job of weeding the garden beds next to the cistern to make room for all the new baby plants we are anxiously waiting to sprout!

As a preschool teaching team, we also entered February with the big question, "How can we better weave empathy and kindness building practices into our curriculum?"

So much of the real work that we do in preschool revolves around social emotional development, and supporting the childrens' emerging relationships to both themselves, and others. To be a preschooler means growing and changing within a highy dynamic social environment, and this raises many important questions, and challenges, for all of us during our school days together. As teachers, we are always assessing the emotinal and social needs of our students, and whether we are being responsive to both the spoken,



and unspoken, social emotional needs and questions that arise. And when needed, we must deliberately steer our preschool conversations and actions towards our cherished preschool values of belonging, empathy, and kindness in both actions and words. Our job is to find concrete and positive ways to build the practice of kindness into our daily work at school, and to help our preschoolers make sense of all these questions within a framework that puts our shared values as a loving community at the center of their developing moral compass. To teach kindness, both experience and research tell us that we must provide daily practice in what it means to act with kindness towards others, not solely be the recipients of kindness, or observers of it.

Additionally, we also made the oh so exciting introduction of preschool jobs to our classroom. Every morning circle, we pass out job necklaces and the children are in charge of doing that particular task with a buddy of their choice. Ringing the lunch bell, passing out cups, collecting eggs, feeding greens to the bunnies, loading the dishwasher, and wiping tables have all become part of their daily routine. The children love it! When the children can practice being helpers in this way, they are seeing themselves as people who are capable givers of care and kindness towards their school, classmates, teachers, and ultimately, themselves. Our big idea with both of these routines is that we are creating a daily practice of kindness in action, and that the preschoolers are participating in a sort of 'kindness project' that we will continue to build on throughout the school year, and for years to come.

To see photos from this month check out our SmugMug album.



Friendly Reminders

Summer camp registration is now open. Please email the office if you have any registration questions.

Tuition is due the first Friday of every month.

Get Your Calendars!

Please Join Us for our Parent Discussion Meeting, Saturday March 10th at 10:00 at the PlayGarden. The topic is Emotion Coaching with Eebie Motlong. Please watch for more information to be posted in the Breezeway by the bag drop off.

Peace and Love,
The PlayGarden Teachers





MONTH
MARCH



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DAILY TASKS

GARDEN

- Continue to plant seedlings indoors
- Transplant pea seedlings to the garden
- Harvest garlic
- Plant flowers
- Plant peas in egg cartons
- Toilet Paper Roll Planters
- Plant plant kale, radishes, beets, lettuce, carrots and potatoes
- Hang nesting balls
- Make suet feeders
- Plant carrot seeds on toilet paper
- Wash the pig
- Examine the pussy willow buds



ANIMALS

- Learn about composting and what foods the chickens, rabbits and worms eat
- Make a bunny salad with greens from the garden
- Feed the worm bin
- Collect eggs
- Feed the chickens mealworms



LET'S SING TOGETHER

Skidamarink

Skidamarink a dink a dink,
Skidamarink a doo,
I love you.
Skidamarink a dink a dink,
Skidamarink a doo,
I love you.

I love you in the morning
And in the afternoon,
I love you in the evening
And underneath the moon;
Oh, Skidamarink a dink a dink,
Skidamarink a doo,
I love you, and you and you!

We like to sing this song in order to spread love
and to teach the ASL sign for I love you.

Bomdeyada

I love the mountains.
I love the rolling hills.
I love the daffodils.
I love the fireside.
When all the lights are low.

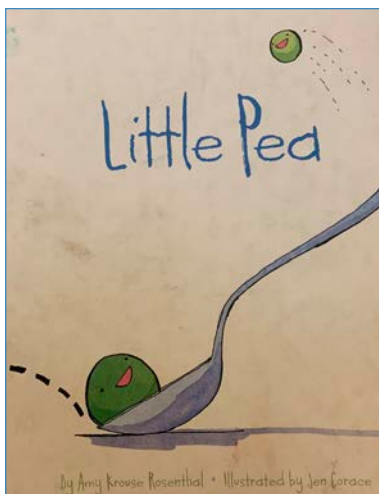
Boom dee ah dah. Boom dee ah dah.
Boom dee ah dah. Boom dee ah dah.
Boom dee ah dah. Boom dee ah dah.
Boom dee ah dah. Boom dee ah dah.

I love the mountains.
I love the rolling hills.
I love the daffodils.
I love the fireside.
When all the lights are low.

Boom dee ah dah. Boom dee ah dah.
Boom dee ah dah. Boom dee ah dah.
Boom dee ah dah. Boom dee ah dah.
Boom dee ah dah. Boom dee ah dah.

Make hand motions with each line.
When you get to the Boom dee ah dah part,
encourage the children to gently bump into one
another in the circle. Repeat faster each round.

STORYTIME



Little Pea by Amy Krouse Rosenthal is a book about early spring in the garden and planting peas!



Compost Stew by Mary McKenna Siddals is all about compost and the life cycle of food and plants. It's a great tool for teaching how to compost.

Our Other Favorites:

What Color is the Wind by Annie Herbauts

The Snails Spell by Joanne Ryder

Yucky Worms by Vivian French

Harry the Dirty Dog by Gene Zion

RECIPE OF THE DAY

PIZZA

Pizza is a staple at the PlayGarden and can become a full morning activity. We let the children roll and stretch out their own dough and add their own combination of toppings for their individual pizzas.

INGREDIENTS:

- Dough
- 3 1/2 to 4 cups bread flour, plus more for rolling
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 envelope instant dry yeast
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 1/2 cups water, 110 degrees F
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, plus 2 teaspoons

- Toppings
- Tomato Sauce
- Olives
- Pineapple
- Pepperoni
- Mozzarella Cheese
- Basil





HOW TO MAKE THE PIZZA DOUGH :

1. Put warm water in a large bowl, add the yeast and let stand for about 5 minutes for the yeast to activate. Don't use hot water or you will ruin the yeast.
2. Whisk in olive oil. Add flour, then the salt and knead until well-combined. The dough should be sticky.
3. Grease a large bowl with the remaining 2 teaspoons of olive oil, add the dough. Cover with clean washcloth and leave in a warm place until doubled in volume (45 min to 1 hr at room temp or 25-30 min in a warm 100°F oven)

DIRECTIONS :

1. Preheat oven to 425°F
2. Have students grate mozzarella cheese if not already grated and chop olives. Place into small bowls.
3. Set up trays with pizza ingredients distributed into small bowls such as olives, tomato sauce, pineapple, pepperoni and cheese.
4. Clean off a table for pizza making. Flour table so the pizza doesn't stick to it.
5. Give each child a ball of pizza dough to make their own individual pizza.
6. Place ingredients out across tables so that all children can reach ingredients.
7. Transfer individual pizzas to a baking sheet.
8. Bake pizzas at 425°F for 15 minutes or until the crust is crisp and toppings are cooked. Let cool.
9. Allow the students to use pizza cutters to cut the pizza.

CREATION STATION

RAINBOW RICE

March is all about the seasonal shift from winter to spring. The days switch from cold and grey to windy, stormy and rainy. Some days we get a break from the rain, the sun shines bright and and if we are really lucky a rainbow will appear. Making Rainbow Rice is one of the many activities we do to celebrate this shift in season and the magic rainbows bless us with.

This activity is great because there are pieces that can be done individually by students and other parts that can be done as a group.

Color involves gross motor skills including pouring, scooping, shaking, high sensory

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Practice measuring, pouring, mixing and shaking
- Explore what happens when you combine certain colors
- Practice taking turns

MATERIALS

- Two large bowls
- Rice
- Food Coloring
- Vinegar
- Gallon or quart size ziplock bags or reusable containers you don't mind getting stained
- Large tub to store rice in
- Measuring Cups
- Tablespoons
- Squeeze bottles



PREP

- Pour rice into a big bowl that the students can scoop rice from.
- Pour vinegar into small water pitchers with lids that the children can pour from.
- Pour small amounts of food coloring into small cups. Set out eye droppers.
- To make the activity either a little less messier, or make the project even simpler you can prep mix the vinegar and the food coloring together into small squeeze bottles.



HOW TO MAKE RAINBOW RICE

- Give each child a quart size ziplock bag.
- Have them scoop 2 cups of rice into their bag.
- Add 1 tablespoon of vinegar to the rice and 5-10 drops of food coloring.
- Close the bag and shake.
- Reopen the bag. Leave the bags open for at least 2 hours and allow the rice to dry.

GROUP ACTIVITY:

Once all the children have made a bag of rice and the rice has dried, bring the class together. Place the empty large tub over a tarp, blanket or sheet to catch at least some of the rice that will come out of the bin. Sing a song and talk about the colors of the rainbow. Have a conversation about how each child is going to have a turn pouring their rice into the empty large container. One by one have the children pour all colors into a small storage bin.

Take a moment to enjoy the rainbow and then let the play begin!

Ways to expand the play

- Build a full sensory bin by adding items such as measuring cups, funnels, spoons with holes, and toys animals.
- Continue the rainbow theme with making a walking rainbow science experiment, reading *Planting a Rainbow*, painting a large rainbow, eat a rainbow for snack and by going on a rainbow scavenger hunt.
- Add rice to old spice jars to make shakers

MUDDY PLAY



S, S and D are able to jump and splash in the mud to their heart's content because they are dressed in appropriate rain gear, including rain pants, jackets, hats and boots and each have an extra set of clothes to change into.

March in the Pacific Northwest is more often than not, cold, grey and rainy. The garden is quiet and the plants have yet to grow back. At outdoor preschool though, March is a very fun month. It is full of adventurous puddle stomping and muddy play. Just like in our favorite Calvin and Hobbes comic, a trickle of rain can book our whole day solid. We spend our days building dams, bridges and floating sticks and leaves. The students practice conquering fears and pushing physical limits. Just as they get practice becoming chefs of mud pie kitchens and project managers on a construction site.

There is a deep thrill to getting really, really dirty and messy play is extremely important for a child's development. Messy play provides children with an exciting tactile and sensory experience that inspires their curiosity, allows them to explore the world around them, and enhances learning. Muddy play is a lesson in how to be carefree, adventurous, spontaneous, and live in the moment. It takes a good muddy day to remind the teachers of just how important this kind of play really is.



