

Natural wonders

Integrated Arts Project
Alison Luttrell



The pictures on this slide are taken from the children's initial experience documented to become the integrated arts project. Since then the children have explored a variety of mediums extending on their 'big ideas'. The children in these pictures are preparing for a party by decorating the table with shells and making party hats.

PEBBLE AND SHELL INSTALLATION



Jemma “It’s like a rock Pool”



Ashley’s plan for her vertical pebble installation.



Attempting to layer the pebbles



Emma “The rocks and shells have the same colours”.

The experience

A wooden shelf contains baskets of shells and pebbles. Displayed are images of Andy Goldsworthy’s installations. The children explore the area, sorting and positioning the natural items.

Review of learning

The pebbles slide as Charlize and Ashley attempt to layer them. Ashley comes to the conclusion that the pebbles are “too slippery”. Her educator posed the question “I wonder how we could make them stay”? Ashley replied “We need to put a wall to hold them”.

Future Plans

Make plans for children to create vertical shell and pebble installations following Ashley’s plan.

EXPLORING VERTICAL PEBBLE MOSAIC AS A DECORATION



■ The Experience

A Perspex frame is built and placed on a table next to the wooden shelf containing pebbles and shells. The educator adds a book displaying images of pebble mosaics from around the world. Ashley begins filling the vertical Perspex frame with the large pebbles. Ashley says to herself “No more big ones, I need the tiny pebbles for the top”. Ashley looks at images in the book as she placed the tiny pebbles. Ashley said “It looks like snakes” (referring to her pebble creation). Ashley finds an image (Howarth, 2003, p. 43) and tells her educator “I want to make this”(Referring to a pebble mosaic tile being created in a frame).

■ Review of Learning

Frames support artworks to hold their shape.

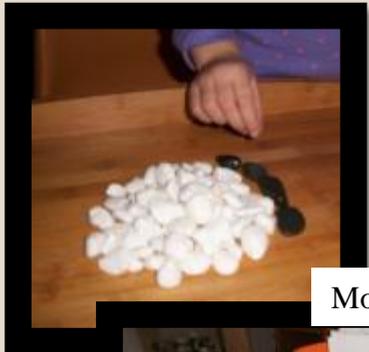
■ Future Plans

Add wooden trays similar to the wooden frame used in the book to create pebble mosaic tiles.

RECREATING PEBBLE MOSAIC PATTERNS



Sarah's plan for her Mosaic design



Mosaic design



Testing her theory of using glue to preserve a mosaic design.

■ The Experience

Sarah selects a famous pebble mosaic (Howarth, 2003, p.98). Inspired by this image she carefully positions the pebbles in a circular form. Once she completed her design she asked her educator to place it up high so no-one can touch it. Together they looked at how the mosaic designs in the book were preserved.

■ Review of Learning

Sarah's ideas on preserving mosaic designs included;

-No-one touches or steps on the pebbles. (As Sarah continued to look through the book, she discovered that people can walk on the pebble mosaics. This led to her following idea to preserve the design.

-A gluing agent is used to preserve the design. Theory is tested and findings are that PVA glue preserve the design of small pebbles.

■ Future Plans

Make pebble mosaic pavers and stepping stones using pebbles, tiles, plaster, grout and air drying clay.

DEVELOPING AN UNDERSTANDING

CHILDREN'S AND EDUCATORS REFLECTIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

- Children take digital pictures of their finished pebble installations to revisit and share with their families, allowing other children to explore the art medium, adding to the pebble work, or create a new art work. This supported the children to feel that their work was valued.
- The children used clip boards and paper to make their ideas visible through their drawings. Graphite pencils were introduced here for the children to explore shade.

