Trees are abundant in most neighborhoods and school yards. They are also engaging tools for learning and discovery. Trees are places to play and at the same time a home for many species of wildlife. They are also an important natural resource for humans. Trees come in different shapes and sizes and are a wonderful way to study life cycles and parts of a whole.

Educating the 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

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 Searcher and Old Tree*, by David McPhail
- *Tree*, by Britta Teckentrup
- *Pie in the Sky*, by Becky Baines
- *Trees*, by Trace Taylor
- *The Tallest Tree*, by The Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy
- *Tap The Magic Tree*, by Christie Matheson

Mango Monkey Says…

Our wise puppet friends 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 Katherine 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.
What Are the Parts of a Tree?

Trees are found just about everywhere, so they are familiar to young children. Trees are child friendly to explore, interesting to learn about, and easy to appreciate. 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 drew and labeled parts of a tree and arranged some loose parts on a board to create a tree that was photographed to be a Locker Tag. We looked at photographs of varieties of trees and then everyone made a unique finger-painted tree. The children studied roots by looking at the classroom spider plants and setting the baby spider plants in water to grow the roots and observing how celery can absorb colored water through their stems. Leaf Rubbings, Bark Rubbings, Leaf Art and Fall Tree Watercolor Painting activities encouraged creativity through different uses of color, shape, technique and design. The Dramatic Play Center was filled with a Tree House and other tiny homes for small animals. Friends used pulleys and little baskets to lift acorns and miniature fruits up and down the treehouse.

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 around the pretend campsite fire and roasted marshmallows (cotton balls) on tree branches. 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. The children had the opportunity to make Pinecone Owls, build wood sculptures, inquire about tree cookies and compare a variety of acorns. In the kitchen, the friends used food mills to make pear and banana sauce. The friends also made French Toast with maple syrup that we enjoyed for snack!
Nature exploration was another way we looked at trees around our school. “Can you find anything green?” and “What sounds do you hear?” By walking around our campus, the children were able to observe first-hand varieties of trees and animals. We started looking at the bottom of a tree and looked for the roots in the ground. Next we moved our eyes up the trunk and felt the bark of the trees. The children discovered that different trees have different barks and different leaves. The children made Leaf Books with leaves gathered from six different trees on and around the playground.

The children expressed themselves artistically as they made leaf prints, painted their Wood Sculptures, and used the tools in the Art and Writing Center and Make Shop.

To bring the outside inside, all the friends enthusiastically had their bodies traced to be fashioned into trees. Next, the children used their imaginations to make the bark of their tree with a variety of materials. Finally, the leaves on the canopy were designed with paint.

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**Who Lives In Trees?**

Do you know who lives in trees?

Why don’t we live in trees?

What do animals need to live in trees?

Animals need a place to live just as we do. We learned that some live in the water and others in holes in the ground. But many animals live in trees. People cannot usually live in trees because we don’t have the special characteristics that are needed to move about in trees. If we were to take away trees, the children learned that many animals would not have homes. We read *Who Lives In A Tree?* that illustrated the special characteristics that help them use trees as their home.

After learning about tree dwelling animals, the friends drew their own unique animal to place on their traced body tree.
The Science Center offers friends opportunities to experience natural materials daily, as well as participate in scientific explorations. The Science Center is home to our classroom pets: Half Moon the Beta fish; and the worms (too many to name). This month we did an experiment to discover how the roots of trees soak up the water they need. The children placed celery stalks in colored water, and observed how the color traveled up the stalks over time. “What’s Inside An Acorn?” was an exploration of how to open an acorn shell (How would a squirrel do it?), and then using magnifying glasses and tweezers to see what was inside. During the “Tree Cookie Exploration,” children counted the rings in some tree cookies to learn how old they were. Bark rubbings from tree bark made some beautiful artwork. Learning about how Maple Syrup is made and Maple Syrup tasting was a very popular activity!

Music Experiences with Mrs. Hraber

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 a parachute and scarves to mimic the way leaves fall off the trees as the wind blows in the fall, and pretended to be squirrels preparing for the winter. The highlight of music class in November may have been everyone taking a turn to walk the musical scale on a floor keyboard! Just like leaves falling to the ground.
Our Month in Photos

Maddox, Claire, Seiichiro and Aria roasted marshmallows around a campfire.

Claire built a Duplo Palm tree to give the hippopotamus shade.

Ewan painted leaves for his tree.

Mary sprinkled cinnamon on her French toast.

Satoshi and Albert dipped their French toast in maple syrup.

Klemens built a tree trunk with tires.

All together now!

Mary swept the snow onto a shovel.

Mr. Allen had his body traced into the tallest “tree” in our school!
Our Month in Photos

Ewan and Satoshi played the Orchard Game.

Seiichiro pushed the blender button to combine water with his torn paper to make pulp.

Maddox recreated a 4-sided tree story tower at circle time.

Kelemens looked at books about owls.

The friends drained water into a screen to save the red pulp.

Satoshi made a collage from the paper the class made in the Make Shop.

Ewan, Seiichiro, and Klemens worked in the Veterinarian’s office.

Mary rolled and sliced playdough.

Albert, Araad, and Claire had fun playing and decorating a very big cardboard box made from a tree.
Our Month in Photos

August threw a ball to the basket.

Ewan held the Folley’s Food mill while Mary turned the handle to smash the apples for apple-banana sauce.

Mary and Albert used sponges covered with foil to paint fall foliage.

Albert assembled an animal forest puzzle.

Ewan connected the pieces to put together a tree puzzle.

The children’s bodies transformed into trees with their unique animal drawings.

Mary and Albert used sponges covered with foil to paint fall foliage.
August painted with a “monkey ball.”

Mary and Claire shoveled sand through a sand wheel.

The second step of making apple-banana sauce was chopping apples.

Araad and Claire “the environmentalists” pretended to water trees.

Sweeping teamwork!