Supporting an Ecosystem of Learning: Outdoor ECE Lesson Plans

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Supporting an Ecosystem of Learning: Outdoors ECE Lesson Plans
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Abstract

While participating in an internship at *Lichen Early Learning*, lesson plans were created to uplift understanding of different relationships to land, consent, gender identity, race, and activism. It is essential for educators to create lesson plans that equip preschoolers for navigating the world they are a part of and disrupt systemic harm. Creating and applying lesson plans can serve as a way to start this kind of work.

*Key Words:* Early Childhood Education, Outdoor Education, Lesson Plans, Community Care, Sovereignty, Foodways, Gender Identity, Race, Activism
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Introduction

In October of 2023, I started working as an intern at Lichen Early Learning (LEL), a
licensed nature preschool based on East of Eden Farm with a focus on teaching that is holistic
and community-based, culturally relevant, and child-centered. Having had no prior experience with outdoor Early Childhood Education before Fall 2023, I decided to do an internship with LEL as a part of my senior capstone to gain experience in a new field and apply my learning within my core areas of study at WWU: education, social justice, food sovereignty, and community care. During the fall, I worked two full school days a week, learning through observation and interaction with the kids. During Winter 2024, the following quarter, I worked one full day a week, increasing my involvement in implementing class values and routines. Outside of class, I wrote lesson plans based on my observations of LEL and outside research.

I completed five lesson plans to be taught within units focused on relationships to land, gender identity, race, and activism. Each lesson plan is accompanied by questions I would want to reflect on before implementing each one and context for their importance. It is my hope that one day I can apply these lesson plans to offer preschoolers the tools to be critical thinkers and social actors. Creating lesson plans is just a step toward supporting a culture of anti-racism, social engagement, affirmation, and autonomy. I would like to continue to investigate how educators can support early learning spaces that uplift self expression and self exploration while engaging kids in thinking about systemic issues.

Lesson Plans

Lesson 1

As Lichen Early Learning is located on a farm with a forested area, it felt important to come up with lesson plans that connected the preschoolers to the farm and the forest. The
following lessons were created with the intention to engage students with the land their school is on and support them in building an understanding of different foodways and ways of relating to the land. If I were to incorporate these lessons into a unit, I would love to create additional lesson plans that share specific Indigenous history and information about contemporary activism while offering more structured interaction with non-human life in the classroom space to support relationships.

Questions for teachers to work through in preparation and questions that feel important for me to work through as an educator:

• How can learning be scaffolded so this lesson can be successful?

• How do I want to approach and introduce what it means to be a guest and settler on this land? Am I a settler, how will this influence the way I teach this lesson? What does guesthood mean to me?

• What are the identities of my students and how will that influence the way I approach this lesson?

• Does my class have a land acknowledgement? Have I taught the students about the Indigenous history of the land we are on?

• What does offering gratitude and creating repairs look like to me, how is this already a part of my classroom community?

• What do I want to learn more about before teaching this lesson?
Lesson Plan: Berry Song

Lesson Goals:

• Increased understanding of different ways different communities connect with the land.
• What does it mean to be Indigenous to a place? Who are the Tlingit Nation?
• What are the different ways people gather food? What does it mean to forage?
• Personal reflection about their own relationship to land and food.

Materials:

• Berry Song by Michaela Goade

Introduction to Activity

• “Today we are going to read a book called Berry Song about a girl who is taught how to gather berries by her Grandma.”
• “The author is Michaela Goade. She is a part of the Tlingit Nation, an Indigenous group from S. Alaska (show on a map, show where Michaela grew up).”
  • What does it mean to be Indigenous to a place? Tap your head if you know and would like to share.
  • To be indigenous to a place means your ancestors have lived there for a long long time, often for thousands and thousands of years!
  • There are so many Indigenous groups and the Tlingit nation is just one!
    • Offer some history about Tlingit
    • In our book today, we will learn about a little girl and her grandmother who are
both a part of the Tlingit Nation and the practices they have when they gather food.

