



Oak Journal

December 20

Written By: Aria



The classroom was abuzz with excitement when we brought out some cardboard boxes and asked what everyone could build with them. Ideas flew around, and children built upon each other's ideas. "Let's make a castle for everyone to fit inside!" Seeing how the activity captured the children's imagination and creativity made me reflect on the learning opportunities present in emergent project-based curriculum. In emergent, project-based curriculum teachers observe closely the natural interests of the

children, and plan projects that explore those interests. This means projects will be unique to the group and children are active participants in shaping their own learning. The learning benefits of this approach are many. The "21st Century Skills" have been identified as the 4 C's: Creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking. Project-based learning lends itself to development in all those areas.



1. **It promotes problem solving, collaboration, and communication.** As the castle emerged, conflicts emerged too. "Can I go in there?" "You can go in after me." Children

used language to explain their ideas, ask about the ideas of others, and coordinate tasks. "I'll color inside, you color outside." "How about we call it the rainbow unicorn castle? Do you like that idea?"

2. **Engagement is high, because student's own curiosities and interests are valued.** As the project gained steam, almost everyone in the classroom had been drawn in. "Can I help?" "Can I play too?"

3. **It creates deep, memorable understanding.**



Think about what you remember from your schooling. Most likely, it was the times (if any) when you were allowed to explore your questions, build something with your hands, and learn by doing.

4. **It is inherently open-ended, which draws on students' creativity.** In a teacher-directed activity, the answers are held by the teacher, to be discovered by the student. In a child-led activity the teacher needs to surrender a certain amount of control, and be a "guide on the side" in a co-creative emergent process.



5. It lends itself to an inquiry-based process, which employs children's researching capabilities.

6. It creates authentic moments for literacy development, as well as other academic skills. Someone suggested a mail box, and suddenly a group of students were making mail to fill the mail box. Someone needed to label the mail box and other people wrote messages for mail.



What do you think of this approach? What projects do you see your child engaging in at home? How is this type of pedagogy different from how you were educated? The teachers are excited to see where project making takes us next semester! We wish you a joyous and restful holidays and winter break! See you in the new year.
Love, Teacher Aria



Activities

Card making for Indie
Pastel rain drops
Alphabet line painting
Play dough cookies
Apple cider making

Materials

Watercolor
Chalk pastels
Biodynamic apples
Juicer
Play dough with
cookie cutters