

The Project Approach to Learning at

RisingOaks
Early Learning

| St. Matthew

Project Name: Sewing

Age Group: School Age Group 2 (6yrs-8yrs)

Project Start Date: November 2022

Project End Date: May 2023



RisingOaks
Early Learning

Growing minds through play

Background

This project started in November of 2022 and continued until May of 2023. The children who were involved in this project range from 6 years to 8 years old. The staff that was involved was Rukmanie, RECE.

Phase 1: Beginning the Project

This project started when the children were busy creating various crafts for Halloween. They wanted to design and decorate treats bags that they could use for their trick or treating. Together, we found some discarded swim shirts that were used by the Summer Campers many years ago, which we thought would be appropriate to use for the treat bags. First, Ethan said, "We can just hot glue the bottoms and then decorate them with felt pieces to look like Halloween characters." Then Will B. said, "I think if we use hot glue our candies might fall out if the glue doesn't stick properly." Then Mason added, "Well I would not want that to happen to my treats." Then Lucy who wanted to do the activity commented, "We can sew them together; my brother did that once." So, the children collectively agreed that sewing their treat bags would be a great idea.

As the children were sewing, they were commenting on how much they liked using the sewing machine, and how much fun they were having during the activity. They then used hot glue to add features to their treat bags. The finished bags were then taken home and were used for Trick or Treating. During this time, some of the children started to use plastic needles to do weaving and cross stitching on plastic cards, while others used embroidery thread and sewing needles. The children gained so much interest in doing these activities that we decided to embark on a Sewing project.





What do you know about this topic?

- Sometimes you can use a sewing machine or a needle and thread
- You can fix a button on your shirt
- Sew two pieces of fabric together to make a bag or a stuffy
- You have to follow the safety rules so that you don't poke yourself or your friend

What do you want to know about this topic?

- The functions of the different parts of a sewing machine
- Different kinds of sewing
- How to use a loom to make hats and scarves
- Learn to sew better so that I can do it by myself
- How to do Embroidery and Cross stitching like our grandmas

Experts

- Google – iPad
- St. Matthew Staff
- Jo Neeb (Supervisor John Sweeney)

Informal Meaning

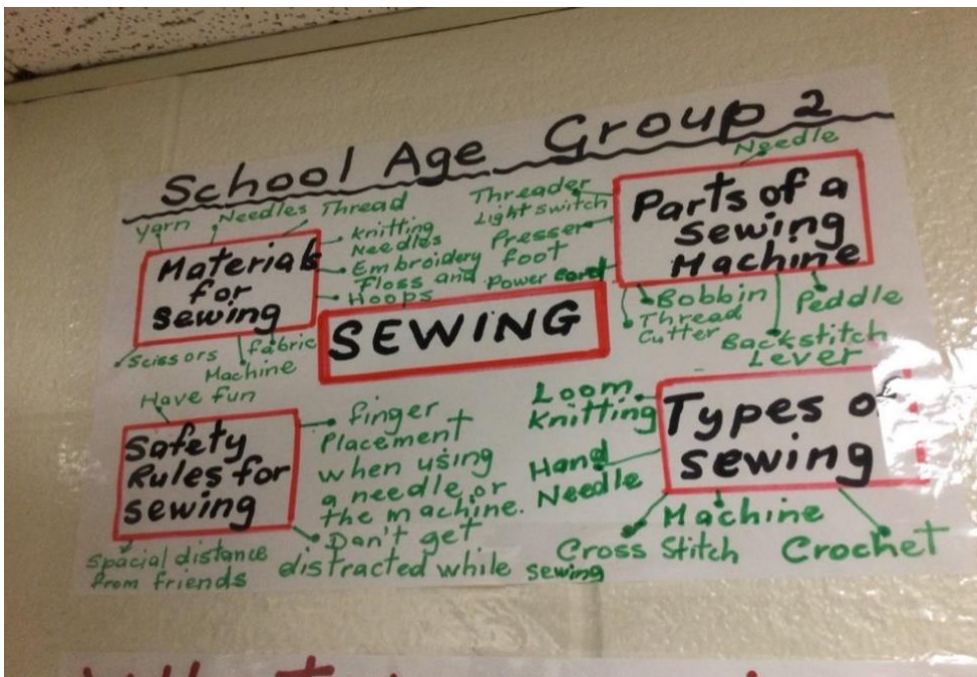
Putting a needle and thread through fabric to make something you can use. You can also use a sewing machine which makes your work faster.

Formal Meaning (iPad – Google)

Sewing is the activity of making or mending clothes or other things by using a needle and thread.