Art Goals

- **For children to engage in symbolic representation.** The Early Years Learning Framework outcome five supports the expression of ideas and meaning making using a variety of media (DEEWR, 2009). This art goal was met through the ample opportunities for children to engage in visually representing their ideas using pencil and paper.
- **For children to engage with nature and explore natural art mediums.** Outcome two in the Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009) emphasises the importance for children to engage in thinking about nature, its relationship with people, how it can be impacted upon, and in turn develop respectful responsible behaviours. Cadwell (1997) suggests using natural materials to support children to develop a relationship with nature. This art goal was met as the children explored the earths material as an art medium for several weeks.

EXAMINING PRODUCTS MADE FROM CLAY



■ The Experience

Clay items were placed on a table with books about pottery for the children to explore. Educators supported the children's explorations by encouraging them to explore the items, ask questions and build theories about how the different items were made.

■ Review of Learning

The children developed skills in recognising clay items. The children asked questions about the different shapes and patterns. Jemma pictured below questions the marking on the bottom of one of the clay items. She said it must be a word. After a discussion about our own artworks, she concluded that it must be the name of the person it belongs to. The educator supported this theory.



Future Plans

Add playdough to this area for children to try out their theories and new knowledge with a familiar medium similar to clay.

MAKING PARTY FOOD AND PEOPLE WITH PLAYDOUGH

■ The Experience

Birks (1997) book titled *The Complete Potter's Companion* and MacKay's (2003) book titled *Creative Garden Mosaics : Dazzling Projects & Innovative Techniques* were positioned with some playdough and rollers at a table. Charlize followed the visual steps to create a coil pot. She filled the coil pot with playdough lollies. Her educator noticed different shapes and questioned her about this. Charlize replied by naming the various lollies she made "Snakes, strawberry lollies, smarties". Audrey joined in and created people to eat the party food.

■ Review of Learning

Exploring new techniques for moulding. Referring to visual images and written instructions in achieving a goal. The children work cooperatively on the one project extending on each others ideas and discussing strategies.



Future Plans

Introduce Clay as a Medium to work with.
Plan for an experienced potter to be the 'Artist in Residence' to support the children.

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

UNDERSTANDING THE PROPERTIES OF CLAY



The artist in residence shows pictures of clay, tools, techniques and finished products. The children watch, listen and ask questions as the clay is cut. The children have a turn at slicing a wedge of clay from the large block.

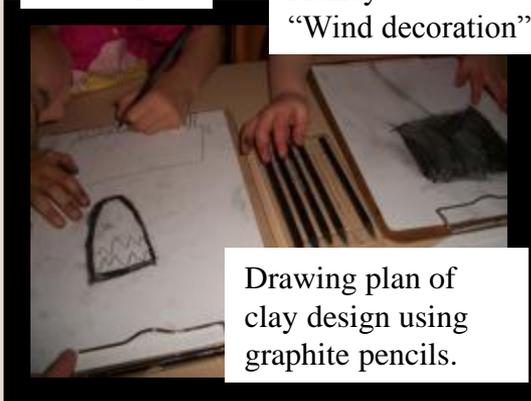


EXPLORING THE TEXTURE AND MAKING COILS.

Audrey “Coil pot”.



Tahlia
“Pinch pot”



Drawing plan of
clay design using
graphite pencils.

Ashley
“Wind decoration”.



David “Lizard”



■ The Experience

Jemma, Audrey, Tahlia, Ashley and David explore the texture of the clay. They explore adding water to the clay. Tahlia and Ashley draw plans depicting their ideas for using the clay. As Audrey twists the coil around she notices a small crack appearing. We question how to fix this. Tahlia suggests she cover the cracks with more clay. The educator supports her to rub the cracks to smooth them out and spread clay over the top. The children and educators explore this technique.

■ Review of Learning

Clay is malleable and can crack. Tahlia and Audrey discovered that the cracks can be smoothed out and covered with clay.

