

Terrific Textiles

**CMU Children's School
Staff / Parent Discussion 1/29/16**

Textile Exploration

[Try arranging, tying, and weaving with materials from our Make Shop.]

Why Study Textiles?

Our goal is to notice and appreciate the diverse fabrics we encounter in everyday life. We aim to foster young children's understanding of the textiles that we use to protect and adorn our bodies, homes, belongings, etc. We will explore the science, math, history, geography, and arts of textiles, as well as the ways that textiles feature in children's literature, games, etc. In other words, we can deepen our concepts and build skills in many domains by studying textiles.

Key Questions We Plan to Investigate

Week 1: What is a textile? Where are textiles found? How do the textile characteristics make them useful for specific purposes (clothing, bedding, uniforms, protection, etc.)?

[Books: Socks, Hats, Hats, Hats (what is fabric and what is not), Clothesline Clues (clothes for specific jobs)]

Weeks 2 & 3: How are textiles made from natural fibers (plants like cotton & jute), animals (like sheep), insects (like silk worms)? How are textiles made from synthetic (man-made) fibers?

[Books: Fabric, Sheep to Sweater, Cotton to T-shirt]

Week 4: How are textiles dyed and decorated? How do textiles allow us to express our unique selves?

[Books: Extra Yarn, and books with textile artwork or about textile techniques]

Week 5: How can we be creative with recycled or reused textiles?

[Books: Something from Nothing, What Can You Do with an Old Red Shoe, Beyond Fashion: 120 New Ways to Transform a T-Shirt]

Key Concepts Related to Textiles

- **Physical science / Technologies** – People work with fibers and fabrics in ways to enhance their usefulness for a variety of purposes by improving their durability, texture, insulation, absorbency, resistance to water, fire, etc., as well as the by developing machines to automate various parts of the process.
- **Life science** – Textiles are part of the human solution to our need for protection, and we have invented ways to make textiles and dyes from many plants and animals, usually in sustainable ways.
- **Geography / Earth science** – Climate and weather in certain places in the world determine the types of textiles needed and the resources available to make them. Synthetic fibers and dyes can be made from oil and minerals found in the earth, and our efforts to recycle textiles help preserve the planet.
- **History** – We can trace the history of textile making from natural to synthetic fibers, handmade to machine processing, etc., as well as highlight inventions from within our own community, such as the invention of Kevlar in 1964 by a 1946 Margaret Morrison Graduate, Stephanie Kwolek, at DuPont.
- **Math** – Measurement helps in making and selling products from textiles, but math is also built into textile designs. We can always ask How Many? What Shape? What Pattern? How Big? How Frequent?
- **Literature / Social Studies** – Many stories feature textiles prominently, and some have illustrations made of textiles. In some cultures, stories are woven into the textiles themselves (e.g., quilts, banners, flags, etc.).
- **The Arts** – We can create our own textiles, dyes, and designs, as well as make art from textiles, or integrate textiles into our music, movement, and drama (costumes & props).

Adult Support For Exploring Textiles [I wonder ... I think ... I learned ...]

- Explore **WITH the children** to gently support their investigation without directing or frustrating them.
- Take the **child's lead**, follow the child's interest, and provide only the level of support they need.
- Allow children to try a **variety of tools** for sewing and **techniques** for tying, weaving, etc.
- Allow children to work with the same materials for a **period of days**.
- Encourage children to **clean up from their explorations** so the materials are ready for the next textile adventures.

Developmental Benefits of Exploring Textiles

- **Self-Esteem & Independence** – building pride and confidence re: personal textile preferences and cultural textile traditions, as well as independence for utilizing textiles in everyday life (especially clothing).
- **Interaction & Cooperation** – respecting peers' differing preferences, cooperating in group textile projects, and gifting or donating textiles to others.
- **Communication** – learning new vocabulary related to fibers, fabrics, and textile processes and properties.
- **Discovery & Exploration** – strengthening skills in observation, counting, measuring, comparing & contrasting textiles and designs, as well as for experimenting with physical science related to textiles.
- **Physical Capabilities / Health & Safety** – strengthening eye-hand coordination for sewing, weaving, tying, etc., as well as appreciating safety issues related to textile arts tools (e.g., needles, low heat glue guns), and using textile products in sports (e.g., bean bags, ribbons & scarves, etc.).
- **Artistic Expression & Appreciation** – appreciating and exploring the artistry in making textiles as well as utilizing textiles in visual arts, drama, dance, and music.

Opportunities for Parent Involvement

Everyone

- Share a meaningful textile (woven world banner example).
- Donate textile materials.
- Donate new socks & underwear.
- Participate in the Family Festival – **Terrific Textile Time** and wear your classroom color!

Those with Extra Skills / Time

- Sewing Machine help in the Make Shop
- Other Make Shop support (extra pair of hands)
- Make us an I Spy quilt
- Demonstrate a textile technique

Other Ideas??

Thanks to the Family Social Organization for planning textile-related family field trips and activities!