How to See Muddy Play as Beneficial to Child Development

<p>Common Arguments Against Muddy Play In A Preschool Setting</p>	
<p>“They will get too dirty”</p>	<p>The students do get dirty but a little dirt never hurt. Research has shown that the number one reason you should let your students go outside, play in the mud, and just get dirty is that it introduces their body to essential microorganisms and can in fact help to strengthen children’s immune system.</p> <p>Learn more in Jack Gilbert’s book <i>Dirt is Good: The Advantage of Germs for Your Child’s Developing Immune System</i>.</p>
<p>“The classroom will get too dirty”</p>	<p>It is true that muddy play outside can often lead to a lot of clean up and feel like too much cleaning for teachers. But ask yourself, who is the preschool experience designed for? Is it for the benefit of the teachers? Or for the students? The students getting dirty is a good learning opportunity. After playing in the mud, teachers can help children change out of muddy rainy gear into a new dry set. This is all part of the fun for the students. They like to get cleaned up, wash their hands in warm soapy water, get cozy again, and put their dirty clothes into a special bag to take home.</p>
<p>“The parents don’t want them to be muddy at the end of the day.”</p>	<p>Every family has a different comfort level with their children getting dirty. There are also important cultural differences to take into account when considering adding muddy play as part of your preschool program.</p> <p>Be sensitive to the different cultural norms and talk with families about their comfort level with their kid being dirty. If they are uncomfortable with their child being dirty at the end of the day, be sure to change that child into clean clothes before pick up. If they don’t mind, you can let go of that stress.</p> <p>Be sure to talk with parents about sending their children to school in clothes they don’t mind getting dirty and offering rain gear to families who may not have it at home. At the Playgarden we have two stocked bins of extra clothes that students can borrow clothing from.</p>
<p>“They will get too cold”</p>	<p>Outdoor play in March in the Pacific Northwest can be very cold. This is a serious concern for the children’s health and safety, and of particular concern for children with physical disabilities who may have a limited ability to change clothes themselves and move their bodies to warm up. The cold is also a concern for younger children or children with communication disabilities that limit their ability to tell a teacher if they are getting too cold.</p> <p>Be sure to watch when students are getting wet, pay attention to how long they have been playing in the mud/rain and be ready to change them into dry clothes soon after they are done playing. At the Play-Garden we warm up with a hot snack or lunch, have access to warm water to wash hands, blankets to curl up in, and give out hand warmers to students when needed.</p>
<p>“It takes too much time to change them.”</p>	<p>There is no getting around that muddy children take a little extra time to change. However, for preschoolers, learning to zip up a coat, put on mittens, or kick off muddy boots are key skills needed for their development. Time spent changing clothes is not time wasted. Make it part of your daily routine.</p> <p>You can set up simple systems to help students change clothes and make it easier on the teachers, such as doing a bathroom train in small groups, having the students get their bags themselves, rules about taking off boots at the door, and changing clothes to a specific song. It can help to establish, with the students, a certain time of day when they can get really muddy so that you are not changing students right from the get go in your day.</p> <p>At the PlayGarden, all of the teachers clean up at the end of each day. Cleaning time is some of the most critical time for our teaching staff. We use this time to have debrief conversations with each other about what is going on at school. Being able to talk while cleaning saves times that would otherwise be spent in separate meetings. It is also when good ideas often spark.</p>



Worms and Mud go Hand in Hand

March is a great time to start teaching students about worms. Looking for worms, saving worms from rain puddles, learning about their body parts, and how they help decompose food are all great places to start.

What to read:

During March some of our favorite books to read include: Duck in the Truck, Yuck! Stuck in the Muck, Yucky Worms, & Diary of a Worm.

Accessibility tip:

Though Mud can be super fun to play in it can make spaces less physically accessible for students that use walkers, strollers or wheelchairs. Find creative solutions for keeping paths in your garden as solid as possible and try to reduce the occurrence of potholes.

At the PlayGarden we cover our garden paths with burlap sacks pinned down with garden staples to keep the paths smooth and easier to navigate.

Building a Mud Pit

There are a few key considerations to keep in mind when building a mud pit:

1. Set aside a specific place where students can dig as much as they like. Our mud pit at the PlayGarden is in a central location in our garden yet distinctly it's own place. In the fall, winter and early spring it will fill itself with rain water to make mud. In the summer, students can retrieve water from a cistern and add it to the mud pit. This is an activity that can entertain students for hours.
2. A mud pit is an intentionally designed space. Add elements that spark wonder. For example, we have Wilbur our Pig nearby. He loves to roll in the mud and get mud baths and be hosed down in the summertime. The mud pit is also near the garden so students can pick flowers to add into their mud pies.
3. To make an exciting mud pit, add stumps, logs and rocks to sit on and allow students to move materials around to make bridges and dams.
4. Pay attention to its depth and edges. The best mud pits are deep enough to pool but not so deep that they are dangerous for young children to play in. Students will often try to make the mud pit bigger by digging from the sides. We keep a close eye on the pit to ensure that the wheelchair accessible paths around it are still wide and flat enough for our students in wheelchairs to use and to protect the garden.





Building & Maintaining a Mud Pie Kitchen

Preschoolers love to play make-believe, role-play, play family, kitchen and restaurant. Watch children play in a mud pie kitchen and you will see, they love to practice serving each other and making mysterious sounding concoctions like witches stew. A mud pie kitchen area is a great learning environment to set up for your students that integrates all of these kinds of play.

To create a mud pie kitchen that is accessible and fun for all

1. Make sure to have tables or surfaces at different heights and that allow for wheelchair access.
2. Have tools on hand like muffin tins, watering cans, pitchers, spoons, whisks, and measuring cups out that students can access on their own.
3. Be sure to have enough supplies that multiple students can play at the same time.
4. Build your mud pie kitchen area near a water source as well so students can continuously make more mud.
5. Remember that the whole environment around the mud pit is key. If the tools are all tucked away or out of reach students won't start playing with them on their own. If however, the tools and cooking utensils are easy to access and there are a few enticing things, like some flowers left on the table, or an example of a mud pie, students will be drawn into the space.
6. For the mud pie kitchen to stay fun it is important for the space to be cleaned up and put back together just like an indoor play space would be cleaned after students play there. At the end of the day have teachers, rinse off utensils, wipe down the tables, and put the tools back in the right places.
7. Remember, to let the children guide the play.

ALL BEHAVIOR IS COMMUNICATION



All behavior is a form of communication. Adults and children are communicating something through their behavior every part of every day, whether they are aware of it or not. The goal as an educator is to understand what is driving the behaviors. Certain behaviors can indicate to a teacher that the child is having an easy or hard time with things such as paying attention, readiness to learn, and ability to play with their friends.

Some behaviors communicate a desire for attention, a certain activity, sensory stimulation, or a break; while other behaviors that a child may want to avoid something, such as a loud noise, a crowded group setting, or a transition. Imagine you have a student in your group who refuses to sit still at circle time. It may be easy to jump to the conclusion that the child is being difficult or choosing to not cooperate. If instead we can switch to think “this child may need

a break” or “this child is not feeling heard” it changes how a teacher responds to that child. Switching how we think about a child’s behavior with the perspective that all behavior is communicating something creates opportunities for teachers to figure out what that need is.

There are also many behaviors such as pushing in line, avoiding group activities, putting hands over their ears, or refusing to put on clothing that is itchy or scratchy that teachers can misinterpret or mis-label as “bad behaviors” when in fact there may be something bigger going on. These types of behaviors can indicate that the child is having a hard time processing sensory information. This is often related to a child having what is referred to as a sensory sensitivity or sensory processing disorder.

Understanding Sensory Processing

by Burnley Danner, OTR/L

Occupational Therapist & PlayGarden Board Member

Humans have eight senses that make up our sensory system. These senses help us take in, process, and respond to all types of information from the world around us. These senses include: Hearing, sight, smell, taste, touch, awareness of our bodies in space (proprioceptive input), awareness of our body's movement and relationship to gravity (vestibular input), and awareness of our own bodily functions and feelings (interoceptive input). All people process this sensory information in different ways and with different preferences and thresholds. Some people notice a small amount of sensory information very quickly, while other people need a lot of sensory information to even notice it. Some people like the feeling of a certain kind of input and want a lot of it, while some people may be more sensitive and tend to avoid that input. Sensory processing is something we all do and every person's sensory system is unique to them. It is important to remember that a sensory processing difference does not always indicate a sensory processing problem!

When to Refer to an Occupational Therapist:

Sometimes a child's sensory system can be so unique that it interferes with their ability to participate in daily routines like eating, getting dressed, sitting down to read a book or play a game, or playing with friends. As a preschool teacher if you start to notice any of the kinds of behaviors listed below and these behaviors are interfering with the child's classroom participation, that child may benefit from specialized help. Set a time aside to have a conversation with the parents about what you are noticing. In these conversations you can refer a parent to consult with their pediatrician and to get an evaluation from an Occupational Therapist. The goal of occupational therapy is to help the child participate in the things they want and need to do throughout their day, including at home, at school, and out in the community. An Occupational Therapist will work with the family and child to come up with a treatment plan and goals. This may include identification of what kind(s) of sensory input a child is struggling with and developing a list of activities or strategies that can help the child process and respond to sensory input in a way that helps them participate more successfully in their learning experience.

Behaviors that may indicate the need for an Occupational Therapy Evaluation:

1. Distracted by or frequent commenting on sounds, textures, or smells more often than peers.
2. Avoiding or becoming distressed by messy play, such as mud, playdough, glue, food, paint, etc.
3. Highly distractible, difficulty with attention or learning new concepts during stationary tasks.
4. Difficulty sitting still in their seat, fidgeting, wanting to get up and stand or walk during stationary classroom tasks.
5. Poor awareness of where their body is in space, clumsy, frequent running into peers or equipment, hitting their head or limbs when climbing, very high pain tolerance
6. Frequent slumping or leaning their trunk or head down on their desk.
7. Often mis-calculating their own strength, such as breaking pencils or crayons during coloring or writing or accidentally using too much force during play with peers



O pours bucket after bucket of water on her face to cool down. S sits in a whiskey barrel of lavender, enjoying her time at the PlayGarden.

Examples at the PlayGarden:

At the PlayGarden we spend most of our school day out in the garden. Here are a few examples of behaviors we have noticed amongst our students with sensory sensitivities and how that translate to their time in the garden:

Sensory Seekers

Children that are sensory seekers may do a range of different things in the garden to meet the need for sensory input. They may enjoy dropping gravel down the drain, jumping into the mud pit and covering themselves completely in mud, or picking the tops of flowers off their stems and watching the petals fall to the ground over and over again.

Some of these behaviors can appear to adults as disruptive to the class, the main activity or the garden. However, using the perspective of all behavior is communication, an inclusive educator sees these behaviors not as disruptive but as a reminder that that behavior is doing something important for the child's emotional and physical regulation.

Ask yourself:

- What could that behavior be doing for the child?
- What are they trying to communicate with their actions?

For example, dropping gravel down a drain may at first seem annoying or unnecessary to an adult but in fact that the act of scooping and pouring gravel and listening to the pebbles fall into the drain may be helping a child feel calm and at ease or it may help them release pent up energy after having been at circle for thirty minutes right before.

Sophie is a young girl with Autism. She loves to pick flowers and pull off all the leaves and petals. We do not know what this behavior is doing for Sophie but we do know it is important for her and proves to be incredibly calming. If picking flowers in this way is not conducive to your garden space, you can encourage the child to continue picking flowers but direct them to do it in a more contained way.

Sensory-Avoidant

You may have a child in your group that you want to introduce to the garden but they are sensory avoidant. For example, they may be averse to having their hands get dirty or are uncomfortable with different temperatures or textures.