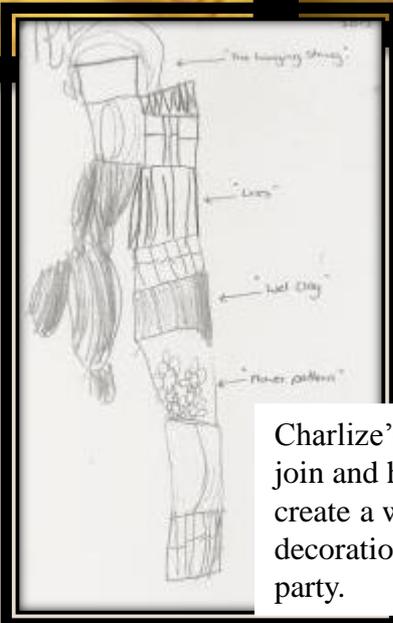
■ Future Plans

Continue to provide the experience. Discuss with families the possibility of firing the clay creations, ask for suggestions on places who might have a kiln and ways of transporting the works.

USING TOOLS, MAKING COIL POTS AND PACKING OUR CREATIONS TO BE PLACED IN A KILN.



MAKING TILE DECORATIONS FOR THE PARTY



Charlize's plan on how to join and hang the tiles to create a wind chime decoration for the garden party.

■ The Experience

The children examine images of clay tiles in Birks (1997). From this the children wanted to make their own tiles. A family suggested that everyday natural items such as gum nuts that the children collect outside could be used to imprint on the clay tiles. Outside the children collected gumnuts, pebbles and sticks in a basket and used them to imprint on their clay tiles. Charlize draws a plan that includes her peers tiles to create a group wind chime. The educator scribes Charlize's thoughts on how to join the tiles on her plan.

■ Review of Learning

How natural items can be used in art. Using plans to support the thinking and planning process in art.

■ Future Plans

Send the clay tile creations off to be fired in a kiln and upon their return provide the materials detailed in Charlize's plan for her to test out her theory for connecting the tiles and hanging them.

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

CREATING HUMAN CHARACTERISTICS



■ The Experience

Reece brought in a clay portrait sculpture his father had made in high school. The children set to work on their own people creations with the support of our second “Artist in residence” who reflected on the techniques he had previously used.

■ Review of Learning

Techniques for carving into clay and moulding it into shapes. Exploring the properties of a person using a new medium.

■ Future Plans

Explore wire and paper Mache sculpture.

THE RETURN OF OUR CLAY CREATIONS

THE TRANSFORMATION

■ The Experience

Exploring and comparing the wet clay, air dried clay and fired clay. Kosta (1999) encourages the exploration and comparison of wet, air dried and fired clay.

How it changed?

Jemma “It’s changed colour”

Ashley “This one has gone orange”

Charlize “The clay is all dry now”

Max “It’s hard”

Tahlia noticed that the colour of the fired clay and air dried clay was different. Jemma added “The air dried clay is more white”.

Ashley asked if we were going to paint them.

■ Review of Learning

Understanding of the drying process.

Developing a connection and collaboration with the high school that fired the children’s clay work.

■ Future plans

Provide water based paint, allowing Ashley the opportunity to paint her clay creation.



INTEGRATING PEBBLES AND CLAY

- The experience

The children begin to feel more confident using clay. They set to work on creating pavers for the garden party. Jemma decides to integrate the pebbles and the clay. She refers to her previous experience of making tile decorations as a starting point for making the pavers. Displayed in the clay area are drawings of the children's previous plans, visual representations, photographs and clay creations. She tells her educator and peers that she needs to roll it flat like a pancake. Other children join in Jemma's experiment of integrating the pebbles and the clay. The pavers are set aside to dry. Once dry the children eagerly position them in the garden outside. The educator is concerned that stepping on the pavers may result in them cracking. Dominic suggests that they take a photo of the pavers in the garden. In the beginning the children are hesitant to step on the pavers and instead step around them and admire them. It will be interesting to see if this hesitation subsides over time and if the pavers can withstand the natural elements of being outside.



