



Something's Fishy Project

Owl-St. Matthew: Toddler

Background

Our Project began in December 2016 and ended early April 2017. The ages of the children in the classroom are 16 months to 2.5 years. The staff in the room were Becca RECE, Heather RECE and Joanne RECE.

Phase 1: Beginning the Project

We received a fish tank as part of our environment challenge. Patti went out and bought us a blue Betta fish and all the supplies we needed to get started (food, a net, cleaning supplies). Patti brought the new fish into our classroom and immediately the toddlers started asking, "What's this?" We decided to name our fish Taco after doing a survey. We came up with what we know, what we want to know and whom we could ask. We thought we could talk to Patti's sons Mason and Michael on the PD day about fish because they have a Betta fish at home.

What we know	What we want to know	Whom we can ask
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- They eat breakfast- Live in water- Fish can be red- Fish eat food- Taco is a fish- Taco is blue- We eat fish- Fish live under the sea- Taco swims in the water	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Do fish have hands?- Do they have Mommy's?- Do fish play in snow?- Where do fish live?- How do you go fishing?- Are all fish blue like Taco?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Patti's sons; Mason and Michael

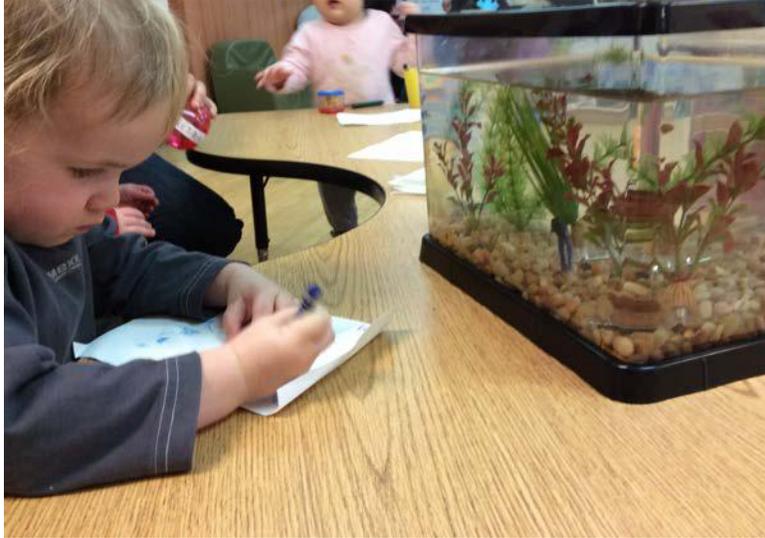


Project History Board

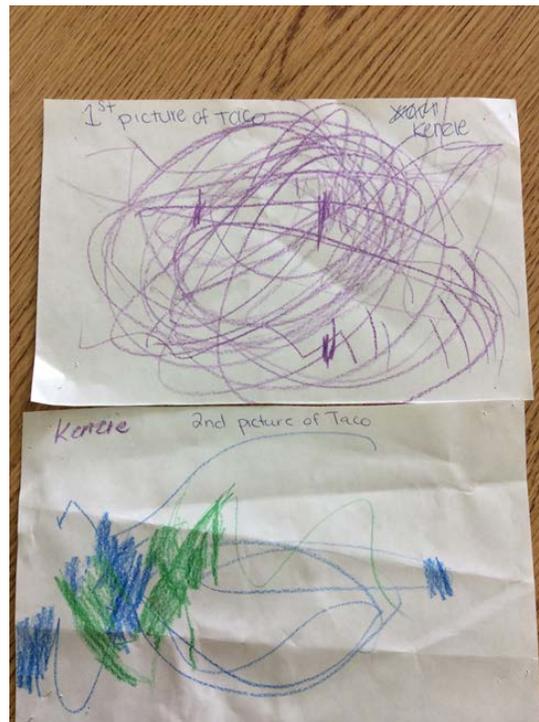


William (age 2) watching as we created a home for Taco

Phase 2: Developing the Project



Kellen (age 2) is drawing his first picture of Taco. He spent a long time looking at Taco, then drawing what he saw. The first drawings of the fish did not have much detail and were coloured with a variety of colours. We noticed during the toddler's second fish drawings, many toddlers used a blue crayon for taco and green to make the plants inside the tank.