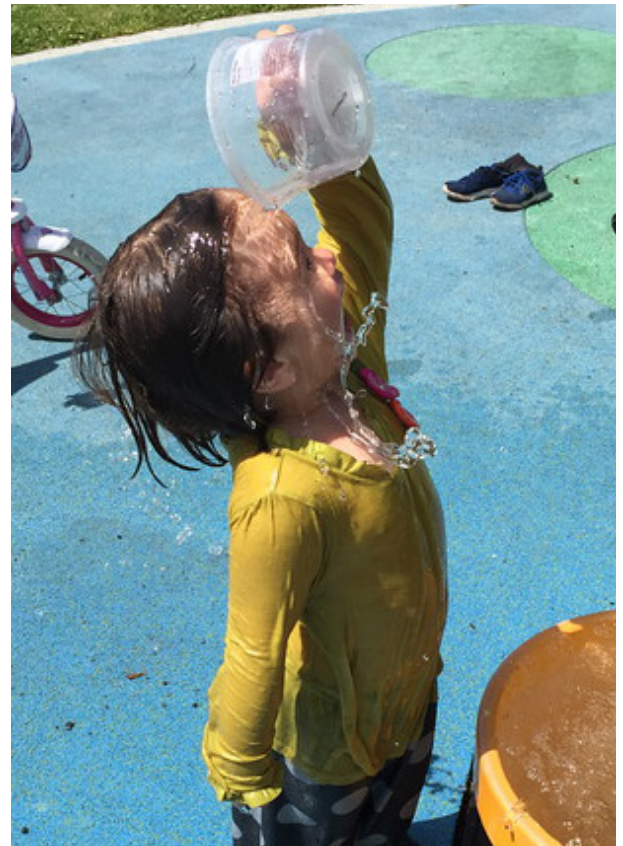
There are many ways to help students with sensory disabilities engage with the garden in a way that is still comfortable for them. Do your best to figure out what element of the

gardening is making them uncomfortable (such as the temperature of the soil, the texture of the worm, or the smells of certain things) and remove that element if you can.

Remember that even if a child pulls away from an activity such as planting with their hands they may still want to watch. In this case, help them to experience the various elements by narrating what you see, what you feel and what you notice.

There are signs you can look for that will help you better understand if a child is having trouble processing sensory information. Some examples include:

- A child covering their ears around loud noises such as at circle time.
- A child avoiding the snack or lunch table. This could mean the child is overly sensitive to smells and there are too many smells around the table to process or that the table is too crowded, cluttered, with other students
- A child avoiding group activities as they could be too overstimulating for them.



SEATTLE CHILDREN'S
PLAYGARDEN

A Garden for Everyone



February Newsletter Check Out What We've Been Up To!

Dear Preschool Families,

We were so happy to have Teacher Hannah join us for preschool this month while Teacher Liz was becoming a Grandmother in London. Little baby Omid is now on his way in life as a healthy, strong and feisty little boy. Teacher Hannah led the kids in a “food story” with the main character being a blueberry muffin named Blue. The kids developed Blue’s origin, what he/she was made of including eggs from the chickens, flour from wheat, blueberries from bushes and vanilla from, well that was a hard one. The kids decided that vanilla came from cinnamon.

We also began our days with weather reports, sharing and discussions about love and friendship.

Looking Ahead to March

With some luck the rain will let up a bit and the soil will dry enough for early spring planting! We will begin our seed starting with peas, lots and lots of peas, sugar snap peas, sweet peas, snap peas, snow peas and garden peas. We will turn our attention to nesting by studying nests and making nesting balls for the birds. We will look for signs of spring all around us and hope for a few rainbows.

Our book of the month is Little Pea by Amy Krause Rosenthal Illustrated by Jen Corace.



Get Your Calendars!

Join us for another PlayGarden Discussion Night
Tuesday March 21st. 6:30-8:00pm

This month's topic is Talking about Race With Your Children. Please make sure to join us for this very important topic. Childcare is available but limited. Please register your child for care by emailing the office. Space is limited.

Art with Ms. Arni Saturday March 18th 10:00am-10:45 session and 11:00-12:30 session. \$10 donation. Register here on the website.

Peace and Love,
The PlayGarden Teachers





MONTH

APRIL



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in the Classroom p. 144

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DAILY TASKS

GARDEN

- Cleanout worm bin
- Add shredded newspaper to worm bins
- Add red wigglers to worm bins
- Harvest greens for bunnies
- Plant onions
- Make suet balls
- Plant peas, sweet peas, radishes, beets, carrots, greens
- Look for cherry blossoms, daffodils and crocus

ANIMALS

- Care for and name baby ducklings and baby chicks
- Feed bunnies greens from the garden
- Pet the bunnies
- Explore the difference between a chicken and a duck egg?



LET'S SING TOGETHER

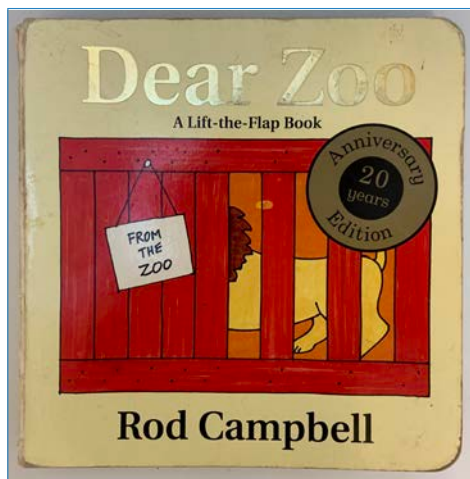
Here is Bunny with Ears So Funny

Here is a bunny
(Hold up index and middle fingers.)
With ears so funny.
(Wiggle fingers.)
And here is his
Hole in the ground.
(Make hole with fist of the other hand.)
At the slightest noise he hears,
He pricks up his ears,
(Wiggle fingers.)
Then hops to his
Hole in the ground!
(Pretend to hop bunny ears into the hole.)

If All the Raindrops

If all the raindrops
Were lemon drops and gumdrops
So what a rain that would be
Standing outside with my mouth open wide
Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah
If all the raindrops
Were lemon drops and gumdrops
Oh, what a rain that would be
I can get working
Oh, look at that
He, hope he gets everybody
Oh, come on
If all the snowflakes
Were candy bars and milkshakes
Oh, what a snow that would be
Standing outside with my mouth open wide

STORYTIME



Dear Zoo by Rob Campbell is all about pets and helps us talk about responsibility and taking care of our own animals at school.



Hank's Big Day by Evan Kuhlman is all about bugs! This is a great book to pretend a bug hunt and exploring in the garden.

Our Other Favorites:

Somebody and the Three Blairs by Marilyn Tolhurst
Gossie, Gertie & Peedie by Oliver Dunrea

RECIPE OF THE DAY

QUESADILLA

Quesadillas are quick and easy to make and the process of making quesadillas has just enough risk from using the cheese graters to the griddle to keep children excited to cook them all year.

INGREDIENTS:

- Flour or corn tortillas
- Cheddar cheese
- Butter or oil

SUPPLIES:

- Cheese graters
- Griddle or stove top/frying pan
- Cutting boards
- Pizza Cutters





INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Set up stations with cutting boards and cheese graters at the table for multiple students to grate cheese.
2. Give each child two tortillas, add their cheese too.
3. Heat up the griddle and add 1 tablespoon butter or oil.
4. Have a conversation about how to be safe around the griddle if the students are helping to cook.
5. Fry quesadillas a couple minutes on each side.
6. Remove from heat and set aside to cool.
7. Allow the students to use pizza cutters to cut the quesadillas.



CREATION STATION

MARBLEIZED PAPER

Marbleized Paper is a high sensory and colorful art experience. It is process-based art that sparks the imagination with the final product. Can you see ocean waves in the swirls? Or a snowy mountain pass or forest landscape?

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Have the opportunity to get really messy and engage in a high sensory art experience.
- Learn cause and effect as it relates to mixing colors.
- Celebrate Earth Day!

MATERIALS

- Watercolor paper cut in half
- Shaving cream
- Large plastic trays
- Plastic knives
- Food coloring
- Thick pieces of cardboard to scrape off shaving cream
- Sharpie
- Sink or bucket to rinse off trays



PREP

Marbleized Paper can become a big mess really quick if not prepared well ahead of time.

° Pre-cut paper to the size you want for each child (your hands will get dirty as well so it is easier to do this ahead of time).

° Fill a large tub or wheelbarrow with water. This will come in handy when you want to reset a tray for another child. Set in a location close enough to the project that the students can access it but far enough away that the project space and cleaning space are different.

Plan to do this activity outside if possible. If not, put tablecloths over the tables to prevent the food coloring from dying on the table surface. We like to use oilcloth tablecloths that we have cut specifically to fit our pre-school tables.



DURING THE ACTIVITY

One of the best parts of this activity is playing in the shaving cream, not making the final product. If a final product is a goal of yours,

Instructions:

1. Give each child a piece of paper and write their name on the back
2. Give each child an empty plastic tray, a plastic knife, and a piece of cardboard to scrape
3. Have kids spray shaving cream into the tray. Most kids will need assistance spraying so be ready to have teacher support.
4. Add drops of food coloring
5. Use a plastic knife to swirl around the food coloring
6. Gently place the watercolor paper on top of the shaving cream
7. Peel back the paper slowly
8. Place paper on a hard surface
9. Use cardboard to scrape shaving cream off
10. Hang up to dry
11. Once dry, the marbled art can be turned into Earth Day cards or gifts with the addition of a little ribbon or words from each child.

Benefits of Having Animals in the Classroom



One of the things that truly sets the PlayGarden apart from other schools, even other outdoor preschools, is the wonderful menagerie of animals who live here, a flock of chickens and ducks, a big goose, and a trio of rabbits all make their home at our school. These animals are part of our preschool, our park, our curriculum, and a part of our community.

At the PlayGarden, we often think of there being four teachers in our space: The preschool staff, the children/social environment, the garden/physical space of the PlayGarden itself, and lastly, the animals.

Children are drawn to animals. Fundamentally, they present an intriguing sensory experience, one that is made of sound, smell, touch, sight, (and when we eat the chicken's eggs, taste). The smell of the chicken yard, the sound of the animals talking to one another, quietly clucking or loudly honking, the splash of the ducks in their pond, the feel of their feathers or fur, their leathery feet or sharp claws, the sight of the birds moving as a flock through the lawn, the animals distinctive colors - these are all captivating to our senses. We have had many students who would

happily stay with the animals the entire school day, holding, watching, talking to, or feeding them. The children have their own relationship with them and they seem to understand that the animals are intrinsically important and of value, and whole part of our community, each with their own personalities, and unique qualities.

In preschool, the animals are part of our daily curriculum. Sometimes it is as simple as feeding the bunnies, chickens, goose and ducks our veggie scraps from mealtimes, or searching the garden for a kale leaf to give the bunnies. Other times it's as enthralling as having baby chicks in an enclosure in the classroom, or bringing the bunnies out to hop around on our circle time blanket, or holding a chicken on our laps. Animal care is also part of our daily practice. Often, we use kid sized rakes to clean the barnyard, and have the children fill the duck pond with fresh water in the mornings and refill the food dishes. Every morning we search for eggs.

Children with vastly different temperaments and attention spans are drawn into the experience of holding, feeding, or observing the animals. Our kids are natural observers,



and track the changes and growth that the baby chicks go through over a few days, weeks, or months. When they see this development, it becomes a mirror to their own change/development, and we teachers can help them connect to this idea through conversation. Remember how little those chicks were when we first got them? They could only peep and liked to huddle together. Now look at how big they are! They can hop up on the log, and roost up high. Their feathers are changing. They can fly now! Do you remember when you were so little that you couldn't hop, or could only cry when you needed help? What can you do now that you couldn't do when you were a baby? We're all growing so much!

As teachers, we work to reinforce the natural empathy children feel towards our animals, by exploring how to best care for them, and respond to their needs. Our job is to teach our students how to hold them properly, feed them what is healthy for them, clean their enclosures, read their cues, and respond appropriately, and protect them from harm. We work on the assumption that each animal deserves respect and care, and that their behaviors have meaning, even an unpleasant behavior, like biting.

For instance, the big goose, Hop, can be intimidating for some of our students. He occasionally bites our fingers if we get too close, because (as we explain to the children), his job is to protect his flock, and biting is how he keeps us from getting too close, it's not because he's a "mean" or "grumpy" goose. We empathize with the feeling of being scared or worried he will bite, and of course teach ways to be cautious

and protect our hands, but we try and frame it as Hop doing his job, and not that he is "bad."