DEVELOPING AN UNDERSTANDING

CHILDREN'S AND EDUCATOR'S REFLECTIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

- The children made their ideas for their wind decorations visible through their drawing. The children made visible their thoughts on connecting the tiles with string. Groups of children worked on creating tiles for the group wind decoration.
- After a windy weekend some children help the educators to collect sticks. These sticks are placed on the art shelf. Whilst the children are working with the clay, the educator asked how the sticks might be used. Charlize used a stick to imprint on the clay tile.
- The following week the tiles are dried. The sticks, wire, fishing line and clay tiles are positioned on the table for the children to explore. The children start threading and wrapping the tiles and sticks. Educators support the children to ensure the wind decorations are secure.
- This group project developed and maintained relationships and collaboration between children and between the children and educators.



DEVELOPING AN UNDERSTANDING

Art Goals

- **For children to explore a range of art mediums.** This provides opportunities for children to experiment and develop skills in manipulating different objects (DEEWR, 2009). Schiller (2002) describes that children's early experiences can influence their art choices in the future; therefore it's essential that children be introduced to a range of mediums. Throughout this project the children have explored pebbles. Clay, paper, graphite pencils, recycled paper, fabric and plastic materials.
- **For children to experience working with Clay as a medium and engage in 3 dimensional constructions.** Children can experiment with ways to express ideas and make meaning through the creative arts (DEEWR, 2009). The children enjoyed using the clay and are continuing to create with the clay, building on their previous experiences and revisiting past creations. At the moment the children are planning a group clay sculpture for the director to place at the entrance of the preschool.
- **For children to co-construct with educators.** The Early years Learning Framework is supportive of children connecting with people to resource their own learning (DEEWR, 2009). Children and educators should become co-researchers (Gardner, Rinaldi & Hargreaves as cited in Schiller, 2002). The children and educators worked collaboratively on the projects, expressing ideas, testing theories and engaged in joint creations.

COLLAGE AND PAPER CRAFT FOR THE PARTY

The Experience

Charlize tells her educators about a party she went to where everyone wore a mask. The educator placed some mask templates in the collage trolley for the children to explore. The children use pencils, crayons, markers, recycled materials, feathers, fabric, glue and glitter to make masks. Afterwards the children practice their dancing. Charlize tells her peers that they have to choose a partner and dance together. Sarah finds a large left over box that had been covered with paper for another project a few weeks ago. Sarah tells her educator and peer that this could be the present. They start gluing items from the collage trolley onto the box.



Birthday present construction

Review of Learning

The children broaden their understanding of party's. They engage in paper craft extending on their original paper craft experience of making party hats. The children explore mixed media in their mask and present creations.

Future Plans

Listen to different styles of music, including natural sounds to play during the party. Support the children to select a date for the garden party, consider an appropriate time frame for the children's ideas to be completed on time for the party. Design and create invitations.

DESIGNING INVITATIONS

COMPUTERISED DESIGNS

- **The Experience**
- Sarah, Jemma and Emma started working on the design of the invitations for the garden party. The educator printed a range of pictures of the garden so far and the children selected ones to use in the invitation. The children were already familiar with using the computer as these are available each day. The educator asked what do we need to type on the invite. Jemma replied “Your name”, Emma added “When you need to go”, Jemma added “Your address”. The girls decided on pink, purple and blue writing. The educator helped them to sound out the words to type. As the children thought of things to add to the invite the educator read the invite aloud. The children began handing out the invites.
- **Review of Learning**
- The children worked cooperatively, making joint decisions. The children extended on their skills of using ICT in the preschool.
- **Future Plans**
- Making the party food, cake and biscuit decorating. Inviting parents to help with the food preparation.