Kenzie's (age 2) first and second drawings of Taco and his fish tank

Fish Survey

After seeing a rising interest in our new pet Taco, the fish project began. One of our first steps was a survey. We asked, "Do you like fish?", everyone except for one child answered yes verbally or by shaking their head or making some other nonverbal cue to show that they like fish. Not all of the toddlers are able to use words yet but no one said no. One child opted not to answer the question, possibly because they do not have many words yet. After we asked the children, "What do you like about fish?" Hannah H said "Taco.", and some others answered this question with the same answer. William S said, "He swims", Xavier said, "He's hiding" and "Taco is blue", and some other children said, "Blue" (the colour of our fish Taco). This survey helped us start to understand the toddlers' area of interest in fish.

ing happily in water
toddler definition
Taco, swimming in the water, spikey,

Do you like FISH? ∞

Name	Yes	No
Kenzie	✓	
Ava	✓	
William N		
Ethan	✓	
Sophia		
Hannah H	✓	
Xavier	✓	
William S	✓	
Nicholas	✓	
Jack	✓	

What do we like about fish?

"Taco" Hannah H "He swims" William S. "He's hiding" Xavier
"I like fish" William S "Taco is blue" Xavier



Ava (2.5) drawing her second picture of Taco

Paper Plate Fish

We created paper plate fish, where each toddler was given a chance to pick what colour they wanted their fish to be. William S. wanted his fish to be yellow. When he added green paint he announced "It's yellow!" Xavier used green and blue paint. He first started to paint stroking the paper plate back and forth with a brush and then decided to use his hands and fingertips to create his fish. When the painting was complete, the toddlers decided the fish needed eyes and each one chose how many eyes their fish had. Some fish had only one eye and others had multiple eyes.



Naomi (age 2) using red paint to make her fish

Becca told us that to go fishing you need a fishing license. She explained having a license keeps everyone, including the fish safer. We created our own fishing license using a paper stating our name, age and a picture of ourselves. We colored them with crayons and when we went fishing in the pond, we showed Joanne our license, which gave us permission to fish. The licenses all went home with the toddlers.

Under the sea mural

Using a large sheet of paper, we drew sea creatures that live under the water. First Heather made the water line, and then we started to talk and draw fish and all the other sea creatures we could think of. This built on the children's knowledge of the different kinds of creatures that share the under the sea space. The activity gave the children an opportunity to discuss and build on language skills, creativity skills as they drew, and an opportunity to socialize as they completed this project together. From their own knowledge, they drew fish, sharks, whales and octopus. Joanne and Heather helped make other creature suggestions to broaden their sea creature vocabulary. Starfish, jellyfish and other creatures were added to our drawing. We discussed colour options, what each creature looks like and what the creatures do under the water. The toddlers enjoyed colouring in the water, adding their own creatures and of course adding multiple sharks into the water.

Fish Experts

We had a visit from two fish experts. Mason, one of the school agers, came and told us how he has a beta fish at his house. Mason had lots to tell us about his fish Fishy. He told us they feed him every day at breakfast and clean his tank once a week. We asked how old Fishy was. Fishy is one year old and was going to live 3 years, or if you are lucky 3.5 years. He explained Fishy's tank is different from Taco's. Fishy has pink sand, but for her second birthday, she will be getting a new tank just like Taco's. Michael, another school ager, told us he goes fishing at the cottage. He uses a fishing pole and jigs or sometimes-live bait to go fishing. Kenzie asked if he likes fishing and Mason told us it's relaxing and he really likes it.



