

2am, 3am, 3pm  
May 18, 2014

Hi Everybody,

Two weeks ago we put some big plastic insects in the sand table; scorpions, bees, spiders, stag beetles, ladybugs etc. A lot of kids were immediately attracted, but others avoided the space at first. Some kids had already formed an aversion to insects due to some bite or sting and also because many of us as adults respond similarly, with fear or disgust. On our walks around the block heavy stomping immediately followed any encounters with insects. Slowly, however most kids got comfortable with handling and examining the parts and began relating stories of brief episodes with family and friends; a brother got stung, an uncle saw a scorpion; ladybugs are commendable.

In the second floor classroom they have a glass case that houses live beetles and millipedes so one day when the conversation was especially lively, we asked the 3pm class if we should see if the upstairs would let them visit. This idea was enthusiastically agreed upon, so the next day at group time we drafted a letter to send upstairs. Kids suggested ideas and a teacher wrote them down. The following day, a Thursday, kids could sign their names to it.

The next Monday the JK dropped the bugs off on their way to the gym with a list of feeding and handling instructions. Suggestions like, feed them zucchini squash or don't let them go by the trucks and cautions like the millipedes are not to be touched, because they can irritate the skin. Pick them up with a spoon.

The following few days they were in their case on the blue table for kids to observe. We would move and transfer the rock and egg carton that provided hiding places to reveal the lethargic pile of millipedes and the scrambling few beetles. In all the groups there were ongoing crowds gathered round with noses pressed close to the glass calling out their observations, "It's moving." "That one's climbing up!" "Are those cucumbers?" For some kids the zucchini was every bit as interesting as the bugs. And just try saying zucchini squash when you are three. Of course a lot of the excitement resulted in pounding on the glass or screaming in surprise at some movement, but kids pretty quickly responded to reminders of insect etiquette by lowering their voices and controlling their impulses.

Wednesday in the pm we placed a few of each kind on a tray and let kids who wanted a turn, hold a beetle in their hand. Among the eager crowds, some kids were definite about saying no. Others were really torn, vacillating a long time before consenting. Consent was followed by delight when they realized the sensations were nothing like what they had expected. Meanwhile, the millipedes were climbing the side of the tray to many cries of alarm and warning. "uh oh." "He's getting away!"

This week we will return our visitors to their former caretakers, but we hope this little foray into bugs has bred familiarity.

Melinda, Anita, and Sarah