DEVELOPING AN UNDERSTANDING

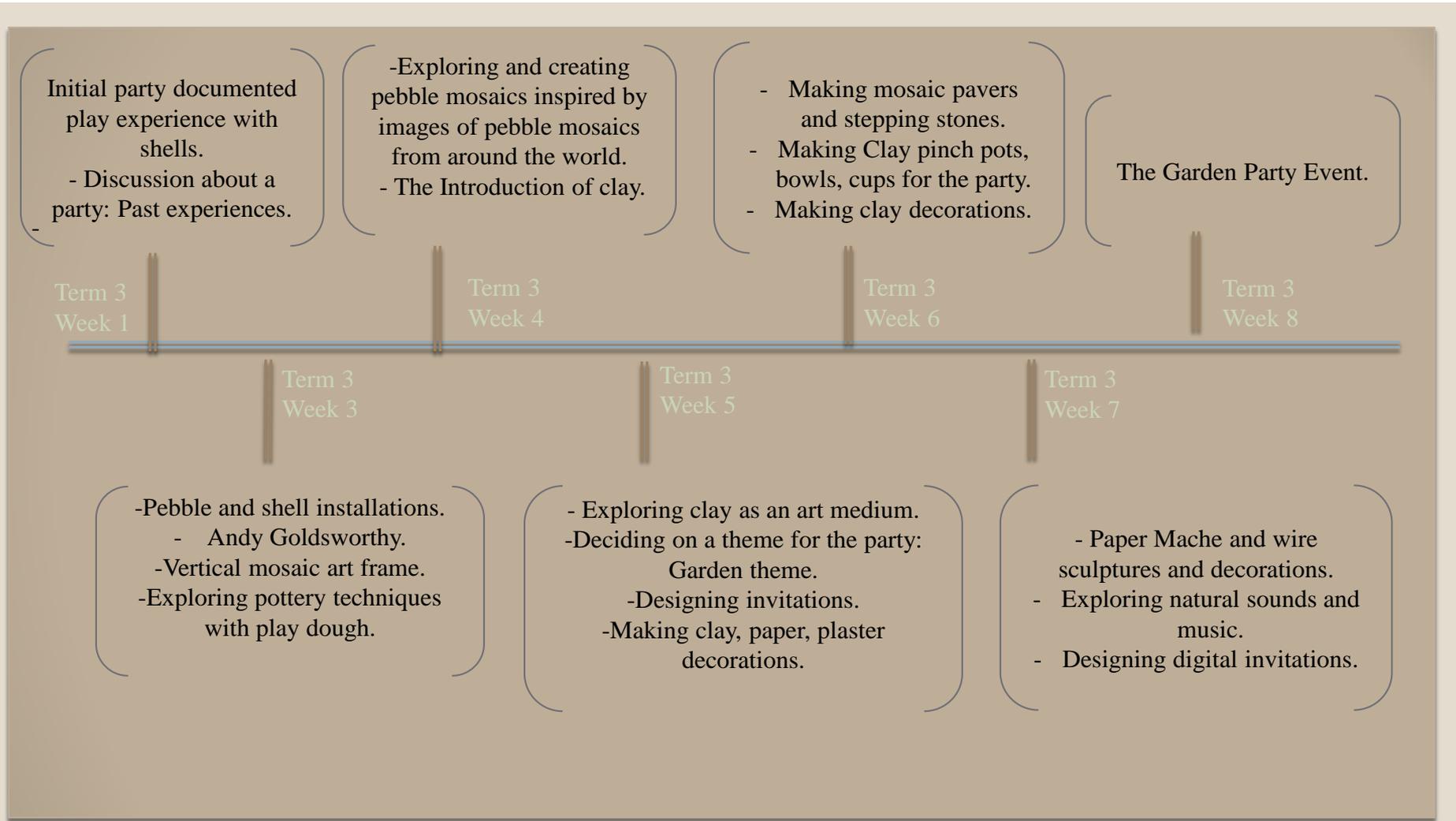
CHILDREN'S AND EDUCATOR'S REFLECTIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

▪ Art Goals

For children to express themselves creatively. Outcome 4 of the Early Years Learning Framework states “Children develop dispositions for learning such as curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity” (DEEWR, 2009, p.34). Educators support children’s creative development by offering open-ended materials (Szyba, 1999). Throughout the experience a range of open ended materials were available for selection by the children. The educator’s listened closely to the children’s ideas and conversations and made efforts to provide resources to extend on these ideas.