Our special guests Michael and Mason answering all our questions about fish

Tissue Paper Fish

Early on in our fish project, we made a tissue paper fish together. Not only were we building on our fine motor skills while spreading glue and applying small pieces of tissue paper to the page, we were also learning about the parts of the fish. Heather first drew a huge fish outline on the page. As it was being drawn the parts were identified. "This is the fin" "This is the tail" While the toddlers applied the glue and tissue paper to the page we talked and identified the colours of the tissue paper but also the area of the fish they were applying it to. "Where did you put the blue tissue paper piece?" "Oh it is on the fish tail!" This art activity gave the children choices. Choices of what colours to pick, how many pieces to add and where to apply them on the fish. It started to build the concept of fish body parts in a simple way for the toddlers to begin learning about them. After this, many more activities continued to build on these concepts as the children learned about different sea creatures, what fish do and what fish look like.



Fish in a Bag

Everyone shared Taco as a pet, so why not have our own pet fish to take care of? We started by using Ziploc bags as our fish bowls. Water with blue food colouring was added to the bowl for the fish to "swim" in. Then each child was able to pick different colours of fish (red, blue, yellow, green) and count out how many fish they wanted in their fish bowl. Afterwards each toddler had the opportunity to take care of their fish by feeding them. They each sprinkled some glitter "fish food" for their fish to eat. This activity gave each child an opportunity to learn how to care for a pet fish. It also allowed them to practice counting and colour recognition skills.

Playdough Fish

During our fish project, we added fish cookie cutters and even plastic fish shapes to our playdough toys. Ava and Xavier worked with Joanne to make playdough fish bowls! Then they added plastic fish in their bowls. They tried shaping their bowls in different ways to add more fish in their tanks. Ava also practiced rolling out the dough and cutting it with fish cookie cutters. She made many fish! This brought numeracy into the project, as she would count all of the fish she made.



Sticky Fish

The toddlers love to touch everything so we decided to give them an opportunity to create their own fish by exploring two very different textures. We cut narrow card stock outlines of fish in different colours. Each toddler chose a colour and helped stick it to a large piece of contact paper. The table was then covered in pieces of different coloured tissue paper. “Ok, the choice is yours. Take whatever colours of tissue paper you want to stick them on your fish”, said Joanne. The toddlers picked up pieces of tissue paper and dropped or placed them on the contact paper. A few of the toddlers started to laugh as they placed a hand on the contact paper and then tried to pull it off. “What does that feel like?” asked one of the teachers. “It’s sticky, sticky” said Ava. Tissue paper was soon everywhere, on the table, on the floor, on the fish and even on a few toddlers’ heads. Our Conestoga College student gathered up loose tissue paper and rained them down on the toddlers’ heads. Ethan, Jack and Wyatt were having more fun watching the tissue paper rain down than making their fish. A few days later, we created our sticky fishpond on the bulletin board. Our sticky fish creations were a great experience in making choices and working with two very different textures.



Magnet Fishing

One day, Joanne put a bucket on the floor and filled it with funny looking fish. Then she put a chair near the bucket and asked a volunteer to go fishing. Joanne unwrapped a special fishing pole made of a tree branch and string. The children had seen a few YouTube videos of people going fishing. “The fish have a special magnetic disc hidden inside them. The pole uses a magnet as bait, like a fisherman uses worms. All you do is relax, sit on the chair and drop your fishing line in the pond. See what you can catch.” There were many volunteers including Xavier and Ethan. Xavier put in the line and right away caught a jellyfish. Everyone watching started to get very excited. Ethan preferred to fish by hand until he caught a whale. Later, the children asked if we could fish again, so everyone lined up chairs on the edge of the carpet while Joanne set up the pond and three chairs. Hannah M., Hannah H., and Madison fished together in many ways. They laughed each time they caught each other instead of a fish. The children were very patient waiting for their turn. William S., Kellen, Nicholas and Xavier went several times to catch a fish. The toddlers’ love of fishing was apparent a few weeks later when Joanne introduced a one-person fishing activity with a small pole and felt fish. It is still one of their favourite busy bag activities. Then one day, after a very heavy rain Hannah M., Ava and Kenzie were seen using small branches to fish in the puddles on top of the sandbox cover. We practiced patience while we waited for our turn, hand-eye coordination while we fished and fine motor hand control of the fishing poles.



