Green Room Newsletter

Carnegie Mellon University Children’s School
January 2014

Building Theme

During our Building theme, we identified the basic concepts of building including balance, foundation and stability. We offered guided exploration of building to reinforce our rules and vocabulary. We explored construction vehicles, tools and design. We finished our unit discovering the buildings around us and learning about purpose and design as we discussed famous structures.

Transitioning from our storytelling theme, we began our building theme by reading The Three Little Pigs. This classic story allowed us to introduce the basic concepts and vocabulary of building including structure, balance, foundation, materials and stability. During the week, we explored the different materials the pigs used to build their houses. We assembled props for our story, which included houses made of sticks, straw and bricks. We practiced balancing our bodies on the balance beam, and used the scale to balance various objects. We learned about the importance of a strong foundation when we experimented with building small blocks using various foundations.

Next, we introduced various building materials, including Unit Blocks, Wedge-its, Cuisenaire Rods, popsicle sticks, tree blocks, stone blocks and cups. The teachers guided the children when building to reinforce our building rules and vocabulary. Some of the books we read during circle time included Look at that Building by Scot Ritchie, Block City by Robert Louis Stevenson and Build It! Structures, Systems and You by Adrienne Mason. During the week we built with unit blocks and sketched our structures, measured our height using rectangular prisms, experimented with gravity using ramps and wooden balls, and created Wedge-it structures using various foundations. Our Dramatic Play Center became The Green Room Workshop where the children practiced using tools as they pretended to work and fix “broken” items.

Machines Go To Work by William Low, Old MacDonald had a Woodshop by Lisa Shulman and The Lot at the End of My Block by Kevin Lewis were books we read to introduce construction vehicles, tools and to learn about the job of an architect and a builder. During the week, we focused our building on specific structures and spaces. In the Block Center, the children designed and built a playground and worked together to build a neighborhood. We experimented with tension to construct a bridge and used various tools to take apart old machines. We worked together to paint old boxes and assemble them to build a skyscraper, a parking garage and a Giant Eagle.
We ended our unit by discussing and looking at structures around us and famous structures located around the world. *Amazing Built Structures* by Nicolas Brasch, *Shapes in Buildings* by Rebecca Rissman, and *Roberto the Insect Architect* by Nina Laden helped us learn and discover world famous structures, shapes used in architecture and the job of an architect. We opened the Green Room Architect’s Studio in our Dramatic Play Center to allow the friends to pretend to be an architect and design new skyscrapers, bridges, schools, playgrounds, libraries, and houses. Their “blueprints” were displayed in the studio. We walked around the inside of Margaret Morrison to identify arches, columns and shapes used in the building. We took a look inside the architecture students’ studio on the top floor of Margaret Morrison where we viewed models, blueprints and tools that the students use when designing. Ms. Lee, our Duksung visitor, shared photographs of structures found in Korea, which allowed us to compare them to known structures in the United States.

During our month, our activities reinforced skill development as well. Building structures and measuring them using standard (ruler) and non standard (unifex cubes) items allowed the children to practice measurement. Patterning skills were demonstrated when patterning pictures of tools. Shape recognition and identification was reinforced when the children created structures using shapes on their locker tag. We introduced 3D shapes starting with a rectangular prism as we measured each child’s height using rectangular prisms. We practiced observational skills when we compared buildings around us to buildings around the world. Physical skills were used when tracing tools, construction vehicles and construction signs, sketching built structures and balancing our bodies on a balance beam. Cooperation skills were necessary when working together in the Block Center to create a playground and neighborhood, and when working together in the Green Room workshop.
Eric, Sam and Charlie W. build a climbing wall for our Block Center playground.

Lena, Lynn and Julia experiment with balls and ramps to learn about gravity.

Tayshawn builds a marble run.

Lena, Lynn and Julia experiment with balls and ramps to learn about gravity.

Gwynnie uses her imagination to create a structure in the block center.

Vivian experiments with a pendulum.

Adeline builds when playing Prickly Pile Up.

MinSeo and Lynn build a car using Floresco.

Nika builds a tower.

Carlos builds using tree blocks and small animals.

Milo measures Andres using rectangular prisms.
Simone builds a structure in the Block Center.

Lola experiments with a pulley.

Muriel builds with colored shaped blocks.

Arnav builds with small colored blocks.

Rhiannon sketches a design in the Green Room Architect’s studio.

Yasmin, Lola and Carlos build with No Ends.

Ben builds a person using Cuisenaire Rods.

Elena builds a marble run.

The afternoon friends participate in making a banner at the Martin Luther King Jr. celebration.

James is proud of his structure!
Birthday Celebrations

MinSeo, Sasha, and Ilan, celebrated their 5th birthday this month. Emma and Natalie and Eric celebrated their 4 1/2 birthday. We enjoyed a special birthday snack.

Special Visitors

During our month, we welcomed several visitors in the Green Room. Miss Debbie, from the Carnegie Library, shared songs and stories related to our Building Theme. Anne Sekula (Jane) stopped by to explore pomegranates with the children.

Ms. Soobin Lee, from Duksung Womens University, spent 2 weeks with us and shared her talents and Korean culture with us. She taught the children favorite children’s games in Korea and shared photographs of famous buildings in Korea.
Green Room Helpers

We welcomed 2 new helpers to the Green Room this month.

Amy Cascardo is studying Special Education and Early Childhood Education at the University of Hartford. While on her winter break from college, she spent a week with us in the Green Room. We thank her for her talents and help during the week.

Renee Tillman is a senior at City Charter High School. She is helping in the afternoon in the Green Room and will be with us for the next few months.