• Tell students what they can expect: we will be reading a book then we will have a walk through the forest to look for berry plants.

• Before we start, think to yourself, what do I need to feel ready to listen to a book? Do I need to go to the bathroom? Do I want to lay down? Do I need to find something to hold to help me listen?

**Book Reading Including Points to Highlight:**

• “By the tumbling, icy falls, we dip our nets for silvery salmon hidden beneath the current

  • There are so many different ways that they are gathering food and many places they are gathering food.

• “As the land takes care of us. Gunalchéesh,” I say, giving thanks.”

  • They are offering gratitude to the land for taking care of them. There are so many ways to show care and respect to the land.

• “Grandma tells me, “We are a part of the land…” “As the land is a part of us,” I say”

  • What do you notice about the relationship between these people and the land they are gathering from?

  • These characters have a relationship to the place they are gathering from, they are recognizing they belong to this place, just as their ancestors did.

• Who belongs to the land we are on?

• Think to yourself- where do my ancestors belong? How does my relationship to the land feel different than or similar to that of the characters in this book?
• “I have so much to show you”
  • I noticed that in the beginning of the book, the grandma was teaching the narrator of this book how to collect berries and thank the land and now the narrator is sharing what she learned with her little sister.

Transition time:

• Does anyone have questions about the book? Or connections they would like to share?
• Now that we are finished reading the book, we are going to visit some berry plants in our classroom.

Berry Activity:

• What do we notice about the berry plants? How are they responding to the season?
• How can we support these plants in what they are experiencing?
• How can we show the berry plants that we care about them and offer them gratitude in our own way?

Closing:

“Thank you so much for participating! I am so excited to continue visiting the berry plants in our classroom and see what they are doing throughout the seasons. Today we thought a lot about what it means to be Indigenous to a place, what different relationships to the land look like and different ways to gather food. We are going to continue thinking about these things and considering, what does my relationship to the land look like? What relationships have my ancestors had to the land? How do communities I am not a part of connect with and relate to the land?”
Lesson Plan: We Are All Growing!

Lesson Goals:

• Increased understanding of how we grow alongside plants. Learning about how knowledge about growing plants can be passed down.

• Personal reflection about their own growth and relationship to plants.

Materials:

• *Love Makes a Garden Grow* by Taeun Yoo

Introduction to Activity

• “Today we are going to read a book called *Love Makes a Garden Grow*. This book shares the experience of a girl who grows plants with her grandfather and how she grows up alongside her plants!”

• “This book was written by Taeun Yoo. This book was written based on her relationship to her Grandfather and their time growing plants together!”

• “Before we read our book, we will do a movement activity where we will pretend to be plants growing from seeds through all the different seasons!”

• Connect to the season and what the plants in the classroom are experiencing
  
  • What season are we in?
  
  • What have you noticed about the plants we see at school?

• Before we start, think to yourself, what do I need to feel ready to listen to a book? Do I need to go to the bathroom? Do I want to lay down? Do I need to find something to hold to help me
listen?

**Movement Activity:**

- Guided activity to prompt kids to think like plants and get to know how plants grow! What are seeds? What would it feel like to grow from seed into a tree or flower?
- Vocalize the life cycle of a seed while offering space for students to reflect what that looks like in their own bodies

**Book Reading Including Points to Highlight:**

- “Peonies are my favorite”
  - I wonder if you have a favorite flower
- “My peonies grow and so do I”
  - Just like we are growing while the plants we see at school are growing!
- “I can lift the watering can myself. Grandfather and I hum to the plants together.”
  - I noticed that at the beginning of the book, it was hard for the narrator to lift the watering can by herself but now she can! I also noticed that in the beginning of the book, her grandfather would hum to the plants but now they are both humming to the plants! She is learning from her Grandfather.
  - Being able to do things that were once really challenging can be a sign or clue that we are growing! Think to yourself.. is there anything that was once hard for me that has gotten easier over time?
- “At first, my house feels empty and I miss home.”
  - Do you ever miss home? That's how this person is feeling. It can be hard to be away
from home and the people we love.