Ethan (2 yrs) explored the fishing ponds



Fishing together

Sink and Float

First, we began with a large container of water at the children's level. Then using a variety of items including a wood piece, clothes pin, light plastic fish toy, a heavy sensory block, a small plastic bowl and cork we began our sink and float experiment. Each item was held up for the children to see and examine. After being given the definition of sinking and floating we then would guess what each item would do. Would they sink or float? After testing the items in water some surprised the toddlers. Most of the toddlers were new to the sink/ float concept and would randomly predict what each item would do. When testing each item we found out that the hard sensory block sunk, and the small plastic fish floated. Then when trying the light plastic bowl we made a new discovery. It first floated. However, when water was added to the inside of the bowl it sunk! Afterwards we discussed what fish do. Do they float? Do they sink? What do they do in the water? From observing Taco and seeing the results of this experiment, we knew that they swim!

Ice Fishing ("Do fish play in snow?")

Early on in the project, during winter, the children were eager to learn about fish but also were enjoying playing with ice and snow. Using the sensory bin we added large ice chunks and ice cubes, then put in water and fish. The children then used nets to attempt to catch the fish in the icy water. They also used their hands to explore the ice and pick up the fish. During this activity, we discussed how people do ice fishing in the winter. They cut a hole in the ice and use a fishing rod to drop in the water under the ice to catch fish. The toddlers discovered how cold it is to catch fish in icy cold water. Some really enjoyed touching the cold ice and water, others tried it once but preferred using nets or observing this activity. Maddie and Hannah M both loved using the nets to catch their fish! This also helped answer Xavier's question, "Do fish play in snow?"

Since we discovered that fish live in the water below the ice and snow they don't get to play in snow. But what do fish play with? We took this question and did some iPad research to discover that Beta fish like our fish Taco, sometimes play with small balls and push them inside their tanks. What a discovery!