When children are able to be present with animals in this way, as observers, and as caregivers, they naturally build both insight into what we all need to thrive as living beings (food, water, shelter, companionship/love) and empathy for the animals as independent beings with their own experiences and needs; while at the same time, organically developing their own internal identity as someone who is a caregiver, nurturer, and helper, and who is separate in their own identity, but in relationship with others.



SEATTLE CHILDREN'S
PLAYGARDEN
A Garden for Everyone



April Newsletter Check Out What We've Been Up To!

Dear Preschool Families,

It's hard to believe that the last time I sat down to write the newsletter just a few short months ago, the world outside was a frozen white winter wonderland. Now we are frolicking in 80+ degree sun, and the garden is lush and green, and the marigolds we planted shine like gold in the borders. Buttercups, dandelions, and tiny white daisies dot the lawn, the once scrawny pea vines are now full of tendrils and stand tall and sturdy, and our tomato and basil starts are already in the ground.

Like the growth and change we've watched so quickly unfurl in the garden, our days in preschool have been full of this same magic and experience of time suddenly moving more quickly, and the realization that our days together will soon come to a close. In June we will be saying goodbye to a fabulous group of five and six year olds as they fly off to kindergarten, and our once new preschoolers will become the seasoned pros of next year. In circle we've been having a conversation about all this growing we've done, and how far we've come from when we were babies.

I've shared some of my own baby photos and photos of a newborn Teo. The class was truly fascinated by these. I would love to continue this conversation with more baby photos from our entire class, so please send in a photo if you can and we'll share it at circle!

In April we also celebrated Earth Day. Teacher Hannah helped the class understand what that mysterious word "Recycle" means, and organized a Recycle Relay so we could learn about how to sort our recycle from our trash. We also talked about the small things we can do to take care of our Earth (turn off the tap when we brush our



teeth and soap up our hands, ride our bike more, and of course, Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle.) We also had a conversation about what makes our Earth so special (water, so many types of plants and animals, it's where all our favorite people and pets live, it's our home, it's beautiful), and examined the globe and painted our own Earths. We also played with the Earth ball and tossed it to each other while shouting out our favorite ocean animal.



In April, among other things, we also explored dyeing eggs with cabbage and plants, made chicken masks from egg cartons, danced like a growing plant with Teacher Louie, turned the soil and planted potatoes and heirloom corn seeds with Teacher Annie, filled bucket upon bucket and watering can upon watering can from the cistern, watered the garden, played basketball and soccer with Jean, celebrated Winnie and Ben's birthdays, and spent countless time observing, holding, and talking about our bunnies and chicks.



A big thank you to all our families who volunteered for our family work day in the garden, and helped Teacher Annie get some important tasks checked off of her to-do list. We so appreciate your help!

Peace and Love,
The PlayGarden Teachers





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MAY



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DAILY TASKS

GARDEN

- Plant summer squash
- Harvest peas
- Plant flower seeds
- Hammer flowers into bookmarks
- Make lavender satchels
- Plant Scarlet Runner Beans
- Clean the whiskey barrel pond and refill with water

ANIMALS

- Go on a Bug Scavenger Hunt
- Watch the bees
- Do a bee dance
- Collect eggs
- Play time in the grass for the bunnies
- Scrub the duck pond



LET'S SING TOGETHER

Boom Chicka Boom

I said a Boom Chicka Boom
I said a Boom Chicka Boom
I said a Boom Chicka Rocka Chicka Rocka Chicka Boom
Uh huh
Oh yeah
One more time _____ style.

Janitor Style

I said a Broom Sweep-a Broom
I said a Broom Sweep-a Broom
I said a Broom Sweep-a Mop-a Sweep-a Mop-a
Sweep-a Broom

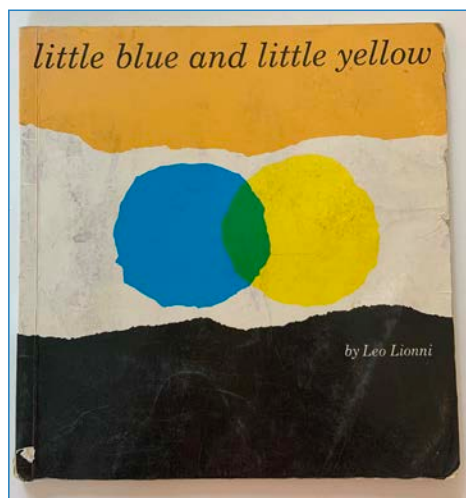
Bee Style

I said a Bzzzz chicka Bzzzz
I said a Bzzzz chicka Bzzzz
I said a Bzzzz flower nectar pollen honey chicka Bzzzz

Barn-yard Style

I said a moo chicka moo
I said a moo chicka moo
I said a moo chicka watch your step
don't track it in the room

STORYTIME



Little Blue and Little Yellow by Leo Lionni is a great book about friendship and family all within a great art lesson.



Planting a Rainbow by Lois Ehlert is a great story to go along with a garden hunt, observing all of the different colors that happen in the Spring.

Our Other Favorites:

Jamberry by Bruce Degen
Caps for Sale by Esphyr Slobodkina

RECIPE OF THE DAY

BLUEBERRY MUFFINS

Muffins are one of the baking projects we do on a regular basis. If you have lots of time, you can do all of the measuring with the children's help. If you have less time, pre-measure out your ingredients but still allow the children to do the mixing and scooping into muffin tins.

INGREDIENTS:

Muffin batter

- 3 cups flour
- 1 1/2 cup white sugar
- 1 tsp salt
- 4 tsp baking powder
- 2/3 cup vegetable oil
- 2 egg
- 2/3 cup milk
- 2 cup blueberries, raspberries, or blackberries fresh or frozen

Crumb Topping - Mix all together

- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 1/3 cup flour
- 1/4 cup butter cubed
- 1 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon

SUPPLIES:

- Mixing bowl
- Wooden spoon
- Teaspoon
- Measuring Cups
- Muffin tin
- Muffin liners





INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 400° degrees
2. Grease muffin cups or line with muffin liners
3. Combine flour, sugar, salt, and baking powder.
4. In a separate bowl mix oil, egg, milk
5. Mix the oil mixture in with the flour mixture
6. Fold in blueberries
7. Using a $\frac{1}{3}$ measuring cup to scoop help the students, fill muffin cups
8. Sprinkle with the crumb topping
9. Bake for 20-25 minutes



CREATION STATION

FLOWER CROWNS

We make crowns and cuffs each season with different items from the garden. In the Summer the crowns are adorned with bright flowers. In the Fall crowns fill with bright orange, yellow and red leaves. In the winter we add pine needles and bright purple winter berries and in the Spring lush smelling lilacs, daisies, and grasses get added. It is a great activity to celebrate the change in seasons and encourage dramatic play.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Explore the garden each season to see what is growing, see the change in colors, textures and plants.

MATERIALS

- Card stock paper cut into crowns and cuffs
- Scissors
- Pen to write names
- Masking tape
- Stapler





PREPARATION

For most preschoolers, cutting out the shape of the crown is too challenging for them. This project is most successful if teachers pre-cut out the crowns. If you have access to a garden the students can pick directly from it. If you do not have access to a garden, collect a large basket full of natural items from your home garden or near-by park (picking respectfully of course) such as grasses and pine needles. Lay out natural items out for the children to choose from to use to decorate their crowns.



HOW TO MAKE A FLOWER CROWN

1. Give each child a crown in its flat form. Write their name on it. They are sure to set it down somewhere and not remember which one is theirs.
2. Pre make some tape rolls out of masking tape to hand to the student to put on their crown.
3. Add flowers, leaves, grasses to the crowns.
4. Once the crown is fully decorated using tape or a stapler fit the crown on the child's head and seal closed.

WAYS TO EXPAND THE PLAY

Read *I'm in Charge of Celebrations* by Byrd Baylor and have a conversation about all the things in nature we can celebrate each day.

TRANSITIONING TO KINDERGARTEN



Just like the transition to preschool, the transition to kindergarten is an important milestone for all children. At the PlayGarden, this transition can be especially meaningful because so many of our students have been with us for two or three years. They have grown up at the PlayGarden, and their families have become an essential part of our community. So celebrating this milestone and transition is always at the forefront of our minds as spring rolls around.

Thinking about this transition for our oldest students begins in January, when we teachers begin assisting the parents in their process of preparing for kindergarten. This means answering questions like:

“Do you think my child is ready for kindergarten?”

“Should we consider another year of preschool?”

“What school would be a good fit for my child?”

As a team, we pull from our collective knowledge of child development, our relationships with elementary schools in our area, and the PlayGarden community, and spend as much time as we need to answering questions and support to families.

In about December, we begin filling out evaluations, forms, and paperwork for the private elementary schools that our students may attend in the fall or Individualized Education Plans (IEP) for children with disabilities going on to public schools. Answering questions about temperament, strengths and challenges, social skills, type of disabilities, and academic skills are all part of this process. As a teacher it feels good to share our knowledge, our insight, and pass the torch to the next team of educators.

As the end of the school year approaches, we also think about the types of conversation and reflection we want to share with our preschoolers around how we’ve all grown up in our time together at school, and what is next. Sharing baby photos (teachers included), or first day of preschool photos, is a great jumping off point for reflection. I love to share my baby photos with my students because it is



such an unexpected revelation that teachers were also once babies, too!

A great circle time conversation starter after sharing our photos is asking the kids questions like:

What could you do when you were a baby? What couldn't you do yet?

What did you do when you were sad? Who comforted you? What do you do now when a friend is sad?

What did you like to eat when you were a baby, and what about now? Do you like different foods than when you were little?

Could you help when you were a baby? What about now- what do you do now to be a helper at school?

How did you feel on the first day of school? What was hard at preschool? How did we make it better? What was fun?

How did we make friends?

What is your favorite game or activity at school?

It's helpful for the kids to hear from their teachers too on all these questions, so I always try to offer a few of my own milestones or observations about my own growth.

Ultimately, the goal of these questions is to get the children to reflect on their own growth. As our kids get ready to transition to new schools, we want to offer back an image of themselves as people who can grow and change, who are

resilient, empathetic, capable, and have the tools to do new things, like kindergarten!

As an inclusive program, we know that it's important to structure these conversations around sharing and highlighting our own personal bests, and not operating on the assumption that all preschoolers will share the same milestones. It's fine that some preschoolers may still be working on skills that other kids have already mastered. The goal is to highlight that all our kids are similar in that they are learners who can grow and change, not making direct comparisons or asserting like, "All preschoolers know how to..."

Last Day of School Traditions

We have a couple of simple but meaningful traditions for our graduating students on the last day of school. Every child who is moving on to kindergarten gets a new picture book that the teachers have specifically chosen for them. The entire staff writes messages on the inside, and we wrap it up to be given on the last day of school. We also have a big end of the year sing-a-long in the garden, where we gather with all the children, staff, parents, and extended family to have a treat and sing all of our favorite preschool songs, or songs that our kids sing at home with their families. As we say our good-byes, we offer the reassurance that you will always be a part of our community, and reinforce the message with our children and families that they are forever welcome to visit, join summer camp, volunteer, or just play in our park.

Once a PlayGardener always a PlayGardener!

SEATTLE CHILDREN'S
PLAYGARDEN

A Garden for Everyone



May Newsletter Check Out What We've Been Up To!