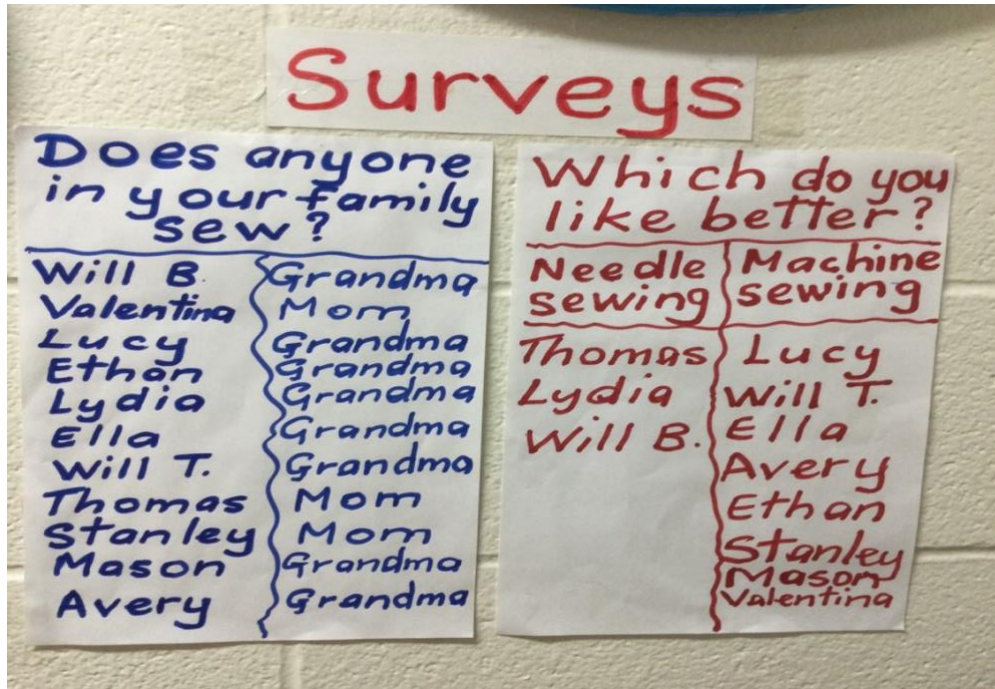
Web

Below is the learning web that highlights the learning that took place throughout the course of the sewing project.



Phase 2: Developing the Project

Below highlights some of the surveys that were asked throughout the entirety of the project. These surveys were revisited frequently as the group explored and gained additional knowledge.



Vocabulary

Below highlights the vocabulary list the children gained throughout the entirety of the project. This new knowledge was represented throughout the rest of the project.

Threader
Peddle
Needle
Crochet
Presser foot
Backstitch
Bobbin
Cross stitch
Embroidery floss
Thimble
Chain stitch
Stem stitch

Sewing Remembrance Day Poppies with a Needle and Thread

This activity started by sewing beads and sequins on the outline of poppies to commemorate Remembrance Day. As the children were sewing, Lucy said, "It is okay to poke your fingers just a bit sometimes, because it doesn't hurt." Then Ella added, "If your fingers are soft, it doesn't hurt at all." As the children continued with their sewing, Avery's thread got broken, which made her panic and she said, "Oh no, something is wrong, I don't know why the needle came out." Ethan who was working beside her commented, "Looks like your thread got broken." Then Avery added, "I can't sew anymore, what do I do now?" Will B. then intervened and said, "Well you have to put the thread back into the needle." Avery then replied, "Well the hole of the needle is so small, I don't think I will be able to put the thread through." Lucy who was busy with her sewing suddenly yelled, "You have to use the threader, silly." Ethan asked, "What, what is a threader?" Lydia who was sewing nearby saw the threader on the table, pointed, and answered, "I think that is the threader." Will B. then added, "Oh, that is what that shiny thing is, I didn't know it was called a threader." The children learned how to use the threader and realized how easy it was to thread a needle with it. As the children continued with their sewing, Will T's mom arrived and with enthusiasm Will T. shouted, "Look Mom, I am using a real sewing needle and didn't even poke my finger." While the children were sewing, Ella asked, "Why do people wear poppies?" Then Lucy answered, "Well, during the war lots of soldiers died and where they were buried, poppies started to grow without anybody planting them, so people started to wear poppies to remember the soldiers that died." Valentina then wanted to sew something black in the middle of her poppy, so Thomas suggested that she could sew a black button in the center of her poppy. The other children did the same to add the finishing touches to their poppies.