For children to work cooperatively. The Early Years Learning Framework outcome 1 states “Children develop their emerging autonomy, interdependence, resilience and sense of agency... when children increasingly cooperate and work collaboratively with others” (DEEWR, 2009, p. 22). Children develop an understanding and respect for different perspectives when engaging in shared projects (DEEWR, 2009). This highlights the importance of providing opportunities for shared experiences. The children worked collaboratively with the paper crafts. The children worked in small groups, some remained at the experience while others contributed and then left and some revisited the experience a second time. Throughout the paper craft project the children discussed their ideas, gave each other suggestions and support. Some children were more experienced in using the computer for designing invitations, children offered their support to each other and built on each others ideas. This experience highlighted the value of collaborative relationships through the arts.

THE CHILDREN'S BIG IDEAS TIME LINE



REVIEW OF ART GOALS

- **For children to explore a range of art mediums.** This provides opportunities for children to experiment and develop skills in manipulating different objects (DEEWR, 2009). Schiller (2002) describes that children's early experiences can influence their art choices in the future; therefore it's essential for children be introduced to a range of mediums.
- **For children to express themselves creatively.** Outcome 4 of the Early Years Learning Framework states "Children develop dispositions for learning such as curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity" (DEEWR, 2009, p. 34). Educators support children's creative development by offering open-ended materials (Szyba. 1999).
- **For children to engage in symbolic representation.** The Early Years Learning Framework outcome 5 supports the expression of ideas and meaning making using a variety of media (DEEWR, 2009).
- **For children to experience working with Clay as a medium and engage in 3 dimensional constructions.** Children can experiment with ways to express ideas and make meaning through the creative arts (DEEWR, 2009).
- **For children to work cooperatively.** The Early Years Learning Framework outcome 1 states "Children develop their emerging autonomy, interdependence, resilience and sense of agency... when children increasingly cooperate and work collaboratively with others" (DEEWR, 2009, p. 22). Children develop an understanding and respect for different perspectives when engaging in shared projects (DEEWR, 2009). This highlights the importance of providing opportunities for shared experiences.

REVIEW OF ART GOALS CONTINUED

- **For children to engage in long term project work, revisiting their work and building on it over time.** The Early Years Learning Framework outcome 1 states “Children develop knowledgeable and confident self identities...when children celebrate and share their contributions and achievements with others” (DEEWR, 2009, p. 23). Schiller (2002) notes the importance of continuity, allowing projects time and space to grow and develop.
- **For children to co-construct with educators.** The Early years Learning Framework is supportive of children connecting with people to resource their own learning (DEEWR, 2009). Children and educators should become co-researchers (Gardner, Rinaldi & Hargreaves as cited in Schiller, 2002).
- **For children to engage with nature and explore natural art mediums.** Outcome 2 in the Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009) emphasises the importance for children to engage in thinking about nature, its relationship with people, how it can be impacted upon, and in turn develop respectful responsible behaviours. Cadwell (1997) suggests using natural materials to support children to develop a relationship with nature.
- **For children to use new tools and learn different techniques.** The Early Years Learning Framework outcome 3 recognises that children can develop physical wellbeing by learning to use tools effectively (DEEWR, 2009). Educators can use modelling to support this.