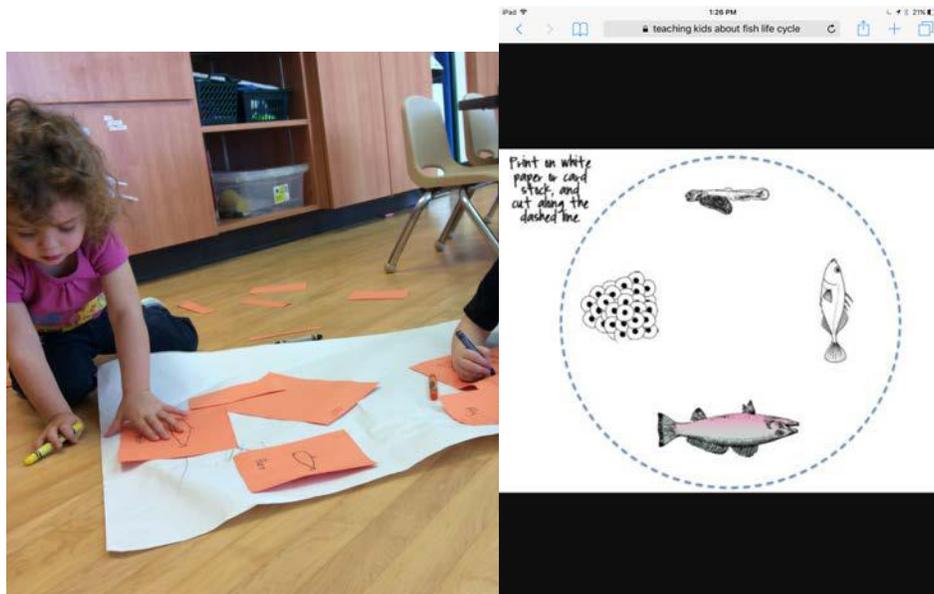
Kenzie(age 2), Ava(age 2) ice fishing

Fizzy Fish

Pinterest is a great source of ideas for everything toddler but not everything works out the way you plan. First, we looked for fish shaped ice cube trays but they were nowhere to be found, so Joanne used small rectangle ice cube trays and asked the toddlers to imagine that each rectangle was a little fish. We poured some water into two bowls and added baking soda into each one. The toddlers took turn stirring the baking soda. The toddler chose two different colours – blue for one bowl and red for another bowl. Then we poured the water into measuring cups so we could more easily pour it into the ice cube trays. We put the fish into the freezer and waited a whole day to check them out. Joanne filled a squirt bottle with vinegar and then she asked Hannah to choose a fish. “Red one”, said Hannah. A red fish was dropped into the bowl. Joanne handed Hannah the squirt bottle and said, “See if you can make your fish fizz”. Hannah tried to squeeze the vinegar out on to the fish but turned and asked for help. “I can’t get the water out”, she said. Joanne helped her squeeze the trigger on the bottle but not much happened. “Why didn’t it work?” Joanne asked the children. Several explanations were offered. Kenzie thought we needed more vinegar. Joanne said maybe we needed more vinegar and baking soda. We sprinkled some baking soda on the fish and tried the vinegar again. This time there was a little fizzing. “I’m sorry our fizzy fish didn’t fizz”, said Joanne. “That’s ok Joanne”, said Kenzie. Hannah was happy just adding more baking soda and pouring the vinegar water on top. We put the fish in a big bowl and watched them melt into different colours. They were very cold and some of us got colours on our hands. Did you know that red and blue make purple? Joanne and the toddlers concluded that even when you follow the directions, not everything works out the way you want it to. We also decided that when an experiment doesn’t work, find another way to look at it.



Sophia(age2) adds baking soda to the mixture



Ava(age 2) colouring and assembling the order of a fish life cycle
A basic fish life cycle that the children used to find out how a fish grows and changes

"Do fish have Mommies?" (Life Cycle of a Fish)

During our project, Kenzie wanted to know if fish have mommies. We decided to investigate the life cycle of a fish to see if they do indeed have parents. We used the iPad and found the different stages of a fish include egg, then alevin (baby stage), then fry, parr (kid stage), smolt, then an adult, then a spawning adult (parent fish) that has the eggs and the cycle continues. We coloured fish at each stage. Ava and Xavier talked about the "baby", and "egg" and "mommy" fish as they assisted in assembling the life cycle of a fish poster. Kenzie was happy to know that fish do have mommies that have the eggs to make more fish. The finished fish poster was hung up in the room and sometimes the children visit it and ask questions about each stage.

Fish Puppets

The toddlers really enjoy their story time with finger puppets and stick puppets so we decided to invite them to make their own fish stick puppet to use with some of our favourite fish songs. The toddlers were given a choice of several different fish outlines. They coloured the fish of the choice and used a glue stick to glue the fish to a craft stick. The next day, we gathered together on the carpet to show off our fish. Then we sang three of our favourite songs and used the stick puppets. We sang "Slippery Fish", "There was a toddler had a fish and Taco was his name" and "1,2,3,4,5, once I caught a fish alive". The children liked having their very own stick puppet to take home. A few weeks later, we had a visit from a woman who works at the library. She brought a book about a fish and gave all the toddlers a fish stick puppet to take home.



William S (age 2) gluing together his fish puppet



Sophia (age 2) and Felix (age 2) with their completed fish puppets participating in fish songs with their new puppets

Wood Fish

Several of our toddlers had been spending time using some new tools we had donated to our room. Hammering was the favourite past time so we decided to give them a chance to use a real hammer, real nails and wood to make another kind of fish. Joanne brought in a wooden board with the outline of a fish that looked a little like our class fish, Taco. Then she brought out a hammer and some nails. That got everyone's attention and Nicholas was first in line. "Does anyone want to hammer a nail into our fish?" asked Joanne. "Nicholas, Nicholas" shouted Nicholas. Joanne explained that we were going to hammer many nails into our fish and then use the nails to help us decorate it. Nicholas took the hammer and promised not to hammer Joanne's fingers. She held the nail and Nicholas hammered. Seven toddlers hammered nails into the wood and only one of them missed the nail. Ava insisted on holding the nail on her own. Then Ethan and Kellen insisted they could do it on their own, too. The next day, Joanne offered the toddlers lengths of wool in lots of different colours. She explained that the toddlers could now use the nails to guide the wool all over the fish. Once a toddler chose a colour, Joanne tied it to a nail chosen by the toddler. Then the child wrapped the wool around nails going back and forth. William N. was fond of going in a straight line while Hannah H. went around and around the same nail. Kenzie made a plan to go from one side of the fish to the other and took her time choosing the nails that would get her there. When we finished, we put the fish out in the