Dear Preschool Families,

As the last few weeks of the year approach we cherish every day we are together. We have bonded over the year.

It shows in how quickly the kids are immersed in their play, the way they handle disagreements and conflict and in the way we come together to read, pet the bunny, share our meals and plant the spring garden.

Our May days will be spent enjoying the garden! It is prime planting time and we will sow seeds in our flower garden and plant starts in our vegetable garden. We will also learn about bees, butterflies and other insects that call the PlayGarden home. Our study of birds, butterflies, caterpillars and roly poly bugs will continue in our art projects and snacks.

At circle time we will continue to sing ALL of the songs we have learned this year and the kids will chose their favorite to include in our end of the year sing-a-long.

Show and Tell has become a bit unwieldy and its time to turn our attention to other types of sharing. We sometimes have "T-Shirt Fashion Show" where the kids have a chance to show us their cool shirt. We also love to see crafts that your kids made at home or things from nature found here at the garden or on other adventures.

We will also be taking care of our new baby chicks! We are now proud caretakers of two Speckled Sussex and one Light Brama, two breeds we have never had before.

They will grow lickety split fast so make sure you visit them often.



Our library is growing by leaps and bounds. We read many books each day but our current favorite is *This Is a Poem that Heals Fish* by Jean-Pierre Simeon and Olivier Tallec.

Get your Calendars!

May 5th: Momentia Seattle will join us from 10:30-12:00 for their “Walk in the Garden” program for seniors dealing with dementia. The seniors will tour the garden then make a garden based craft with the preschoolers.

May 6th: Art with Ms. Arni: 10:30 and 11:30 classes, \$10 donation, email liz@childrensplaygarden.org to reserve a spot.

May 17th: Our annual Play, Grow & Learn Luncheon 11:30-1:00, Four Seasons Waterfront There will be no school but you are all invited to attend our biggest fundraiser of the year.

May 20th: Scarfest Northwest. Join us at the Seattle Children’s PlayGarden to play, meet others and connect with each other. Ward Foley, “Scarman” who was born with arthrogryposis will be coming from Kansas to share his story of hope and healing through his scars. All are welcome to this fun and free event! I hope you can join us! 10 am to 12 pm



May 23rd: Parents Night at the PlayGarden: Discussion topic: Transitioning to Kindergarten! 6:30-8:00pm Limited childcare is available. Reserve childcare by registering for this evening event.

May 29th: Memorial Day, No School

Thursdays in May: Seattle Parks & Rec Dementia Friendly Recreation Program by Momentia Seattle will take place from 10:30-12:00 at the PlayGarden. The preschoolers and seniors will gather for a sharing time from 11:30-11:55.

June 8th & 9th are the last days of school for the year. We will gather for a Sing-a-long at 12:30. Bring a light treat to share if you wish. Friends and family are welcome!

Peace and Love,
The PlayGarden Teachers





MONTH **11** **JUNE**



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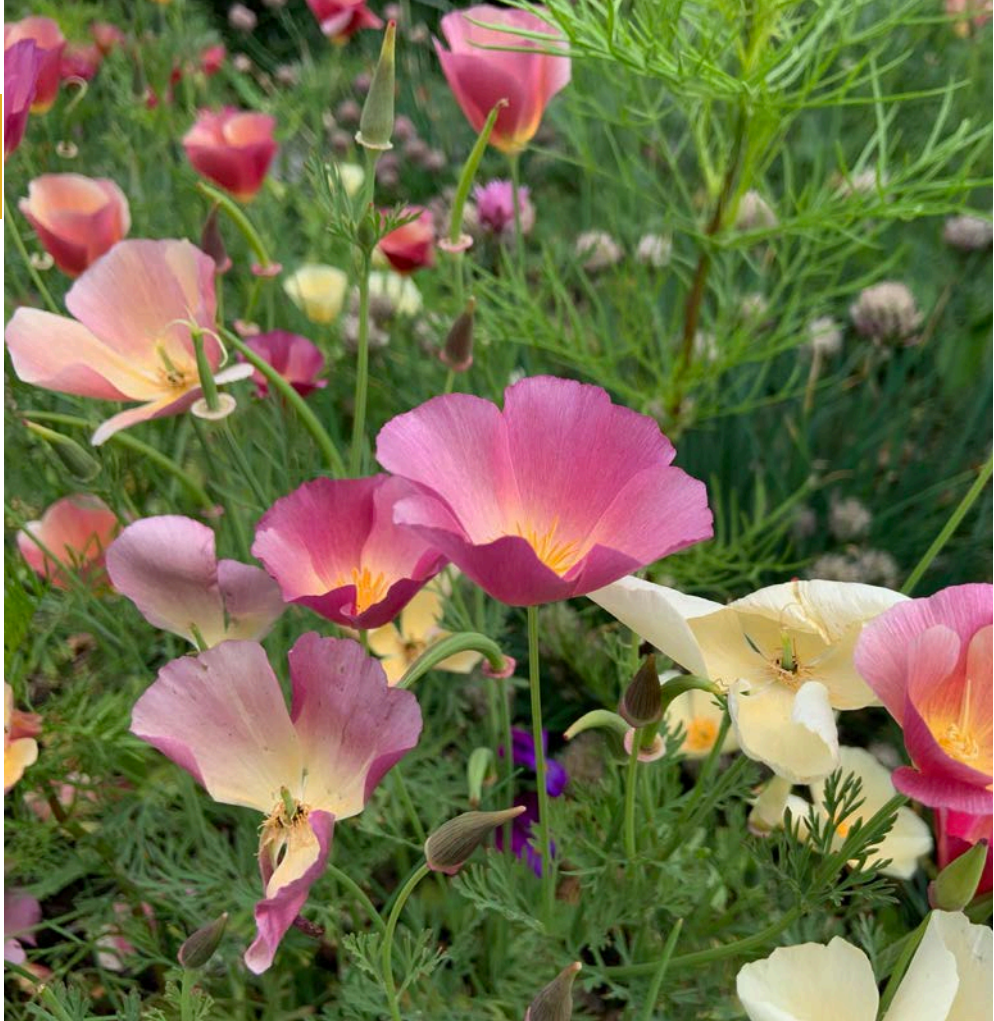
DAILY TASKS

GARDEN

- ° Pick cherries, strawberries and snap peas
- ° Make flower bouquets
- ° Water the garden
- ° Pick lavender
- ° Harvest potatoes and beans

ANIMAL

- ° Look for butterflies, moths and hummingbirds
- ° Dig dandelions to feed the bunnies
- ° Harvest mint for the bunnies



LET'S SING TOGETHER

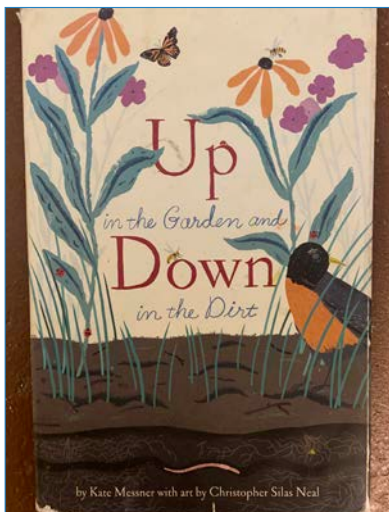
So Long

So long, it's been good to know you
So long, it's been good to know you
It's been a long time since I've been home
And I've got to be traveling on

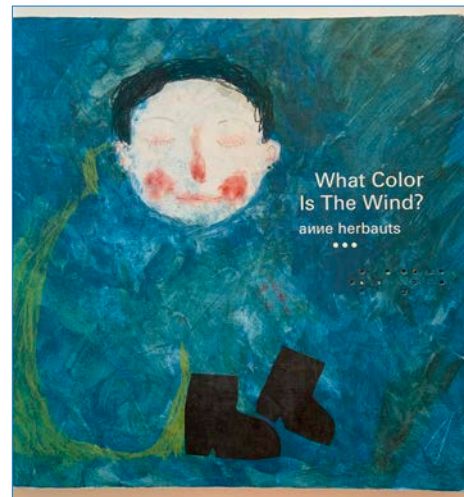
Make New Friends

Make new friends, but keep the old.
One is silver, the other is gold.
A circle is round, it has no end.
That's how long, I will be your friend.
A fire burns bright, it warms the heart.
We've been friends, from the very start.
You have one hand, I have the other.
Put them together, we have each other.
Silver is precious, gold is too.
I am precious, and so are you.
You help me and I'll help you
and together we will see it through.
The sky is blue. The Earth is green
I can help to keep it clean
Across the land, Across the sea
Friends forever we will always be.

STORYTIME



Up and Down by Kate Messner is about the wonders of the natural world.



What Color is the Wind by Anne Herbauts is about a blind child questions all he encounters about the color of the wind.

Our Other Favorites:

A Home for Hermit Crab by Eric Carle
I'm Quick as a Cricket by Audrey Wood

RECIPE OF THE DAY

SMOOTHIES

When the weather gets hot, smoothies become a favorite snack at the Play-Garden. To make it feel even more summery, consider using an extension cord and setting up a smoothie station outside. Plan to make smoothies in batches.

INGREDIENT:

Dairy Free Easy Berry Smoothie

- 2 medium bananas fresh or frozen frozen
- 1 cup milk or alternative milk
- 3 cups fresh or frozen fruit such as strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, mangos, peaches.
- Ice (if not using frozen fruit)

Dairy Free Mango-Banana Smoothie

- 1 cup cubed peeled ripe mango fresh or frozen
- 3/4 cup sliced ripe banana (about 1 medium) fresh or frozen
- 1 cup milk or milk alternative
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Ice (if not using frozen fruit)





INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Place all ingredients in a blender.
2. Blend until smooth, adding more liquid if necessary.
3. Pour into cups and enjoy.

Play around with different liquids such as using limeade to make tangy smoothies or ice cream to make them sweeter and creamier.

CREATION STATION

FROZEN ICE SCULPTURES

Children love to play with ice. In the winter they can spend hours searching for frozen puddles, licking icicles like popsicles, and investigating ice crystals in the soil. In the summer however, the search for ice is a way to cool down. Freezing natural items such as flowers, pinecones, and leaves can lead to conversations about how water freezes, and spark the children's natural curiosity about the natural world.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Explore different properties of water
- Practice pouring and carrying items carefully
- Enhance their observation skills
- Develop patience as they wait for their flower ice cubes to freeze and thaw
- Learn about cause and affect by placing ice cubes in various places (sunny vs shady)

MATERIALS

- Flowers and other natural items such as sticks, rocks, pinecones grasses and berries
- Water in pitchers
- Ice cube trays or bowls
- Scissors for picking flowers
- Freezer





HOW TO MAKE FROZEN ICE SCULPTURES

1. Have children go around the garden and pick up flowers, sticks, rocks, or feathers.
2. Bring the children back together again to look at what everyone found. Have tupperware containers they can fill with water.
3. Have kids add their nature items to the water.
4. Freeze overnight.
5. Remove ice cubes with flowers from the containers by letting them sit in the sun for a few minutes or running some hot water over the container.
6. Watch it melt!

WAYS TO EXPAND THE PLAY

- As the ice sculptures begin to melt, children can use the ice cubes to paint with water on cement.
- Have the children guess how long the sculptures will take to melt if put in different places (in the direct sun, in the shade, or on different surfaces).
- Freeze more things such as whole cookie sheets of water, make popsicles, or smoothies!
- Paint frozen ice blocks and watch the colors melt together.