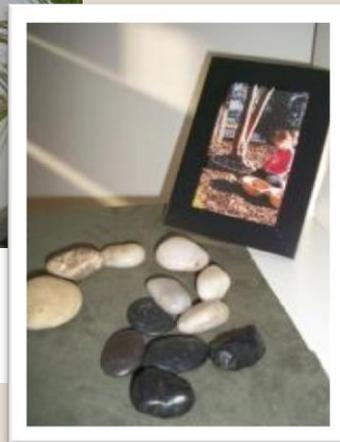
MY ROLE IN THE INTEGRATED ARTS PROJECT

- Respect is reflected in the schools of Reggio Emilia through the provision of quality art materials (Fraser, Susan & Gestwicki, 2002) In my choice of resources, art tools and their arrangement I tried to show this respect.
- Throughout this Integrated Arts Project I tried to take on the role of a teacher in the schools of Reggio Emilia. Fraser, Susan & Gestwicki (2002) describe the importance of relationships and collaboration in children's learning. I supported the children's explorations of the pebbles and clay by offering materials, listening and observing the children, scaffolding and modelling, making comments, wondering and posing questions, engaging with them in their explorations and discoveries. "Reggio teachers understand themselves to be members of a community of inquiry" (Kennedy, 1996, p. 26). I encouraged the children to work collaboratively with their peers.
- My role was to ensure that the children had uninterrupted time to engage in their art projects and revisit their work over time. To achieve this role I had to become knowledgeable on ways to store unfinished clay work. Along with this I had to become familiar with the properties and techniques for using clay as an art medium.
- Another role was to provide beautiful earthware to display for the children. This required the help of children, families and other educators to look out for and bring in such items. Some of the clay works that came in held sentimental value for the families and educators. Some of the items created by the children were placed in the home corner for dramatic play.
- Displaying and documenting the process was one of my roles. The children helped with updating the art gallery. Kosta (1999) points out that clay should be slowly introduced to children. I was conscious of this throughout the arts project, ensuring daily experiences with the items introduced. The pebbles and Clay remain a daily art medium that children can access. Not all of the experiences have been included in this documentation due to its size. The project is still continuing.

SHARING THE EXPERIENCE WITH FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND EDUCATORS



The Art Gallery after several weeks of this project.



- The corridor of the preschool became ‘The art Gallery’. In Reggio Emilia children’s artwork is displayed with related photographs and documentation expressing their appreciation for children’s artwork (Fraser, Susan & Gestwicki, 2002).
- ‘The Art Gallery’ displayed the journey of the integrated arts project. Artworks, photographs, children and educators dialogue and documentation of the learning was displayed to share the experience with families.
- Families and other educators were invited to comment on the art project throughout the entire process. The arts project grew over time.
- One low shelf contained a piece of material and several different shaped and coloured pebbles for visiting children and families to explore with the arts medium building on the experiences of the children involved in the arts project.

EDUCATOR REFLECTIONS

- We linked up with the community to support the art project. A high school art department placed the children's clay creations into their kiln. Relationships with people and groups in the community are supported in the Early Years Learning Framework as a way to support connections (DEEWR, 2009). This project highlights the Interdependent nature of the relationship between the child, the educator, the families and the community. In the schools of Reggio Emilia, curriculum projects support and maintain relationships. Since the return of the clay works the school have offered to help with any future art projects we undertake.
- Kosta (1999) describes diversity in the children's reactions to using clay. I witnessed this as some children eagerly engaged with the clay, while others watched over several days before choosing to touch it and some children are yet to explore the art medium.
- "Clay and Children belong together" (Kosta, 1999, p. 22). Having watched the children engage with the clay and exploring with them I agree with this statement. The clay provided numerous opportunities for children to explore using their senses, make new discoveries, explore a new medium, extend on their connection with nature, revisit and engage in long term projects and collaborate with others.
- Through this integrated arts project all of the art goals were achieved. As the arts project is still being explored I plan to continue to work with the group of children having these arts goals in mind. The main arts goal I am currently focusing on is; For children to engage in long term project work, revisiting their work and building on it over time. I believe the children and educators have learnt so much as a result of setting this goal. Myself and my fellow educators have changed our approach to packing away and interrupting children's play and learning.

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