We spent the end of our school year together thinking and learning about BUGS. We learned the parts of an insect, discovered insects that live in a colony, identified spiders as arachnids, and created bugs in many different ways. While outdoors around campus and inside the classrooms, we observed live bugs, including worms, ants, bees, spiders, butterflies, and dragonflies. The friends waited, watched, and wondered while observing these bugs.

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:

- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, by Eric Carle
- *Anansi the Spider-A Tale from Ashanti*, by Gerald McDermott
- *Spiders*, by Gail Gibbons
- *Bee Dance*, by Rick Chrustowski
- *Ant Cities*, by Arthur Dorros
- *The Best Bug Parade*, by Stuart J. Murphy

Mango Monkey Says…

Our wise puppet friend visited the friends this month to talk about good sportsmanship. We shared the book, “Bats Big Game,” retold by Margaret Read MacDonald, illustrated by Eugenia Nobati. The earliest versions of this tale seem to be from Aesop. The story takes place on a soccer field. Bat joins one side and then joins the other when he thinks they will win the game. The two teams did not think his actions were fair and asked, “What side are you on?” He is discredited and had to leave the game. Bat learned that he cannot play on both sides at once! Mango Monkey sparked a discussion about how a good player sticks with the team…even when they are losing.
Week 1

Life Cycle: The Butterfly

During the first week, the teachers focused to a life cycle of a butterfly as it journeys from egg, to caterpillar, to chrysalis, and finally, to butterfly. Inside of both Blue and Green Rooms, the friends witnessed real caterpillars turning to butterflies inside of special butterfly kits. The friends learned the special name for the life journey—the **metamorphosis**. As the friends witnessed each stage of a butterfly metamorphosis in the classrooms, they completed a cell on a “Butterfly Life Cycle” chart. To complete this activity, they stamped a rubber stamper depicting the corresponding step in the life cycle and wrote the name for the step next to the image. For Daily Work, the friends created new insect locker tags. They focused on the main body parts of every insect, a **head, thorax, abdomen, six legs, and two antennae**. In the Discovery Area, the friends molded insect bodies out of Model Magic using toothpicks and Wikki Sticks to represent legs and antennae. During circle time, the friends pretended that they were butterflies at each stage of the metamorphosis. The friends enjoyed the using drama to highlight the life of an insect!

Week 2

Ants and Bees

The focus of the second week was “ants and bees”. During circle time discussions and activity times, the friends first spoke of their real-life experiences with the two featured insects. The teachers shared with the friends that a group of ants or bees is called a **colony**. We examined the differing roles ants and bees play within their colonies from **worker** to **queen**. The friends readily observed ant farms in both the Blue and Green Rooms. The friends saw how the ants inside of the farm created trails to transport food and find their way home. The friends noticed that the ants in the Blue Room were harder workers than the ants in the Green Room and wanted to know why. This inquiry yielded many ideas about why this might be the case. The friends created “ant trails” with black Cray-Pas and painted over the "trails" with brown paint to look like soil. The friends also worked as a team, in ant-like fashion, to pass out seat mats and organize toys during clean-up time. They worked as a colony of bees in the block area to find nectar rich flowers, collect pollen and nectar, and insert it into wooden hexagonal cells to make delicious honey. The teachers read “Bee Dance” by Rick Crustowski, which showed the friends how bees dance or **waggle** in a figure eight pattern to show the members of their colony where the nectar rich flowers are. The friends enjoyed painting these rich flowers at the easel in the Green Room.
Week 3

Spiders

The focus of week three was spiders. In the start of the week, some friends shared that they did not like spiders. The teachers shared that spiders can be interesting even if they do not care for them. Week three was quite an interesting week! The friends observed a YouTube clip of a spider spinning a web. They examined a diagram of a spider and learned that the web comes from its own silk spinning organ called a spinneret. The friends pretended that they were spiders, moving from place to place, leaving a trail of silk web behind them while singing "The Itsy-Bitsy Spider" at different tempos. Over the course of the week, the friends created spider “webs” by stretching rubber bands across a geoboard in interesting ways. They “spun” a circular spider body in a salad spinner using white and silver paint. After the spin art had dried, the friends added eight legs and eight eyes to resemble a spider body. In the Discovery Area, the friends stuck bugs onto different types of tape webs to demonstrate the two different kinds of sticky strands of spider webs. By the end of the week, our friends seemed to appreciate all of the amazing things that spiders can do.