cubby area so all our parents could see it. The children exhibited lots of confidence in using the hammer and enjoyed seeing the colours and patterns they created with the wool.



Nicholas(age 2) uses his fine motor skills to use the hammer.



Kellen(age 2) and Ethan(age 2) use hammers to hammer the nails into our fish.

Slippery Fish

The toddlers have always enjoyed this song. One snack time we were eating fish crackers. That inspired Hannah M to start singing slippery fish to her fish cracker. Later, Heather cut out felt sea creature shapes and as we sang the song, they would identify each creature. There was a whale, octopus, shark, crab, tuna fish, slippery fish and more. The children enjoyed singing the song with the felt board pictures and taking them off and on the board to add them in the song where they wanted. They liked making it funny with the tiny tuna fish eating the big whale as well. They would even make up verses of their own. Typically the song would be sung like "A slippery fish, a slippery fish, swimming in the water, a slippery fish, a slippery fish...glub glub glub, AHHHH! He has been eaten by a tuna fish" Then it would follow with the same verse using tuna fish, octopus, whale, shark and other sea creatures would follow. When the children would make their own verse, I would stop singing and let them fill in what they would like the next creature to be. At times, they would even choose friends in the room to be part of the song "A swimming William..." instead of a sea creature. This trend continued and the whole song became filled with toddlers and teachers names.

A slippery Toddler Room (by the toddler friends at Owl St Matthew)

A slippery Hannah, a slippery Hannah, swimming in the water...a slippery Hannah, a slippery Hannah, Glub, Glub, Glub....

AHHHH!

Hannah has been eaten by . . .

A floating Kenzie, a floating Kenzie, swimming in the water...a floating Kenzie, a floating Kenzie, Glub Glub Glub....

AHHHH!

The song continues and the children name other children and teachers instead of the fish, but it changes every time. They sometimes like to add a shark or another sea creature in the middle of all the toddlers and teachers! Glub glub glub!

Jelly Fish

The toddler teachers heard that often when children reach preschool they have very little if any experience with scissors so Joanne offered the children a chance to use scissors to make a jelly fish. Ava watched Joanne bring out a pair of scissors and a role of narrow ribbon. "We need lots and lots of ribbon cut to use as the tentacles for our jelly fish." We had already seen what jelly fish looked like on the iPad. "Let's pick a colour", said Joanne. "Yellow", shouted Ava. "I want yellow." So Ava picked up the scissors which are designed for small hands to use by squeezing. Joanne unraveled some ribbon and held it out to Ava. She carefully guided the scissors to the ribbon and squeezed. As soon as the ribbon fell away from the cut, Ava squealed with delight. "I did it", she said with a huge smile on her face. "More, more!" she insisted. So we cut lots and lots of ribbon and every time she cut the ribbon, Ava squealed. Kenzie had been watching from a distance and came over to ask for a turn. Ava reluctantly gave up the scissors. Ava had used two hands to squeeze the scissors but Kenzie insisted she could use one hand. "I can do it", she said. And she did. Over the two days, we cut red, blue and yellow ribbon. Almost every toddler in the room spent some time cutting ribbon. Joanne tied each colour bunch into a knot and attached it to a paper lantern. The children chose the colour combinations – blue ribbon to a red lantern, red ribbon to a blue lantern and yellow ribbon to a green lantern. Then we recruited Heather to hang the jellyfish from the ceiling. The children were delighted and still ask to be held up so they can run their fingers through the ribbon. This activity prompted an ongoing interest in scissor use. At least once a week, several toddlers ask for paper and scissors. We have added a few more pairs of squeeze scissors but several of the children are learning how to use regular scissors. Even though our fish project is over, we just can't bring ourselves to take the jelly fish down.