- “Home feels closer”
  - Do you ever miss home? That's how this person is feeling. It can be hard to be away from home and the people we love. When her grandpa sends a gift, the narrator feels close to her grandpa and her home.

- “When my daughter is as small as a sprout, we visit Grandfather together.”
  - Look! The narrator has a daughter now. She is helping her daughter just like her grandpa used to help her when she was younger.

Optional Extension:

- Walk around the farm and look at plants together. Revisit plants throughout the year to see continuous growth, tie into student growth and learning.

Closing:

“Thank you so much for listening to the story and thinking about your own growth and connection to plants! I am so excited to continue to watch the plants on our farm continue to grow throughout the year just like us!”

Lesson 2

This lesson was created to be a part of a body autonomy and radical self love unit. Books that could be included are Bodies Are Cool by Tyler Feder, I Like Me by Nancy Carlson, Julián Is A Mermaid By Jessica Love, No Means No by Jayneen Sanders, and Can I Give You a Squish? by Emily Neilson.
Central to my work at LEL was learning how to support students in navigating relationships with others. I learned from the teachers at LEL to frame advocacy for one's own needs and wants as a way to show themselves love and care. The necessary counterpart to supporting kids in advocating for themselves is to help students learn how to ask about and respect the needs and wants of others so that they can show love and care to others. In my time at LEL, I noticed many students were learning how to work through the discomfort of when their own needs and wants do not align with that of others, sensing when they are willing and capable of being flexible and when they are not. It can be confusing and frustrating when a friend doesn’t want to play a game with you for example, but the teachers at LEL support students in both moving through those big emotions and respecting the needs of their classmates.

It was powerful to observe teachers modeling the asking of consent and advocacy of their own boundaries, offering language for students to do the same. Teachers would model asking consent not just with physical touch but also offering students advice, helping students, being in their personal space, or playing. I observed this to be crucial to students feeling autonomous and safe.

**Questions for teachers to work through in preparation and questions that feel important for me to work through as an educator:**

- What is my relationship and experience with consent in my own life?
- How was I taught about consent and in what context was I taught about consent?
- What does the idea of consent look like in our society? How do they influence the way we interact with kids and think about our relationships to kids?
• Are there any aspects of this lesson that feel uncomfortable for me? How might I navigate those uncomfortable aspects?
• In what ways does and can consent frame the learning spaces I am a part of?
• What questions may students have? How might I answer them?

Lesson Plan: Consent and Boundaries

Lesson Goals:
• What is consent? What are boundaries?
• How can we ask for consent? Or advocate for our own boundaries?
• Increase comfortability with advocating for wants and needs

Materials:
• *Don’t Hug Doug (He Doesn’t Like It)* by Carrie Finison

Introduction to Activity
• “Today we are going to talk about consent and boundaries. Do you know what consent and boundaries are? Make a fish face if you’d like to share with the class.”
• Tell students what they can expect: we will be reading a book then we will have an optional activity to practice asking for consent and sharing boundaries.
• Before we start, think to yourself, what do I need to feel ready to listen to a book? Do I need to go to the bathroom? Do I want to lay down? Do I need to find something to hold to help me listen?
Book Reading Including Points to Highlight:

• “Don’t worry Doug likes you, he just doesn’t like hugs! Doug thinks hugs are too squeezy, too squasy.”

  • Does anyone else feel like hugs can be too squeezy or squishy?
  
  • Sometimes it can feel disappointing or confusing when friends say they don’t want a hug, not everyone likes hugs.

• “And he really likes harmonica bands”

  • Doug doesn’t like hugs but there are other ways he likes to spend time with people, like playing in harmonica bands! There are lots of different ways we can show one another we care about them and playing in harmonica bands is one of those things for Doug, just like hugs can be for other people!