Special Consideration:

Since the kids will be harvesting flowers from the garden it is a great time to have a conversation with the kids about what they can and cannot harvest and how to harvest respectfully.

INCLUSION BEYOND PRESCHOOL SETTING

There are many ways to continue to learn about how to best support the inclusion of children with and without disabilities in our community spaces, parks, playgrounds and schools of all kinds. The following resources can guide you in your learning as we all work to dismantle the stigma of disability and make communities across the world more accessible and inclusive for all children.



Say "Yes!" To Kids with Disabilities: Stories and Strategies for Including ALL Kids by Liz Bullard, Sophie Barnett-Dyer, & Hannah Gallagher

In 2017-2018, the Seattle Children's PlayGarden partnered with King County Public Health's Best Start for Kids Initiative to research the topic of inclusion of kids with disabilities in our community and share what we learned. Our goal is simple: to help other organizations throughout King County to feel empowered to Say "Yes" to kids with disabilities in their programs. The toolkit can be downloaded for free from our website. Hardcopies of the toolkit are available for purchase.



Online Inclusion Learning Hub

The PlayGarden's learning hub is to be a place where people in the community such as parents or other youth-care providers can come and learn about inclusion by reading our inclusion toolkit, exploring over 20+ interactive lessons on inclusion, reading stories of inclusion, exploring our community-focused blog, visiting the resource library or signing up for a workshop or training.



TRAININGS & WORKSHOPS

Workshops & Professional Development Opportunities

Providing truly inclusive programs requires learning and planning. The PlayGarden offers inclusion workshops, professional development and site-specific training opportunities. Please reach out to the PlayGarden if you would like to arrange an in person or virtual training.



RESOURCES

Resources

Over the years, the PlayGarden has compiled our favorite resources into a resource library that can be found on our website. Resources include information on different kinds of disabilities, child development, play-based and nature-based learning, the disability rights movement and more!

Learn more at www.childrensplaygarden.org





APPENDIX

GLOSSARY

In talking about inclusion, a common vocabulary is essential to avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Words have different meanings to different people based on their lived experiences. The purpose of this glossary, which is a work in progress, is to help avoid such misunderstandings. Not everyone will agree on the definition of every word; but everyone should have a common understanding of how words are being used in particular circumstances.

This glossary does not include definitions or descriptions of all the different types of disabilities. If you want to know more about specific disabilities, take some time to do research outside of this book. There are many resources that can provide more comprehensive descriptions than we can provide here in this glossary. Organizations like the Autistic Self Advocacy Network, Adapt!, and the Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund are great places to look for additional information. As you dive into the world of inclusion you may come across the following terms:

Ableism: In the context of disability, ableism is a bias that describes the expectation that people with disabilities should have to adjust to the “non-disabled” world and that this is a “normal” state, rather than seeing “normal” as a world where everyone can participate and belong. Ableism sees people with disabilities as inferior to others. The term ableism is the equivalent of terms such as “sexism,” “racism,” and “homophobia.”

Accessibility: Ensuring that people with disabilities are able to have access to the physical environment around them, to transportation, to information such as reading material, to communication technology and systems on an equal basis with others.

Accessible surfacing: Refers to material used on the ground in playgrounds and public spaces that provides ease of use for individuals that use a mobility device. Some examples of accessible surfacing include poured in place rubber, synthetic turf. Examples of inaccessible surfacing include sand, pea gravel and loose wood chips.

Accommodation: An adjustment to make a program, facility, or resource accessible to a person with a disability.

Adaptive technology: Hardware or software products that provide access to a computer that is otherwise inaccessible to an individual with a disability.

Ally: Someone who supports a group other than one’s own (in terms of racial identity, gender, ability, faith identity, sexual orientation, etc.) Allies acknowledge disadvantage and oppression of other groups than their own; take risks and supportive action on their behalf; commit to reducing their own complicity or collusion in oppression of those groups and invest in strengthening their own knowledge and awareness of oppression.

Alternative Formats: Having alternative formats available to people with disabilities ensures that information is accessible to them. For example, in this toolkit we have used Alternative Text photo captions to make photos more accessible to people with vision impairment.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): The ADA, which became law in 1990, is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public. The purpose of the law is to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else. The ADA gives civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities similar to those provided to individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion. It guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications.

Assistance/Service Animals: Highly trained animals that improve the lives of people with disabilities by increasing the individual’s independence or quality of life.

Assistive Technology/Device: Any item, piece of equipment, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.e.g. Communication device, hearing aid, wheelchair.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): A spectrum of conditions that can cause social, communication, and behavioral challenges. Learning, thinking, and problem solving capabilities range from gifted to severely impaired. Also now includes several different conditions which used to be diagnosed separately: Autistic disorder, pervasive developmental disorder, not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS) and Asperger Syndrome.

Barriers: Obstacles that prevent people with disabilities from fully participating in society.

- Attitudinal Barriers: Attitudes, fears and assumptions that prevent people with and without disabilities from meaningfully interacting with one another.
- Physical Barriers: Physical obstacles that hinder people with physical disabilities from gaining access.
- Access barriers: Any obstruction that prevents people with disabilities from using standard facilities, equipment and resources.

Barrier-free Design: An approach to design that aims for buildings, transportation systems, and outdoor environments that people with disabilities can access and use independently and safely. (see universal design)

Braille: System of embossed characters formed by using a Braille cell, a combination of six dots consisting of two vertical columns of three dots each. Each simple Braille character is formed by one or more of these dots and occupies a full cell or space. Some Braille may use eight dots.

Captioned film or videos: Transcription of the verbal portion of films or videos displayed to make them accessible to people who are deaf.

Captioning: Text that is included with video presentations or broadcasts that enables people with hearing impairments to have access to the audio portion of the material.

Categorization: The natural cognitive process of grouping and labeling people, things, etc. based on their similarities. Categorization becomes problematic when the groupings become oversimplified and rigid (e.g. stereotypes).

Cognitive Disability: Clinical diagnoses of cognitive disabilities include autism, Down Syndrome, traumatic brain injury (TBI), and even dementia. Less severe cognitive conditions include attention deficit disorder (ADD), dyslexia (difficulty reading), dyscalculia (difficulty with math), and learning disabilities in general.

Collusion: When people act to perpetuate oppression or prevent others from working to eliminate oppression. Example: Able-bodied people who object to strategies for making buildings accessible because of the expense.

Color Blind: The belief in treating everyone “equally” by treating everyone the same; based in the presumption that differences are by definition bad or problematic, and therefore best ignored (i.e., “I don’t see race, gender, etc.”).

Communication device: Hardware, such as an Ipad that allows a person who has difficulty communicating using their voice to use words or symbols for communication. May range in complexity from a simple picture board to complex electronic devices that allow personalized, unique construction of ideas.

Deaf/deaf: Uppercase “Deaf” refers to a group of people who share a language (American Sign Language) and a culture. Lowercase “deaf” is used to refer to the audiological condition of not hearing.

Deaf Culture: A set of values, behaviors, and traditions belonging to the deaf and close allies. American Deaf culture centers on the use of American Sign Language (ASL) and identification and unity with other people who are deaf.

Disability, Person with a: Legally defined in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as “a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual; has a record of such an impairment; or is regarded as having such an impairment.

Disability Rights Movement: The collective efforts of advocates to secure equal rights, equal opportunities, and a barrier-free environment for people with disabilities

Discrimination: The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, ability, religion and other categories

Diversity: The wide range of national, ethnic, racial and other backgrounds of U.S. residents and immigrants as social groupings, coexisting together. The term is often used to include aspects of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, ability and much more.

Dominant Culture: The cultural values, beliefs, and practices that are assumed to be the most common and influential within a given society.

Elopement: Wandering, bolting, fleeing or running away from a caregiver, home, or school.

Empowerment: When target group members refuse to accept the dominant ideology and their subordinate status and take actions to redistribute social power more equitably.

Equal Opportunity Employment: A legal term and federal requirement that employers not discriminate because of factors unrelated to job qualifications including race, color, religion, sex, national origin or disability.

Equality: The condition under which every individual is treated in the same way, and is granted same rights and responsibilities, regardless of their individual differences.

Equity: When everyone has access to opportunities necessary to satisfy essential needs, advance their well being and achieve their full potential.

Ethnicity: A social construct that divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as shared sense of

group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history and ancestral geographical base. Examples of different ethnic groups are: Cape Verdean, Haitian, African American (black); Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese (Asian); Cherokee, Mohawk, Navaho (Native American); Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican (Latino); Polish, Irish, and Swedish (white).

Exclusion: In the context of disability, exclusion happens when a person with a disability is ignored or not given a chance to participate in something that they should be able to participate in.

Identity-First Language: Places the disability-related word first when describing disabled people. Those who prefer identity-first language often argue that their disability is an important part of their identity and/or that they wouldn't be the same person without their disability. Identity-first language is also a reclamation and is about thinking about disability as a type of diversity, instead of a source of shame. Some communities that use identity-first language are the Autistic, Deaf, and Blind communities. Other communities and individuals prefer to use person-first language.

Implicit Bias: Negative associations expressed automatically that people unknowingly hold; also known as unconscious or hidden bias. Many studies have indicated that implicit biases affect individuals' attitudes and actions, thus creating real-world implications, even though individuals may not even be aware that those biases exist within themselves. Notably, implicit biases have been shown to be favored above individuals' stated commitments to equality and fairness, thereby producing behavior that diverges from the explicit attitudes that people may profess.

Inclusion: In the context of disability, inclusion means the active engagement of people with disabilities in all levels of society. The presence of people with disabilities does not constitute inclusion unless people with disabilities are valued, seen as contributing members of the group and feel a sense of belonging.

Institutional Segregation/ Institutionalization: Until very recently many people with disabilities were removed from communities and put into institutions where they were denied self-determination and access to the opportunities of independent living, education, and livelihood.

Intersectionality: This term was created by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1988 and is a way of thinking about identity and its relationship to power. It was intended to bring to light the invisibility of constituents within groups that claim them as members but fail to fully represent them. Intersectionality describes the fact that there are many overlapping

identities and related systems of marginalization (such as ableism, racism, sexism, and classism) that combine, overlap, and intersect in the experiences of marginalized people or groups. This concept recognizes that individuals: 1) belong to more than one social category simultaneously and 2) may experience either privileges or disadvantages on that basis depending on circumstances and relationships. Exposing [one's] multiple identities can help clarify the ways in which a person can simultaneously experience privilege and oppression. For example, a Black woman in America does not experience gender inequalities in exactly the same way as a white woman, nor is her racial oppression identical to that experienced by a Black man. Each intersection produces a qualitatively distinct life.

Invisible Disability: Most disabilities are not visible. Non-apparent disabilities include mental and cognitive disabilities, some hearing, visual disabilities, and learning disabilities. Other examples include brain injuries, addiction, Epilepsy, Diabetes, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

Major life activities: Functions such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, breathing, learning, working, and participating in community activities (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990)

Marginalized: Excluded, ignored, or relegated to the outer edge of a group/society/community.

Medical Model of Disability: Arose from the biomedical perception of disability. This model links a disability diagnosis to an individual's physical body. The model supposes that this disability may reduce the individual's quality of life and the aim is, with medical intervention, this disability will be diminished or corrected.

Microaggressions: Verbal and nonverbal cues that are hostile, negative or derogatory to reinforce dominant culture and minimize the target person's experience.

Mobility Impairment: Disability that affects movement ranging from gross motor skills such as walking to fine motor movement involving manipulation of objects by hand. In addition to this people who are born with a disability, this group includes a large amount of people whose condition is related to age or accidents.

