Farm and Food

Three focus books were selected for the Extended Morning’s study of farm and food. The children learned through a variety of literary texts: fiction, non-fiction, picture books, folktales, fables, legends, and poems. We have learned to appreciate the fact that we get many of our foods and material goods from animals.

In the book *Charlie Needs A Cloak* by Tomie de Paola, Charlie was a shepherd who needed a new cloak. In the spring, he sheared his sheep, washed and carded (straightened) the wool, and spun the wool into yarn. In the fall, Charlie dyed the wool red and wove it into cloth. He spun and sewed the pieces together so that when winter came he had a new cloak! Activities included: pretending to "shear" sheep by scraping shaving cream off of sheep shapes with popsicle sticks, playing the game *Sheep, Sheep, Wool*, a version of *Duck, Duck, Goose*. We practiced weaving using paper and popsicle sticks, and we created sheep out of cardboard, yarn, and cloth. The friends prepared several different bread doughs throughout our unit, including pizza dough, pretzels, and pita bread. All these were tasted during lunch.

In *The Farmer In The Soup* by Freya Littledale, a silly farmer agrees to exchange places with his wife for the day because he believes that "nothing to" managing a household. He soon learns how difficult it is after spilling the cream (to make butter) twice, leaving the plug out of the cider keg and flooding the basement, forcing the cow onto the roof to graze, and eventually ending up sitting in the soup he is trying to make! From that day on, the farmer appreciates all that his spouse does. The activities were: creating scenes and stories with barns, animals, and farm trucks; practicing rolling pie dough with rolling pins and forming it into a small pie pans; using rhythm sticks to accompany songs; playing *Follow The Leader*, playing with pulleys, raising heavy buckets (making the farmer’s work easier); making farmer hats and playing the game “Cow Trap” (played like a familiar game, “Mouse Trap”).
The third children’s literature book read was Caldecott Medal award winner, *The Ox Cart Man* by Donald Hall. The Ox Cart Man is a story about the cycle of the seasons on a 19th century New England farm. In the fall, a man packs up his ox-cart with all of the provisions that he and his family have made and prepared over a year for selling in the Portsmouth Market. The cart is full of wool sheared from the sheep, a shawl and mittens knitted from the wool, candles, apples, potatoes, linen, shingles, brooms, honey, vegetables, maple sugar, and goose feathers. The man walks for ten days to the market, sells everything including the cart and the ox, and buys a few provisions for his family. When he gets back to the farm, the process begins again. The friends learned in the following ways. They participated in making potato prints, matching and discussing season pictures, assembling a paper ox-cart with moving wheels, and using their hands and paint to create pigs in mud.