• “Can you hug these people?”

  • If we want to know if we can give someone a hug, what can we do to find out?
  
  • The only way we can know if someone wants a hug is if we ask them!
  
  • People may have different feelings about hugs and that is okay! We are all a little bit different!

Transition time:

• Does anyone have questions about the book? Or connections they would like to share?

• Now that we are finished reading the book, we will have an optional activity to practice asking classmates or teachers if they would like a hug or high five!
• If you’d like to do the activity, take care of any personal needs you might have (bathroom or water), then come join whenever you are ready!

• If you do not want to do the activity, you can watch, read the book again, or do a different activity.

Consent Activity:

• Offer opportunities to students to ask each other or teachers for a hug or high five and express responses.

• Model with another teacher ways to ask and ways to say yes or no

Closing:

“Thank you so much for listening to the story and participating in the activity. A few ways we can show care for one another is by ask people before we touch them, asking them to play and how they want to play, and asking others for what we need or want.”

Lesson 3

This lesson could be taught within a gender unit where students are introduced to language beyond the gender binary, learning what it looks like to affirm the genders of others and exploring what feels affirming to them. A few other books that could be included in this unit are *I am Jazz* by Jazz Jennings, *Julien the Mermaid* by Jessica Love, and *They, She, He as easy as ABC* by Matthew Sg and Maya Christina Gonzalez. This lesson is intended to be taught after students have familiarity with the topic of gender identity and might have ideas of a few different genders beyond the binary. This lesson could then offer a more intentional space for preschoolers to think about their own gender identity and potentially share with their classmates.
Throughout my time at Lichen, I noticed that the students were curious about gender and experimenting with or exploring their own gender identities. I noticed that these students were already heavily influenced by gender norms and assumptions in referring to the genders of story characters, classmates, and teachers. I had students ask: “Are you a boy or a girl?” and “Why do you use those pronouns?” I wanted to create a lesson that would allow them the opportunity to learn more and reflect on their own gender identities.

Questions for teachers to work through in preparation and questions that feel important for me to work through as an educator:

• What is my relationship to gender? How do I define gender identity in my own life? Has it changed over time?

• What narratives have I been exposed to around gender? What ideas have I had to unlearn?

• Are there any aspects of this lesson that feel uncomfortable for me? How might I navigate those uncomfortable aspects?

• In what ways have my students been interacting with ideas of gender, what informs their understanding of gender?

• How does gender influence our classroom community?

• In what ways is gender affirmation and exploration already a part of our classroom culture? In what ways would we like to grow in this area?

• What questions may students have? How might I answer them?
Lesson Plan: Exploring Gender Identity

Lesson Goals:

• Increased understanding of gender identity, introduction to potentially new words like transgender, non-binary, or cisgender.

• Personal reflection about gender identity and opportunity to share with classmates.

• What do we need to feel affirmed and what can we do to affirm the people around us?

Materials:

• *It Feels Good to Be Yourself: A Book About Gender Identity* by Theresa Thorn

• Colorful markers

• Construction paper

• Trays to draw on

Introduction to Activity

• “Today we are going to talk about gender identity. Do you know what gender is? Tap your head if you'd like to share with the class.”

  • Gender is an aspect of who we are and how we feel. Let’s read the book to find out more!

  • A few ways people express their gender is through their name or pronouns

  • Gender is diverse and expansive, there are so many different ways people describe and express their gender identity.

• Tell students what they can expect: we will be reading a book then we will have an optional art
activity.

• Before we start, think to yourself- what do I need to feel ready to listen to a book? Do I need to go to the bathroom? Do I want to lay down? Do I need to find something to hold to help me listen?

Book Reading Including Points to Highlight:

• “There are a never ending number of ways to be yourself in the world”
  
  • However you feel is valid!

• “See, when you were born, you couldn’t tell people who you were or how you felt. They looked at you and made a guess. Maybe they got it right, maybe they got it wrong.”
  
