During the month of November, we learned about trees by studying:

1. Tree parts, the growth cycle, seasons, and the transition to the season of Fall;
2. Trees as habitats for animals, and the food and shelter trees provide;
3. The trees around our school, the CMU campus community and in Pittsburgh.

Why study trees?
“Educating children to the benefits of trees is a way to create lifelong stewards of the urban forest and the planet.” [http://treepittsburgh.org/resource-type/education](http://treepittsburgh.org/resource-type/education)

Our Favorite Theme Books

Circle time is a great time to hear stories that help friends learn more about our theme. This month our favorite books were:

**When The Leaf Blew In**
by Steve Metzger

**From Acorn to Oak Tree**
by Jan Kottke

**Why Do Leaves Change Color?**
by Betsy Maestro

**Fletcher and the Falling Leaves**
by Julia Rawlinson

**Log Hotel**
by Anne Schreiber

Mango Monkey Says…

Our wise puppet friend visited the friends this month to share some stories and talk about Mindfulness. In the book *The Lemonade Hurricane* by Licia Morelli, a young friend whirls through his days like the swirling pulp in a stirred glass of lemonade. His older sibling helps him to use meditation techniques to balance his activity to become more peaceful, patient and productive. The story *One* by Kathryn Otoshi illustrates the message that sometimes it takes just one friend to stand up and make everyone count. The friends helped Mango Monkey remind his puppet pals that “we are all the same, we are all different,” and that calming our minds and bodies helps us think clearly and make good choices.
Week 1

**What Are the Parts of a Tree?**

We began our unit by looking at trees as a whole plant, defining the parts of a tree, and looking at the growth cycle throughout the seasons. Friends studied and matched parts of a tree and arranged some loose parts to create a tree that was photographed to be a Locker Tag. The children studied roots by looking at the classroom spider plants and setting the baby plants in water to grow the roots, and observing how celery and cut flowers can absorb colored water through their stems. Leaf Rubbings, Painting with Pine Branches, and Fall Tree Water Color Painting activities encouraged creativity through different uses of color, shape, technique and design. The Dramatic Play Center was filled with a Campsite complete with marshmallow roasting, a Farmer’s Market and a Tree House and other tiny homes for small animals. Friends used pulleys and little buckets to lift supplies such as acorns and apples up and down the tree house. Children practiced counting skills, cooperating and taking turns by playing games such as The Owl and Squirrel Counting Game, Orchard, and Sneaky Snacky Squirrel.

Weeks 1 & 2

**Why Are Trees Important?**

Next, we learned about some of the reasons that trees are so important in the world. We imagined the forest above us providing shade and protection as we read stories in the play tent and cooked marshmallows over the fire in the Dramatic Play campsite. Books and discussions at Circle Time centered on the animals that use trees as their homes, the food we get from trees, and how paper and wood come from trees. Friends had the opportunity to create Pine Cone Owls, build wood sculptures, make paper, and inquire about how many friends can fit inside of a large tree drawing.
Our final week of Trees included exploring the trees around our school. The children made a Leaf Book with leaves gathered from six different trees on and around the playground. We took a Leaf Walk with our Leaf Books to find the trees from where the leaves came. We took care of our local birds that use the trees by making suet cakes for them and regularly filling our playground birdfeeders. We talked about how worms help keep the soil healthy for tree roots to grow. We took care of our classroom pet worms by chopping and grinding some expired fruits and veggies for them to eat.

We used the book, *When The Leaf Blew In*, to study what comes next (a sequence). After reading the book and using props to tell the story, the children put pictures of the story in order. The children expressed themselves artistically as they painted their Wood Sculptures and used their handmade paper and tools in the Art and Writing Center for their creations.

Using a mix of music and movement activities, Mrs. Hraber deepens the content of each month’s theme and helps the children learn to sing and keep time with instruments and with their bodies. During November, Mrs. Hraber taught us some new, fun songs about trees. Pete the Metronome always introduces the session, this month dressed as a leaf and a squirrel! Children practiced crunching real leaves to the beat of a song, used the parachute and scarves to mimic the way leaves fall off of the trees as the wind blows in the fall, and pretended to be squirrels preparing for the winter. Everyone was fascinated by the large floor keyboard as they walked from high to low notes, like leaves falling to the ground.
Adele’s mom and dad joined her to blow out the candles for her birthday.

Nevin’s parents read a special book to the class to celebrate his birthday.

Heloise’s mom and dad shared a model of the Eiffel Tower at Circle Time to celebrate her birthday.

Zeynep’s dad and sister joined the circle to read a special book for her birthday.

David’s mom helped to plant tulip bulbs in the school garden.

Friends put canned goods in a long line to help CMU collect food for the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank.
Our Month in Photos
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