Week 4

Finding and Creating Bugs

During week four, the teachers spoke with the children about where we can find bugs. First the class looked for bugs around the trees and on the sidewalk by the food trucks on campus. Here the friends only found ants and flies but were then asked where they might find more bugs. This question led to a review of what we had learned about bugs so far. They knew that they were “outside, under rocks, and in the dirt.” The teachers and the friends journeyed to Westinghouse Pond for our weekly Outdoor Exploration in search of more bugs. The teachers guided the friends to find worms, beetles, and dragonflies as well as living things that are not bugs, such as a big turtle and frogs. Week four was also a review of what bugs look like, both insects and arachnids. We also examined fireflies and the friends flew pretend tealight “fireflies” around a darkened Green Room. The friends drew bugs in the classrooms, built bugs onto wood shims that they drilled into, and created delicious bug snacks using celery, cream cheese or Sun Butter, with chocolate chips and sprinkles. This treat was a delicious end to a creepy crawly theme!
Music Experiences with Mrs. Hraber

The Bugs theme was incorporated into music time with Mrs. Hraber. We enjoyed learning songs about butterflies, ants and spiders. We tapped rhythm sticks while pretending to be ants marching in a line and used xylophones and tambourines when practicing keeping the beat and repeating rhythmic patterns. Singing bug songs while moving the parachute is always a favorite!

Makeshop Experience

We began the month by testing ways of making balls travel though space using a Kodu Kids ramp set. The friends set up ramps that made wooden balls spiral around loops and through plastic pipes. Throughout the explorations, the friends collaborated on ramp designs and problem solving. Later the friends created their own bugs by drilling holes into wooden shims and attaching found items such as marker caps, wooden pieces, and film cannisters. The friends thoroughly stayed interested in working on their very own bugs until completion.

Center Spotlight: Loose Parts

Loose parts can be natural or synthetic materials. They are found, bought or upcycled materials that children move, manipulate, control and change within play. Loose parts capture children’s curiosity and give free reign to their imagination and motivate learning. Our loose parts table is always bustling with imaginative scenarios, designs, and conversations. Some of the friends’ favorite loose parts include: colored gem stones, rocks, tree blocks, logs and tree stumps, acorns, spools, small tiles, and sea shells. Adding people and animals to the table enhances the play.
Our Month in Photos

Satoshi, Lucy Jo, and Maddox investigated the Ant farm at the Science table in the Green Room.

Maddox and Zeynep observed the Children’s School worms from the worm farm.

The friends flew battery operated tealight “fireflies” around the train table in the Green Room.

Ms. Debbie, a librarian, shared stories and songs that went right along our Bugs theme. The friends have really enjoyed her visits this year.

Satoshi and Sylas stacked containers filled with plastic worms at the light table.

Evelyn drilled a hole in a wooden shim to create a bug in the Makeshop.
Special Visitors and Birthday Celebrations

Satoshi, Luke, and Sylas gave plastic dinosaurs a “drink” at the water table on the playground.

Sylas and Shreya “cooked” with mud in the mud kitchen.

Maddox painted flowers at the easel in the Green Room.

Zeynep, Shreya, Cornelia, and Maddox sent balls down a ramp in the Makeshop.

Cornelia assembled an ant jigsaw puzzle in the Blue Room.

Ryder assembled a “Bug Hotel” with the help of a child of a CMU Staff member on Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day.
Our Month in Photos

Henry tested the speed of the blue slide on the playground.

Zeynep and Shreya got a boost from a work-study, Shalaya, on the swings behind the Children’s School playground.

Henry, Lucy Jo, and Satoshi dug for bugs in the sand table in the Discovery Area.

Erika, a work-study, and Ryder checked a wide variety of butterflies printed onto magnets on a whiteboard in the Green Room.

Henry and Ryder stacked translucent tangram shapes at the light table in the Discovery Area.

Ryder and Shreya explored plastic bugs and hollow blocks in the Blue Room.