  • Has anyone ever made a guess about your gender? Why might they have done that? How would it feel if someone's guess didn't match how you felt on the inside?
  
  • How do we know someone's gender? How can we find out?
    • The only way we can know for sure is if you ask and they decide to tell you!

• “It feels good to be yourself, doesn’t it?”
  
  • Think to yourself: what is my gender? Did I relate to any of the characters in the book? What pronouns make me feel like myself?

Transition time:

• Does anyone have questions about the book? Or connections they would like to share?

• Now that we are finished reading the book, we will have an optional drawing activity where we can think about our own gender identities.
• If you’d like to do the activity, take care of any personal needs you might have (bathroom, water), then come join whenever you are ready!

• If you do not want to do the art activity, you can use art materials to do something different, you can read the book again in the reading area, or you can do a different activity

Art Activity:
• Opportunity to draw themselves and option to share about their gender, pronouns if they use them, and name they like to be called to the class.
• Option to leave activity and come back to it whenever they choose.
• Option to take it home and continue working

Extension Option: Gallery Walk and Share Out

• Walk around and look at each other’s artwork
• Does anyone want to share about what they drew?
• What did you appreciate about your classmates' art?
• How does it feel to share this with your classmates?

Closing:
“Thank you so much for sharing about yourselves and supporting one another! Today we talked about a few ways we can show care for one another like sharing how we want to be talked about and how the people in our lives want to be talked about (name and pronouns). It is so caring to refer to someone in a way that feels good to them and true to who they are! You can choose when you tell people about who you are and who you decide to tell is up to you too! The way you think about gender may change or stay the same for the rest of your life and that's okay too.
You can share information about your gender identity with the people in your life at whatever time feels good to you!”

**Lesson 4**

“When teachers invite the conversation about how everyone is learning about race and that racism is all around us, we give children the space to name it and to become anti-racists themselves” (Belli, 2020).

This lesson is intended to be taught as an introduction to a unit about race and racism. Questions guiding this unit could be: What is race? How do racism and white supremacy influence our life experiences based on our race? How do people resist racism and white supremacy? How do people advocate for change? Another book that could be included in this unit is *My Skin, Your Skin: Let's Talk About Race, Racism and Empowerment* by Laura Henry-Allain MBE, illustrated by Onyinye Iwu. Talking about race and racism in early childhood is essential, especially in white spaces. It has been found that as early as age three kids start displaying racist behaviors like “forming judgments about people based on racial differences” (Belli, 2020). Having conversations about race and racism is an important way to disrupt the racism that kids are surrounded by every day. In order to support ant-racist adults, we must support ant-racist kids. As stated by Brita Belli, “the ability to avoid talking about race is a form of white privilege” (Belli, 2020). Avoidance of talking about race and racism only maintains racism and supports kids in being complicit to racist systems. BIPOC children are influenced by racism from the day they are born, even before they are conceived. It only protects white comfort and complicity to avoid discussions about race and racism. It is important that kids are both educated about the experiences they may not have and feel represented in their own experiences.
With this, kids are more equipped to respond to incidents of racial harm, support the people in their lives who have different racial identities than they do, are empowered in their own identities, and have language to speak about their experiences informed by white supremacy and racism. As an educator I want to be intentional in offering students the tools to both think critically of the world they are a part of, recognizing that unfair things do happen, and learn how they can advocate for change or make change in their own lives.

**Questions for teachers to work through in preparation and questions that feel important for me to work through as an educator:**

- What is my relationship to race and how does that inform the expertise I do and do not have?
  How might my race and the experiences I have informed by racism and white supremacy influence how I move through this lesson?

- How was I taught about race and racism in my childhood?

- What do I need to unpack within myself to feel like I can approach this lesson in a genuine and meaningful way?

- Are there any aspects of this lesson that make me feel uncomfortable? How might I navigate that discomfort?

- What questions may students have? How might I answer them?

