Trees

During the month of November, we learned about trees by studying:

  1. Tree parts, the growth cycle, seasons, and the transition to the season of Fall;
  2. Trees as habitats for animals, and the food and shelter trees provide;
  3. The trees around our school, the CMU campus community and in Pittsburgh.

Why study trees?
“Educating children to the benefits of trees is a way to create lifelong stewards of the urban forest and the planet.” [http://treepittsburgh.org/resource-type/education](http://treepittsburgh.org/resource-type/education)

Our Favorite Theme Books

Circle time is a great time to hear stories that help friends learn more about our theme. This month our favorite books were:

- **When The Leaf Blew In**
  by Steve Metzger
- **From Acorn to Oak Tree**
  by Jan Kottke
- **Why Do Leaves Change Color?**
  by Betsy Maestro
- **Fletcher and the Falling Leaves**
  by Julia Rawlinson
- **Log Hotel**
  by Anne Schreiber

Mango Monkey Says…

Our wise puppet friend visited the friends this month to share some stories and talk about **Mindfulness**. In the book **The Lemonade Hurricane** by Licia Morelli, a young friend whirls through his days like the swirling pulp in a stirred glass of lemonade. His older sibling helps him to use meditation techniques to balance his activity to become more peaceful, patient and productive. The story **One** by Kathryn Otoshi illustrates the message that sometimes it takes just one friend to stand up and make everyone count. The friends helped Mango Monkey remind his puppet pals that “we are all the same, we are all different,” and that calming our minds and bodies helps us think clearly and make good choices.
Part 1

What Are the Parts of a Tree?

We began our unit by looking at trees as a whole plant, defining the parts of a tree, and looking at the growth cycle throughout the seasons. Friends drew and labelled parts of a tree and arranged some loose parts in a frame to create a tree that was photographed to be a Locker Tag. The children studied roots by looking at the classroom spider plants and setting the baby plants in water to grow the roots, and observing how celery and cut flowers can absorb colored water through their stems. Leaf Rubbings, Bark Rubbings, Crushed Leaf Art, and Fall Tree Water Color Painting activities encouraged creativity through different uses of color, shape, technique and design. The Dramatic Play Center was filled with a Tree House and other tiny homes for small animals. Friends used pulleys and little baskets to lift supplies such as acorns up and down the tree house. Children practiced cooperating and taking turns by playing games such as Leaf Bingo, Orchard, Sneaky Snacky Squirrel, and Seeds For Birds.

Part 2

Why Are Trees Important?

Next, we learned about some of the reasons that trees are so important in the world. We imagined the forest above us providing shade and protection as we read stories in the play tent and cooked food over the fire in the Dramatic Play campsite. Books and discussions at Circle Time centered around the animals that use trees as their homes, the food we get from trees, and how paper and wood come from trees. Friends had the opportunity to make Pine Cone Owls, build wood sculptures, and inquire about tree cookies and acorns.
Our final weeks of Trees included exploring the trees around our school. The children made a Leaf Book with leaves gathered from six different trees on and around the playground. Our Gym Time was spent taking a Leaf Walk with our Leaf Books to find the trees that the leaves came from.

We used the book, *When The Leaf Blew In*, to study what comes next (a sequence). After reading the book, and using props to tell the story, the children put pictures of the story in order on a long strip of paper. The props were then used to invent stories using different position words that were in the book, such as behind, above, over, etc.

The children expressed themselves artistically as they made Leaf prints on fabric, painted their Wood Sculptures, and used the tools in the Art and Writing Center for their creations.

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**Center Spotlight: The Science Center**

The Science Center offers the friends opportunities to experience natural materials daily, as well as participate in scientific explorations and experiments weekly. The Science Center is home to our classroom pets: Billy the frog; Halfmoon the betta fish; and the worms (too many to name). This month, we did an experiment to discover how the roots of trees soak up the water they need. The children placed celery stalks and white cut flowers in colored water, and observed how the color travelled up the stalks and stems over time. “What’s Inside An Acorn?” was an exploration of how to open an acorn shell (How would a squirrel do it?), and then using magnifying glasses and tweezers to see what was inside. During the “Tree Cookie Exploration,” children counted the rings in some tree cookies and then made their own tree cookies that showed how old they were. Bark rubbings from different tree bark made some beautiful artwork. Learning about how maple syrup is made and Maple Syrup Tasting was a very popular activity!
Make Shop Experiences

The saw was the tool introduced in the Make Shop this month. Each friend used a saw to cut a small slice into a tennis ball. They added eyes and a nose above the slice to make the tennis ball into a Munching Mouth. By squeezing the sides of the mouth to drop pennies in, children strengthen their hand and finger muscles which contributes to successful writing. Friends continued to practice using hammers and hand drills safely as well.

The second half of the month in the Make Shop was dedicated to building and painting a wood sculpture.

Music Experiences with Mrs. Hraber

Using a mix of music and movement activities, Mrs. Hraber deepens the content of each month’s theme and helps the children learn to sing and keep time with instruments and with their bodies. During November, Mrs. Hraber taught us some new, fun songs about trees. Pete the Metronome always introduces the session, this month dressed as a leaf and a squirrel! Children practiced crunching real leaves to the beat of a song, used the parachute and scarves to mimic the way leaves fall off of the trees as the wind blows in the fall, and pretended to be squirrels preparing for the winter.
Birthdays and Visitors

Eli joined his sister Lucy and their parents to celebrate Lucy’s birthday.

Raj’s parents and his sister Siobhan came to the Green Room to celebrate Raj’s birthday.

Emmy’s parents joined her group to read for Emmy’s birthday.

Ruthie’s sister Marley joined Lucy’s group to read a book.

Tigerlily’s Mom and Dad read a story to her group as part of Tigerlily’s birthday celebration.

Eli joined his sister Lucy and their parents to celebrate Lucy’s birthday.
Our Month in Photos
Our Month in Photos

[Images of various children engaged in activities such as playing in a sandbox, standing in a line, playing with blocks, and working on crafts.]