

BLUE ROOM NEWS * JUNE 2017



Eden & Violet create a private space at a light table.



Helena, Violet, Colin, & Elena play "family."



Helena & Margaret make a bed with foam pieces.

Building for Imaginary Play

Have you noticed piles of heavy reference books weighing down blankets draped over "the cube," children crouching in a corner behind a bulwark of pillows? While these scenes might look junky at first glance, this is the stuff of childhood!

In our sprawling classroom it's unsurprising the children seek ways to section off space for more intimate play. By using the movable furniture & materials available in the classroom children can *create a new world on their scale* - a blanket as a roof, foam squares fit together for a bed, pillows fortify walls, hollow blocks form a doorway - that is customizable to their needs & honors their ideas. Manipulating these materials to *create a context that manifests the mind's eye* requires cognitive planning, an activation of logic, creativity, problem solving, & most likely, collaboration & negotiation. We can speculate the secluded, clearly delineated space created may provide insulation from noise & interference that lends itself to more focused, enduring, & enjoyable play.

This new environment seems to act as a safe haven in which the children can experience reality & fantasy. In such forts, tree houses, doctor offices, there are *ample opportunities for socio-emotional experimentation*; impossible conflicts can be resolved, new feelings can be articulated, unlikely dynamics can be adopted. These are crucial opportunities for authentic meaning-making.



Margaret & Cyla use blocks to construct a scene for "Snow White & The Seven Dwarves."

June 13th 2017 – Ministry: Kahlan & Felix Play House

“Transforming objects, taking on roles, developing narratives of real or imagined situations, they use the kind of “as if” thinking that will later enable forming scientific hypotheses and creative work in the arts. The acquisition of knowledge and the development of intellectual abilities that take place in the context of pretend play prepare the way for many kinds of later academic learning.” – “Understanding Pretend Play” by The Child Development Institute at Sarah Lawrence College



Felix, taking ownership of the project says excitedly “this is the house, get out! This is the hiding part.” Kahlan then asks of her partner “how about I’m the mom & you’re the dad now? Felix nods, & she continues: “Okay dad, everything has to be perfect!” Later she explains “this is my computer; this is my phone- we share it.” Felix walks across the classroom with another phone, “bring bringing” Kahlan. Kahlan tells Kalei, while feeding her home toy Blueberry, “The baby’s not crying anymore. When I was a baby I had this bottle too. This baby came from my belly. The other baby came from dad’s belly. Her dad is out of town.”

Tablework “Tablework” is a phrase we’ve started to employ to describe experiences & provocations encountered at the tables in our mini-studio. Tablework largely emerged as a natural reaction to our reduced time outside due to the summer heat. When mirthfully boisterous play becomes exhausting or overwhelming, teachers encourage children to explore simple provocations on our mini-studio tables. Generally, the tables are preset by teachers as inspired by children’s interests & trajectories, but the children often design their own tablework. We have observed the children transition obligingly from big body play to tablework with ease & pleasure. It seems tablework is an opportunity to encounter familiar materials in a fresh context leading to calming, focused play alongside friends.



Graduation & Potluck Social – Thank You to All!

On May 25th, 2017 we had our biggest graduation in the history of The Nest! Graduates Violet, Hank, Eden, Kahlan, Camryn, Felix, Helena, Emerson, Cyla, Sol, Elena, Landon, & Charlotte, dressed in capes, sang their “Big Kid Song” with Garrett, heard short individual speeches from teachers, received bookmarks from non-graduating friends, & were awarded a medal. Thank you, families, for the beautiful bounty you provided for the potluck, the utter joy you brought to the event, & your ongoing camaraderie throughout our years together.