Neurotypical "NT": an abbreviation of neurologically typical, is a neologism widely used in the autistic community as a label for people who are not on the autism spectrum.

People of Color: A collective term for men and women of Asian, African, Latin and Native American backgrounds; as opposed to the collective "White" for those of European ancestry.

Person-First Language: Many disability organizations advocate putting the person first when speaking of people with disabilities. For example: “person with a disability” instead of “disabled person”; “people with disabilities” instead of “the disabled”; “she is a wheelchair user” instead of “she is wheelchair bound” or “she is in a wheelchair.” This is intended to create distance between the person and their disability and encourage others to see people with disabilities as people first, and disabled, second.

Personal Identity: Our identities as individuals-including our personal characteristics, history, personality, name, and other characteristics that make us unique and different from other individuals.

Physical or mental impairment: Any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological; musculoskeletal; special sense organs; respiratory, including speech organs; cardiovascular; reproductive; digestive; genitio-urinary; hemic and lymphatic; skin; and endocrine; or any mental or psychological disorder, such as mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities. (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990).

Privilege: An unearned advantage granted to individuals by society based on visible characteristics such as race, perceived gender, age, language or ability.

Program Accessibility: Central requirement/standard under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended as well as the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 which requires that recipients of federal funds or contracts and /or state and local government entities operate programs and activities so that “when viewed in its entirety” such a program/activity is readily accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities.”

Reasonable Accommodation: Legal term defined by ADA and Rehabilitation Acts as “any modification or adjustment to a job or work environment that will enable a qualified applicant or employee with a disability to perform essential job functions.” Example include: restructuring a job; modifying work schedules; acquiring or modifying work equipment; and, providing qualified readers for persons who are blind or American Sign Language(ASL) interpreters for individuals who are deaf.

Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD): A condition in which the brain has trouble receiving and responding to information that comes in through the senses. Some people with sensory processing disorder are very sensitive to things in their environment such as sounds or bright lights.

Specific Learning Disability: Disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in difficulties listening, thinking, speaking, reading, writing, spelling, or doing mathematical calculations. Frequent limitations include hyperactivity, distractibility, emotional instability, visual and/or auditory perception difficulties and/or motor limitations, depending on the type(s) of learning disability.

Speech Impairment: Problems in communication and related areas such as oral motor function, ranging from simple sound substitutions to the inability to understand or use language or use the oral-motor mechanism for functional speech.

Speech input or speech recognition: A method of controlling a computer and creating text by dictation. Speech input software is combined with a microphone.

Stigma: The shame or inferior status that people consciously or unconsciously ascribe to others they perceive as different from themselves. Underlying stigma are negative perceptions or attitudes about disability that are based on outdated and incorrect assumptions

Social Identity: Involves the ways in which one characterizes oneself, the affinities one has with other people, the ways one has learned to behave in stereotyped social settings, the things one values in oneself and in the world, and the norms that one recognizes or accepts governing everyday behavior.

Social model of disability: A reaction to the dominant medical model of disability which sees the body as something to be fixed in order to conform with normative values. The social model of disability identifies systemic barriers, negative attitudes and exclusion by society (purposely or inadvertently) that mean society is the main contributory factor in disabling people.

Universal design: The design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability.

Vision impairments: Complete or partial loss of ability to see, caused by a variety of injuries or diseases including congenital defects.

This glossary was compiled with the help of many external sources including the *Glossary of Disability and National Service Related Terms* published by the National Inclusion Service Project (2018), the *Glossary of Disability-Related Terms* published by the DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology) Center at University of Washington (2012), and the *Glossary from Racial Equity Tools* (2018) and the *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Glossary* published by the School of Public Health at the University of Washington.

PRESCHOOL CLOTHING PACKING LIST



While rain gear will work to keep your child dry, it's the clothing underneath that will ensure warmth.

Outdoor discovery requires freedom of movement in non-restrictive clothing. Clothing should be kept simple, comfortable, and washable. When weather is variable, rainy, or downright cold, layering clothing is key. The standard advice is to wear three layers: a base layer to stay dry, a mid-layer to keep warm and an outer layer to retain heat and protect against rain, wind, and snow. The rain suit will be the outer layer, roomy enough for sweatshirts, coats and other layers to be worn underneath.

Additionally, students need comfortable, protective shoes with gripping soles for running, climbing, and jumping. Insulated rain boots will be appropriate nearly every day. On warmer days, sneakers or sandals with closed toes and heel straps are appropriate. Flip flops are not acceptable footwear for trails and are considered a safety hazard.

Our recommendations for clothing to be worn in addition to Waterproof Pants and Jacket:

- Wool or fleece socks (2 pairs will last all year and will be worn in every season)
- Long underwear (aka long johns or thermal underwear), wool, silk, or synthetic, non-cotton
- Waterproof mittens (not just for snow, they are great for keeping hands warm! Mittens with side zippers or that go over the jacket sleeve are awesome!)
- Scarf/neck cover
- Winter hat (covers the ears)
- Fleece jacket or wool sweater
- Winter coat
- Snow pants (optional, but a great source of warmth under the rain suit on cold days)
- Sun hat (optional)
- Swimsuit (optional)
- In warm weather, we may turn on our water feature and/or sprinklers. The children are welcome to play in the water in either a swimsuit or underpants.

PlayGarden Preschool Clothing Checklist

 <p>Waterproof rain Jacket</p>	 <p>Fleece or wool Jacket</p>
 <p>Waterproof rain Pants</p>	 <p>Fleece or wool vest</p>
 <p>Sun Hat</p>	 <p>Wool or fleece hat</p>
 <p>Waterproof or fleece mittens</p>	 <p>Wool or fleece socks</p>
 <p>Waterproof rain or snow boots</p>	 <p>Fleece, polypropylene or wool first layer</p>

MONTHLY PLANNING EXAMPLE

Every month our teachers, teachers assistants and Executive Director if necessary come together for a monthly pre-school planning meeting. In the meeting we discuss how each child is doing, emerging peer dynamics, how we are facilitating inclusion and friendship building between our students with and without disabilities and challenges we are going through. We look into what is working and what areas need adjusting in our daily routine. We also select themes for the upcoming month, activities, meal ideas and what we will be doing in the garden that month. This is an example of a monthly planning sheet.

Dates	Theme	Morning Activity	Snack/Lunch	Circle Time	Craft or Activity	Big Body Play	Garden/Animals
Wed. 9/11, Thursday 9/12	Starting the school year- getting to know yourself as a preschooler!	Tape Letters	Luch, roasted potatoes, cantaloupe Snack: Hummus, veggies, crackers	Introductions, get to know one another. Talk about the different roles of teachers and students. Read: Two Eyes, a Nose and a Mouth	Potato Prints, bubble bin out	Tour around the PlayGarden with stamps	Potato Harvest
Friday 9/13	Self	Hand prints	Leftovers!	Read: Gossie Sing: Make New Friends	Rice bin sensory bin, musical instruments out in the garden	Playground play with balls	Flower Bouquets
Monday	Getting to know each other and the garden	Flower Power Playdough	Lunch: Pesto Pasta + Apples, Snack; Yogurt and homemade granola	Read: Happy in our Skin, Sing: Squirrel Song	Making pesto	Animal Yoga	Smells in the garden! Harvest basil.
Tuesday		Flower Power Playdough	Lunch: Pesto Pasta + Apples, Snack; Yogurt and homemade granola	Read: Two Eyes, A Nose and A Mouth, Sing: I'm a Nut	Make granola	Animal Yoga	Smells in the garden! Harvest basil.
Wednesday		Binoculars	Lunch; Rice and Beans + Peaches Snack: Apples and Popcorn hard boiled eggs	Exploring with our sense of sight. Read: What Color is the Wind.	Fall Scavenger hunt	I Spy	Look at sunflowers and collect seeds

Thursday		Binoculars	Lunch; Rice and Beans + Peaches Snack: Apples and Popcorn and hard boiled eggs	Read: My Wild Family. Explore with our sense of sight. Sing: What a wonderful world	Fall Scavenger hunt	Cardboard slide on the volcano	Look at sunflowers and collect seeds
Friday		Marble Painting	Snack: Blueberry Muffins, Lunch: Corn on the cob & Yogurt	Explore with sense of hearing: Sing: Boomdeyada	Obstacle Course	Bikes	Listen to the birds, harvest Zucchini in the garden
Monday	Getting to know the animals	Painting with feathers	Snack: apple-sauce, rice cakes Lunch: Chicken Nuggets pears/ apples	Read: No Two Alike. Sing: 5 little ducks went out one day and I'm a duck	One Duck Stuck, 5 little ducks, Waddle Waddle	Farm animals "Stuck in the Muck:	Feed the chickens, goose and ducks. Fill their pond, gather feathers
Tuesday	Chickens	Painting with feathers	Snack: scrambled eggs, toast Lunch: Pizza, vegies	Read: Hilda Hen's Search, and Owl Babies. Sing:		Wild Zone exploration	Feed Chickens, rake chicken yard, harvest eggs, explore eggs
Wednesday	Rabbits	Carrot foot and hand prints in journal	Snack: Blackberries in vanilla yogurt, Camomile tea. Lunch: Rice and Potstickers	Read: Peter Rabbit and Mystery Vine Cathryn Falwell	Make and add color to warm playdough	Simon says like Playgarden Animals	Explore worms on a tarp, sift soil into large wheelbarrow
Thursday	Worms	Painting with stringers	Snack: Homemade applesauce with granola, Lunch: Rice and Potstickers	Read: The Kissing Hand, Sing:	Make wormeries	Wheelbarrows around the garden	Harvest potatoes
Friday		Make wormeries	Snack: Homemade applesauce with granola. Lunch: Leftovers	Sing: Regular, ASL and Silly ABC's. T-shirt fashion show. Move your body like a worm.	Make wormeries	Red light, green light.	Harvest carrots for snack

BOOK TITLE

MAIN THEMES

FALL

<i>Chicken Soup with Rice, Maurice Sendak</i>	Months of the year, rhyming and poetry
<i>Two Eyes, a Nose, and a Mouth, Roberta Grobel Intrater</i>	Getting to know your body
<i>The Kissing Hand, Audrey Penn</i>	Separation from family
<i>Apples for Everyone, Jill Esbaum</i>	Apples
<i>Gossie, Oliver Dunnea</i>	Friendship
<i>Jamberry, Bruce Degen</i>	Rhyming and celebrations
<i>Owl Babies, Martin Waddell</i>	Missing Family/nocturnal animals
<i>Mystery Vine, Cathryn Falwell</i>	Life cycle of a pumpkin
<i>The Little Old Lady Who Wasn't Afraid of Anything, Linda Williams</i>	Fears/Halloween
<i>The Apple Pie Tree, Zoe Hall</i>	Life cycle of an apple
<i>Where the Wild Things Are, Maurice Sendak</i>	Conquering Fears
<i>The Very Busy Spider, Eric Carle</i>	Observing webs in the garden
<i>Pumpkin Circle, George Levenson</i>	Nature, life cycle of plants
<i>Go Away Big Green Monster, Ed Emberley</i>	Fears, Halloween
<i>Room on the Broom, Julia Donaldson</i>	Team work, magic
<i>Because of an Acorn, Adam Schaefer and Lola M Schaefer</i>	Nature, growth
<i>Bread Comes to Life, George Levenson</i>	Garden to Table, where food comes from, circle of life
<i>My Favorite Nature Book: Animals in Their House, Sonia Goldie</i>	Hibernation/Where do animals go in the winter?
<i>Thanks for Thanksgiving, Julie Markes</i>	Gratitude
<i>Thank you Omu!, Oge Mora</i>	Gratitude, Community
<i>My Favorite Nature Book: Animals in Their House, Sonia Goldie</i>	Family/Dia de los Muertos?
<i>Clatter Bash A Dead of The Dead Celebration, Richard Keep</i>	Dia de los muertos