Joanne helps Kenzie (age 2) and Ava (age 2) cut strings to make the jelly fish.

Fish Crackers

The toddlers love their snack foods including goldfish crackers so we decided to make our own. We have included the recipe for you to use at home. We measured the flour and the children helped to grate the cheese – very carefully! Then we added the rest of the ingredients and Joanne started to mix it. The toddlers love to get their hands into the dough, as it is such a fun sensory experience. When everything was mixed together, the toddlers were told it was time to put the dough away for a while. “ahhh!”, William S. exclaimed. “We will just have to be patient and wait until the dough is ready.

Later that day, the toddlers were excited as they gathered at the table to use two things they enjoy: a rolling pin and a cookie cutter. Everyone agreed it was just like playing with playdough only this time we would get to eat it. Jack was particularly excited about that part since he knows that his teachers do not recommend eating playdough. “We can’t eat it until it is baked in the oven”, said Joanne. Jack was not sure he could wait. Later that afternoon, the fish crackers went into the oven. By snack time the following afternoon, the children were able to eat their crackers. Kenzie, Hannah and Xavier thought the fish were very big and very cheesy. Everyone enjoyed their crackers very much, especially Jack.



Kenzie(age 2) helping Joanne roll out the dough
 Ethan(age 2) cutting out a fish cracker from the dough
 Ava(age 2) and Naomi(age 2) enjoying a snack of fish crackers
 Ethan(age 2) and William N(age 2) enjoying their fish crackers. Yum!

Paper Mache Fish

With the children's interest focused on fish we thought we could create our own big replica. Using a ball, triangle block, boxboard cut outs and tape we assembled a big fish that included body, tail and fins. Afterwards we started the paper mache process. We used a glue/ water mixture and pieces of

tissue paper to stick onto the fish. Xavier was very interested in this process and continued to come for turns as each layer was applied. Many of the other children enjoyed gluing and sticking the tissue paper on. Sophia liked to assist other by sticking tissue paper to the fish and have others glue it in place. As the toddlers used paintbrushes to glue, Heather would assist them in finding new areas of the fish to apply paper to. "Look at the fin? Does it need more tissue paper?" This helped the children learn the different parts of the fish. As they glued the tissue paper, this built their fine motor skills and allowed each individual child to make choices and become creative with the project.

After about a week of repeating the paper mache process, it was ready to be painted! The children could not decide on one colour and instead opted for a rainbow fish using blue, bright purple and green. Everyone was excited to apply paint to our fish creation. Using paintbrushes again we took turns applying the paint until our fish was fully covered in rainbow colours! How exciting to see our finished fish. But wait, what was he still missing? After the toddlers examined him, they realized he still needed eyes and a mouth. Heather also pointed out that fish have a lot of scales all over their bodies. Should we add scales to our sea creature? Yes! After the eyes and mouth were added, the toddlers placed the scales on the body of the fish. We chose glittery purple scales. Now our fish was complete.





Phase 3: Concluding the Project

We realized the children were ready to finish the project. All their questions had been answered by the many activities we did with them. They had learned so much about fish in many different ways that allowed for creativity, opportunities to use language, numeracy, science and more. They were also starting a new interest in babies at this time too. It was time to have one big fish celebration and start exploring a new topic.

On our last day of the fish project, we decided to give the children a very real experience with a once alive fish. This gave the children a way to celebrate all they have learned about fish! We also had a fish fry for snack. A delicious fish was cooked and we ate it with our snack that day. It was a very fishy fun day!

Exploring a Real Fish

One of the highlights of our fish project involved taking a very close look at a real fish outside of water. Joanne brought in a rainbow trout fresh from the fish department at the grocery store. She put on gloves and put the fish on the table. The toddlers were around the table before she could even get the knife ready. On the table was a picture of the parts of the fish that we had shown the children on another day. We reviewed those parts but this time we found them on a real fish. Joanne held the fish and passed it around so the toddler could touch it.