**Lesson Plan: The Color of Our Skin**

**Lesson Goals:**

- Understanding that everyone has different skin colors and each is beautiful!

- Recognizing and appreciating one's own skin color.
• Experimentation with mixing colors and making colors to match what they see in their lives

Materials:

• *Colors of Us* by Karen Katz
• Paint (Red, Black, Yellow, White)
• Paint brushes
• Paint palette
• Water cups
• Towels or paper towels
• Construction paper
• Trays or surface to paint on

Introduction to Activity

• “Today we are going to talk about the color of our skin. All of our skin colors are different! Each of our skin colors are special and beautiful!”

• Tell students what they can expect: “We are going to read a book, then we will have an optional painting activity where we will mix different shades of brown”

• Before we start, think to yourself- what do I need to feel ready to listen to a book? Do I need to go to the bathroom? Do I want to lay down? Do I need to find something to hold to help me listen?

Book Reading Including Points to Highlight:

• “I think of everyone I saw today […] each one of them a beautiful color.”
• Each person has a unique skin color and each is beautiful in its own way!

• “I am happy as I get out of my paints: yellow, red, black, and white. I think about all the wonderful colors I will make, and I say their names out loud.”

• There are endless shades of brown! I wonder how many shades of brown we could make with yellow, red, black, and white.

Transition time:

• Does anyone have questions about the book? Or connections they would like to share?

• Now that we are finished reading the book, we will have an optional painting activity where we will mix different shades of brown!

• If you’d like to do the activity, take care of any personal needs you might have (bathroom, water), then come join whenever you are ready!

• If you do not want to do the art activity, you can use art materials to do something different, you can read the book again in the reading area, or you can do a different activity.

Art Activity:

• “We are going to experiment with these paint colors (yellow, red, black, and white) and try to make different shades of brown! You can even try to make a color that matches your own skin color.”

Closing:

“Today, we were thinking a lot about the color of our skin and skin colors that are different from our own. We thought about how beautiful each skin color is and some of us experimented with
mixing different shades of brown! Thank you so much for listening to the book and making some art with me today!”

**Lesson 5**

The following lesson is intended to be taught within a unit about community organizing and activism in response to injustice. I created this lesson because I wanted to feel more confident in my ability to have conversations with preschoolers about activism and injustice. Additional books that could be a part of this unit are *We are Water Protectors* by Carole Lindstrom, *Grandad’s Pride* by Harry Woodgate, and *Intersection Allies: We Make Room for All* by Chelsea Johnson, LaToya Council, and Carolyn Choi.

In my experience at LEL, I witnessed the students to be active community members. They were navigating how to share space and resources with one another, respect one another, communicate, check in when they hurt someone and share when they are feeling hurt or need a repair, and make change when something is unfair. They were building and practicing skills that will equip them to be changemakers in communities and systems outside of their preschool. It is important that preschoolers are given the tools to navigate the society they are a part of and to advocate for change. Whether or not educators or parents introduce ideas like activism or injustice, kids notice and are learning from the nonverbal and verbal messages given to them.

**Questions for teachers to work through in preparation and questions that feel important for me to work through as an educator:**

• How do I respond to injustice I see in my everyday life?

• What is my relationship to activism? How do I want to share that with my students?
• What do we do when something doesn’t feel fair to a student in my classroom? How do I respond to injustice in my class? How do I organize within my community?

• What do we value in our classroom community? How should we treat each other and how do we want to be treated? How can I tie in specific guidelines to help students connect reading to their own community?

• Is there anything about this lesson or topic that makes me feel uncomfortable, how will I work through that?

• What might students ask and how do I want to respond?

Lesson Plan: Artivism

Lesson Goals:

• Increased understanding of what activism is and who activists are.

• Connecting personal experiences and observations of activism and how we can show up in our own communities to create change.

• Personal reflection about personal and community values and how one can respond to injustices.