WINTER

<i>Tallest Tree, Lieber Robert</i>	Pacific Northwest Forests
<i>Where Would I Be in an Evergreen Tree, Jennifer Blomgren</i>	What is an Evergreen tree?
<i>Owl Babies, Martin Waddell</i>	Missing Family/Nocturnal Animals
<i>Little Hoot, Amy Krouse Rosenthal</i>	Fear
<i>Owl Moon, Jane Yolen</i>	Winter, Owls
<i>The Mitten, Jane Brett</i>	Belonging, Helping
<i>The Shortest Day, Susan Cooper</i>	Winter Solstice
<i>The Snowy Day, Ezra Jack Keats</i>	Family, Magic of winter day, Exploring neighborhood
<i>Lucky New Year with Flaps, Pop-Ups and More!, Mary Man-Kong</i>	Lunar New year
<i>Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Doreen Rappaport</i>	Peace, Justice, Black Lives Matter

BOOK TITLE

MAIN THEMES

<i>We March, Shane Evans</i>	MLK, civil rights, how to fix an injustice/problem
<i>A True Book of Puffins, Ann O. Squire</i>	Non fiction about Puffins
<i>Dim Sum for Everyone, Grace Lin</i>	Lunar New Year
<i>I love you sun, I love you Moon, Tomie dePaola</i>	Love of the Earth
<i>Dragon Dance, Jan Holub</i>	Lunar new Year
<i>Stella Luna, Janell Cannon</i>	Belonging Friendship, Fear of Separation, Family

SPRING

Little Pea, Amy Krouse Rosenthal	Early Spring in the garden/Planting Peas
Yucky Worms, Vivian French	Worms and compost
Compost Stew, Mary McKenna Siddals	Compost and the life cycle of food and plants
Hop, Jorey Hurley	Rabbits, gardening
How a Seed Grows, Helene J Jordan	Planting
Peter Rabbit, Beatrix Potter	Cautionary Tale and risk taking
I'm as Quick as a Cricket, Audrey Wood	Understanding growth and self awareness
Planting a Rainbow, Lois Elhert	Spring gardening and observing colors in the garden
Flower Garden, Eve Bunting and Catherine Hewitt	Planting, celebration of flowers, growth, and possibilities
Caps for Sale, Esphyr Slobodkina	Great story to re-enact as a play
UP and Down and in the Dirt, Kate Messner	Gardening and celebration of the wonders of the natural
A House is a House for Me, Mary Ann	Home, belonging, and animals in their home

ALL YEAR

Happy in our Skin, Fran Manushkin	Self-Love, bodies, learning about different skin colors
Here We Are, Oliver Jeffers	Belonging, Part of the world
Hello Goodbye Dog, Maria Gianferrari	Service Animals
The Boy and the Bindi, Vivek Shraya	Self-love, spirituality, embracing culture
The Salamander Room, Anne Mazer	respecting the needs of all animals
The Snail's Spell, Joanne Ryder	Perspective taking
Harry the Dirty Dog, Gene Zion	Family love
Dear Zoo, Rod Campbell	Pets
Fortunately, Remy Charlip	Funny, philosophical look at life
Goodnight World, First Nations and Native Artists	Native Am. Art
I'm in Charge of Celebrations, Byrd Baylor	Celebrations
Thunder Boy Jr., Sherman Alexie	Native Am story, family



SONG TITLE

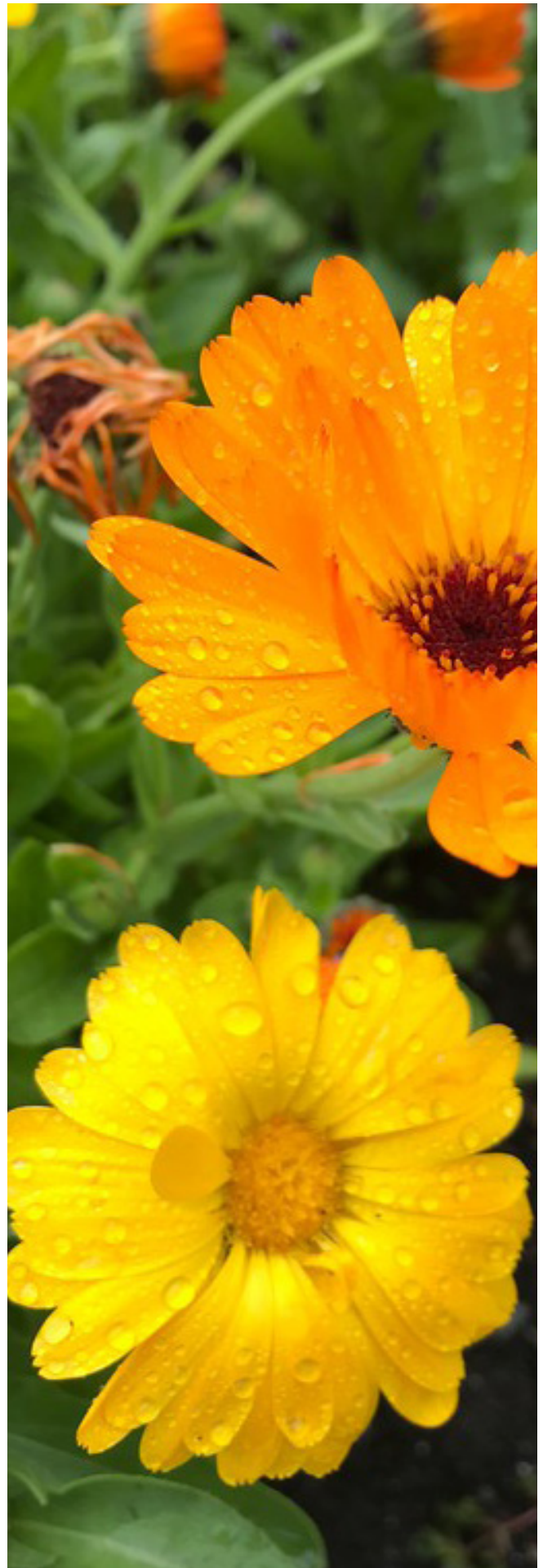
SEASON

The More We Get Together	Daily
Goodbye song	Daily
We Love Our Bread Blessing	Daily
Shoo Lie Loo	Daily
I like to eat Apples and Bananas	Mealtime
Banana Phone	Mealtime
Hungry Hungry I am Hungry	Mealtime
5 Little Pumpkins	Fall
I'm A Nut	Fall
Itsy Bitsy Spider	Fall
Squirrel Squirrel	Fall
Turkey hokey pokey	Fall
Brown Dog in the Rain	Fall
Boots song	Winter
Four Little Owls Sitting in a Tree	Winter
Frosty the snowman	Winter
Jingle Bells	Winter
Roses are Red, Violets are Blue	Winter
This little light of mine	Winter
C is for Conifer	Winter
6 little ducks	Spring
I'm a duck	Spring
Inch by inch- The Garden Song	Spring
Where are all the Sleeping Bunnies?	Spring
5 little peas	Spring
Red,red robin	Spring
Way up in the sky	Spring
I'm a honey bee	Spring
I am an insect in this life	Spring
All I Really Need by Raffi	All year
De Colores	All year
Down by the Bay	All year

SONG TITLE

SEASON

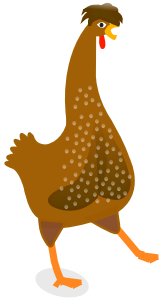
5 little monkeys swinging in the tree	All year
Everything Goin' be alright by Bob Marley	All year
Frere Jacques	All year
Garbage Truck song	All year
Whole world in his/her hands	All year
Here comes the Sun by the Beatles	All year
Make New Friends	All year
Room for you in the circle	All year
Three little birds by Bob Marley	All year
We come from the Mountains	All year
Wheels on the bus	All year
Brush your teeth by Raffi	All year
Fire truck song	All year
Flee Fly Flow	All year
Orca whale	All year
Oh, what a beautiful morning	All year
What a wonderful world	All year
Remember Me from Coco	All year
Boomdeyada	Action
Boom Chicka Boom	Action
Silly ABC'S	Action
Head Shoulders Knees and Toes	Action
Hey Hey Bo Diddley Bop	Action
I love you in ASL	Action
If you're happy and you know it	Action
Shake my sillies out	Action
Skinamarinkadink	Action
Skip to My Lou	Action
There was a crocodile	Action
Toe Knee Chestnut	Action
She'll be coming around the mountain	Action



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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

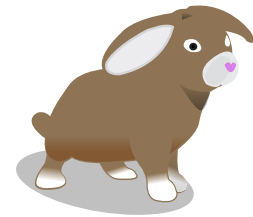


Liz Bullard, Executive Director

Elizabeth is also the visionary behind and founder of the Seattle Children's PlayGarden. She has an MA in Speech-Language Pathology from Indiana University at Bloomington, and a BA in Speech and Hearing Sciences/Spanish from Indiana University. She has worked with children and families in the Seattle area since 1985, and enjoys working and playing alongside PlayGardeners of all ages.

Sophie Barnett-Dyer, Lead Preschool Teacher

Sophie received a Master's degree in Early Childhood Education with Special Education certification in 2005 from Mills College, in Oakland Ca. Her childhood spent playing in her family's garden in Seattle, and later as an adult visiting school gardens in the Bay Area, has inspired a life-long love of teaching and learning with young children in the garden. She is also an avid gardener herself, as well as cook, camper, craftsperson, and the mother of two fantastic children.

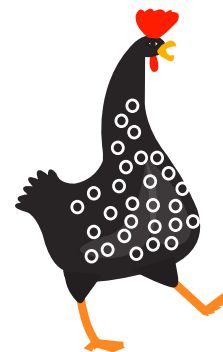


Hannah Gallagher, Lead Preschool Teacher and Inclusive Programs Director

Hannah is a community-based environmental educator from Seattle, WA. She completed a graduate residency in Education for Environment and Community (EEC) with an organization called Islandwood on Bainbridge Island, WA in 2016. In 2017, she completed her Master's degree in Education- emphasis on Science Curriculum and Instruction and a graduate certificate program in nonprofit management from the University of Washington. Hannah has worked with children and adults with and without disabilities in engaging in outdoor play for the last sixteen years at the PlayGarden. She is committed to a life's work helping to connect children, their families and their communities to the natural environment and one another.

Mica Rood, Preschool Teachers Assistant and Co-Camp Director

Mica spent her undergraduate years studying Speech and Hearing Sciences at Washington State University and is starting her masters in Occupational therapy at the University of Washington Fall of 2021. Throughout high school and college she worked at PlayGarden as a camp counselor, in fact it was her first job! Mica, born and raised in Seattle, loves the Pacific Northwest spirit of hiking, camping, gardening and finding ways to stay creative through baking and card making. She is engaged in creating spaces that welcome everyone with positivity, inclusivity and compassion.



Leann Gorman, Graphic Design

Leann is a graphic designer by trade who recently moved to Seattle and fell in love with both the Pacific Northwest and the mission of the PlayGarden.