“Ew”, said Hannah. “It’s cold”, said Xavier. “No”, said William N. Ava noticed the scales on the fish skin. We pulled a few off so they could see them. We found the tail, the head, the eyes, the fins and the mouth. “Should I cut the fish into pieces so we can see what is inside?” asked Joanne. “Yeah”, yelled the toddlers. Joanne cut the head off first, then the tail, the fins and then opened the fish up so the toddlers could see inside. After cutting off the head, we noticed that the fish’s mouth opened easily and you could really see the teeth. Joanne held the head with the mouth open and offered the toddlers an opportunity to touch anything they wanted. William S. touched an eye. Ava and Hannah took one look at the teeth and said, “Danger!” That did not stop Ava from putting her finger up against the teeth. “Are they sharp?” asked Joanne. Ava smiled and nodded her head. Some of the toddlers tried patting the fish’s head but it was not very soft. A few of the toddlers liked the feel of the fins but not as much as the squishy feel of the fish guts. Joanne also pulled out the bones so the children could see and touch them. Since this fish was for eating, all the other parts of the fish were removed. Several of the children were very interested in exploring the fish head including the gills, the teeth, the tongue and the eyes. Before closing out this activity, Joanne explained that in the afternoon the children would get a chance to taste a different fish called yellow perch. That day we also had fish for lunch. It was a good day for exploring with all our senses and taking in some protein, omega 3 fatty acids, vitamin D and B2.



Felix(age 2) touching the fish head, Ava(age 2) and Joanne exploring the fish



Ava(age 2) sampling some of the yellow perch for our special snack

On the same day as the rainbow trout exploration, the toddlers were offered fried yellow perch. None of the toddlers knew if they had ever eaten this kind of fish before. Everyone got a little taste to see if they liked it. Hannah M., Ivy, Ava, Wyatt, and Jack decided they loved it. “More, more, more”, was heard until the last of the perch was eaten. Throughout the day, we talked about cutting up the fish, exploring the fish, and eating fish. No one was concerned about our pet fish Taco. We spent time talking about the difference between fish that are caught to be eaten and fish that are kept as pets. When asked if anyone thought we should eat Taco, Kenzie replied, “No, that’s silly”.

Teacher Reflections

It always amazes me as an educator the benefits of doing a project with toddlers. Not only do the toddlers learn and develop from all domains of learning but that I also learn so much as a co-learner. The toddlers did not learn just about “fish”, they learned colors, textures, language, numeracy and more. My favorite memory is deconstructing the real fish. The look on the children’s face and the curiosity of both children and teachers was incredible. ~Becca, RECE

Fish is not my area of expertise. I don't go fishing, I don't have a pet fish and I barely eat fish. This was started purely by the children's interest in our new pet beta fish Taco. The children immediately loved him. They instantly wanted to know more about him, how to take care of him and about fish in general. With all of this enthusiasm and interest the fish project was born. A real wow moment came for me at the very end of the project. Throughout the project and during all the activities I did see everyone's excitement continue to build and their learning continue to grow. But that last day when we brought a full fish into the room to examine was a huge highlight. All of the children's learning was now being executed on this activity. They had previously learned fish parts, but now they had a chance to really examine, touch and truly experience them. Joanne was a huge mentor during this end activity. She knows a lot about fish and was able to walk the children through all of areas of a fish, helping them fully see and explore them. The toddlers urged me to join and experience this fully with them. "Touch Heather!" they would say to me excitedly with a smile. I truly was a co-learner in this experience. Ava and Hannah M enthusiastically felt all the areas, even asking to touch some repeatedly. Joanne explained that the tongue feels rough and scratchy and urged the children to touch gently. One of the girls then said the tongue felt like "danger" as she touched it. What an amazing way to describe it! I would have never thought of that word myself, but after I was urged to touch it as well I realized how right they were, that was the best description for it! That wowed me. Children often have a way of surprising adults with their confidence and capabilities, I was just blown away with the choice in vocabulary as they made me a co-learner with them that day.

~Heather, RECE