Materials:

• *The Artivist* by Nikkolas Smith

• Paint

• Paint brushes

• Paint palette

• Water cups
• Towels or paper towels
• Construction paper
• Trays or surface to paint on

Introduction to Activity

• “Today we are going to talk about activism and ways we can speak up when things feel unfair”
• This book was written by Nikkolas Smith who is an artivist. Does anyone know what an artivist is?
  • Let's read the book to learn more
• Tell students what they can expect: we will be reading a book then we will have an optional art activity.
• Before we start, think to yourself, what do I need to feel ready to listen to a book? Do I need to go to the bathroom? Do I want to lay down? Do I need to find something to hold to help me listen?

Book Reading Including Points to Highlight:

• Pointing out illustrations and getting curious with them about what is happening (for example: woman being barred from voting, loss of housing, or protest signs)

Transition time:

• Does anyone have questions about the book? Or connections they would like to share?
• Now that we are finished reading the book, we are going to have an optional art activity inspired by the book.
• If you’d like to do the activity, take care of any personal needs you might have (bathroom, water), then come join whenever you are ready!

• If you do not want to do the art activity, you can use art materials to do something different, you can read the book again in the reading area, or you can do a different activity.

Art Activity:

• “In the book we read, the narrator was thinking a lot about what didn't feel fair or kind in the world. The author created art to call attention to the things that didn't feel fair as a way to make change. He hoped to make things feel better and to take care of his community. If you want to, you can paint about what is important to you in your community and how you want people to treat one another. You can also paint about changes you want to make or things that feel unfair.”

Closing:

“Thank you so much for thinking about this really important topic. It is so important to take care of our communities and make sure that people are treated fairly and with kindness. What are some ways we can treat one another and ourselves fairly and with kindness in our classroom community? We can continue to think about this to make sure everyone is feeling supported and happy in our classroom space?”

Considerations for All Lessons

Ways to redirect or be flexible:

• High energy during reading time: Offering movement or a space students can go to if they need to move or take a break from the story
Lots of excitement to share and talk with peers about the book: Offer space for neighbor talk and whole group conversations throughout the readings. Asking more questions to the group about what is happening in the book.

Confusion: Taking intentional time to answer questions and asking questions

**How to know if students learned intended lesson or if the lesson was successful:**

- Did the students seem engaged with the project?
  - Did they work with and explore the given materials?
  - Did they show experimentation and intrigue during their creation process?
  - Did they show or express that they were investigating an interest or curiosity?
  - Were there any barriers to their engagement that could have been addressed by the teacher to make the project fit their needs?

- Were the art pieces created unique to the person who created them?

- Did it spark creativity and curiosity?

- Were they in their comfort, growth, or panic zone?

- Were students given the opportunity to take their own directions and follow their own creativity?

- Did they have the tools and support to learn about the given topic?

**Conclusion**

Preschool is an extremely formative time where kids are learning so much about themselves and the world around them. For this reason, I feel it is incredibly important to discuss and explore topics included in my lesson plans such as relationship to land, consent, gender
identity, race, and community organizing. I observed Lichen Early Learning to be successful in supporting their preschoolers to engage with each of these topics in an embodied way in everyday classroom practices. I learned that in order for preschoolers to truly grasp these kinds of lessons and apply them, there must be active efforts to support a classroom culture that uplifts the messages of lessons. A unit about consent for example alone will not equip preschoolers to practice asking for and giving consent in their everyday lives. Consent must be foundational in the way the classroom functions and therefore a normalized practice.

Integrating subject areas that challenge the values upheld in our school system and society like consent can be an opportunity for teachers and students to learn from one another and learn how to more effectively support themselves and each other! I see these lessons as a way for me to challenge myself to continue to grow and learn as an educator alongside my students. As lessons can never be universally applied, the lessons I created would look different within any day or classroom and applied differently by any teacher. I am still learning what it would look like if I were to teach these lessons and understand that they would probably change if I did! These are not meant to be rigid, final, or perfect, but instead living and ever changing.

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