We really enjoyed our building unit this month! We learned about different kinds of buildings, different parts of buildings, and we enjoyed creating our own buildings out of a variety of materials. We also learned what it was like to be an architect!

We started our exploration of buildings by studying different kinds of buildings - including those made by beavers! Mr. Salinetro borrowed some artifacts from the Carnegie Natural History Museum and these included a stuffed beaver and samples of logs that had been gnawed by beavers. Our explorations included trying to make our own beaver lodges out of “mud” and Lincoln Logs. We then read the big book “A World of Homes” by Kari Jenson Gold, “Buildings” by Betsey Chessen and “There’s No Place Like Home” by Tom Dunsimir. This led to discussions about how homes are different all over the world.

Buildings are made of many different kinds of materials and we examined straw, bricks, stones, clay, and pieces of wood and discussed which materials would make the strongest houses. We also discussed how buildings need very strong foundations. We experimented with putting craft sticks in piles of sand, piles of wet sand, and in hardened cement and we found that the best foundations are made of the strongest substances.

We also spent a lot of time learning about parts of buildings. Most of us could identify doors, windows, stairs, roofs, and chimneys, but we added to our knowledge by learning about eaves, gutters and rain spouts, shingles, and shutters.

We already knew that construction vehicles and construction workers built buildings and houses, but we learned that architects design plans that the construction workers use when making buildings. Some Carnegie Mellon University architecture students donated plans, sites maps and models, and we were able to study these plans to identify what the symbols on the plans represented. We also read “A Day in the Life of an Architect” by Mary Bowman-Kruhm and some of us toured the architecture students’ studios in the Fine Arts Building on campus. We also examined photographs of different structures on campus and went on walks to see if we could identify the buildings (we did very well!).

We ended our discussions about buildings by talking about gravity, compression, and tension. We talked about how gravity pulls everything down towards the earth and how structures have to push against gravity in order to be stable. We talked about how columns push up against the roofs that rest upon them and how this is called compression. We can press our hands together to create compression. When we pull our hands apart we create tension. Tension can be seen in the posts that hold up suspension bridges, just like when two people pick someone up by their hands and feet!

We learned the signs for home, house, and school this month.

Special thanks to Benjamin Kogan’s mom for reading to us at circle time, and to Hunter Schultz’ parents for coming to celebrate his half birthday with us!

We enjoyed seeing everyone at the Building Bonanza!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Rosenblum, Mrs. Tomer, Mrs. Flynn

and Mr. Salinetro
Other Texts We Read

We enjoyed other books relating to Building and Architecture such as “Architecture Colors”, “Architecture Shapes”, “Architecture Counts” and “Architecture Animals” all by Michael J. Crosbie and Steve Rosenthal, “People” by Peter Spier, “Where We Live” by Prestel, “Up Goes the Skyscraper” by Gail Gibbons, and “Architecture ZigZag” by Michel J. Crosbie. We also looked at “Houses” by Gallimard Jeunesse, “First Shapes in Buildings” by Penny Ann Lane, and “This is the House that Jack Built” by Simms Taback.
Discovery Area

In the Discovery Area, we were very busy painting black and white house shapes with metallic colors, putting together sequined window frames to affix to our houses and gluing our own pictures inside the windows so that we were looking out of our own homes.

We also glued geometric shapes onto buildings at the easel, worked on painting and decorating large leaf bags so that we could wear them and BECOME buildings, colored and cut architecture plans, and helped to create a large collage model of a fantastical town!

We also built with small bricks and colored wooden blocks in the sand table and worked with plastic tubing and water mills at the water table. We arranged patterns with colored translucent laminate shapes at the light table.

Playground & Gym

On the playground, we enjoyed the last of the Winter weather by sculpting snow mountains and snow creatures. We also shoveled, swept, and raked the snow, and we found that you can slide really fast down the slide when it has snow on it.

In gym class, Ms. McMichael continued to teach us soccer skills, and we enjoyed stretching our bodies into different architectural shapes such as arches, bridges, and tunnels.

Red and Blue Rooms

The Red and Blue Rooms provided us with lots of opportunities to build with a variety of objects and materials. For a week, the Imagination Playground was in the Red Room, and we enjoyed constructing large structures with the big, blue foam blocks. We also used small “plank” blocks to make overlay patterns both on the floor and on tables. We explored building with unit blocks on different surfaces such as wooden steps and carpet squares. We put together marble runs, took turns playing with large wooden doll houses, experimented with paper cups and colored tape, and made our own architectural plans with crayons and clip boards.