Sewing Christmas Stockings

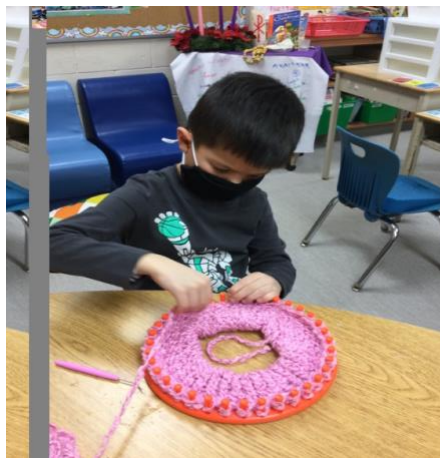
We decided to incorporate Christmas into our project by working hard and sewing Christmas stockings. First, the children used a needle and thread to sew sequins onto templates of their stockings. Each child was given an opportunity to choose the colour of the sequins and patterns they wanted. Valentina said, "I am going to make a pattern with gold and green on one side, but then I might choose two different colours for the other side." Lydia who was sitting nearby added, "I think I will sew pink sequins on mine." Mason then joined in and said, "I like all the colours, so I will use all of them." As the sewing continued, Will T. murmured quietly, "I will use the blue ones." This activity continued for a few days. When Stanley decided to sew his sequins, he asked, "Can I use the pink ones because pink is my favourite colour?" When the children finished decorating the fabric, it was time to use the sewing machine to sew the stockings together. As Ethan started to sew, he commented, "I like using the sewing machine. You can just sew two pieces of fabric together and end up with something cool." While Thomas was sewing, he said, "Now that I am learning how to use a sewing machine, maybe my mom will let me use hers." As the sewing continued, Stanley came and stood beside Thomas and waited. When Thomas was finished, Stanley sat in his spot and was ready to sew. With some tips and suggestions Stanley was able to control the peddle at a comfortable pace. When his mom came to pick him up that day, Stanley held her hand and left with a twinkle in his eyes and a smile on his face as if he was ready to tell all about his experience with the sewing machine. As Lucy was sewing the lining of her stocking, she said, "I wish I could sew something all by myself, I want to do the presser foot up and down as well as the backstitch and everything." Lucy was given two pieces of fabric pinned together. She placed the fabric under the presser foot and slowly started to peddle, then she did the backstitch to secure the thread properly. Lucy continued her sewing until she was finished and then turned around and said, "I actually sewed a little pouch all by myself and I can use it to put some of my gems." Will T. then said, "My stocking will need a string on it to hang." Ethan suggested using a piece of ribbons, so the children sewed green ribbons onto their stockings. The stockings were finally finished, then they were wrapped and taken home for their parents' Christmas gifts.



Loom Knitting

Knitting with a loom was one of the areas of sewing the children were first interested in learning to do. First, the children chose to knit hats and neck warmers because they said that scarves would take too long. As they started, Ethan asked, "What are we going to do with the stuff when we are done making them?" Then Will T. answered, "We can take them home." Thomas then asked, "How are we going to know who is taking them home because we are all helping to make them?" Then Lucy responded, "Well, I guess we can give them to somebody who doesn't have any." Ethan then added, "Oh yeah, there are lots of homeless people who are cold and don't have any warm clothes to wear." Will T. who was listening to the conversation then intervened and commented, "Well sometimes I see homeless people, but then the next time I don't see them there again so, how are we going to give them the stuff?" Thomas then replied, "Well, maybe somebody can have them and when they see the homeless people then they can just give it to them." So, the children started to knit hats and neck warmers for homeless people. When Ella started to do her knitting, she said, "I have never done this before so I don't know how to do it." Avery who was nearby said, "Don't worry, I will help you. It is easy because I made a scarf before." Avery chose her yarn and started to wrap it onto the loom, and when she was

finished, she said, “Now you just have to flip each string over the knob, but you have to make sure you don’t skip any or else you will end up with a hole in your hat or neck warmer.” As the knitting continued with some tips and guidance, some of the children mentioned that they joined the Knitting Club at school and that was where they had learned how to knit with a loom. While the children were working, Lucy’s dad walked in and asked, “What are you making? That looks interesting.” Then Lucy answered, “Well, we are actually knitting hats and neck warmers for the homeless people.” Lucy looked up and smiled then she said, “They will pay us with love and thankfulness, which will make our hearts feel better.” Together the children finished knitting two hats and two neck warmers, then Will B commented, “We should attach a pom pom on top of the hats.” The other children agreed and decided to use some of the yarn to make the pom poms. They wrapped and cut the yarn to make the pom pom, which is something that they have done many times before. When this was done, the pom poms were sewn to the hats. Patti, our supervisor, offered to take the finished products, and donated them to a Community Centre for deserving people.



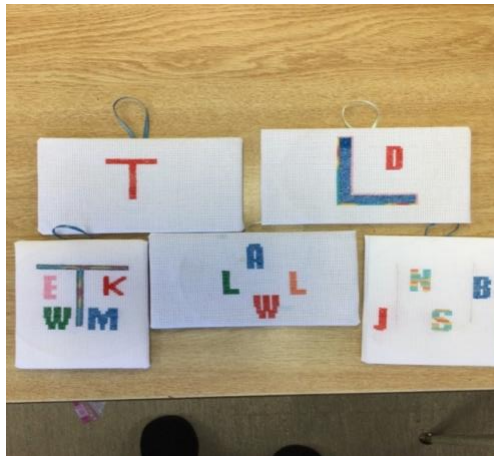
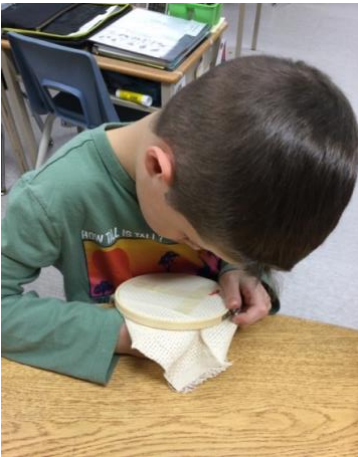
Cross Stitching

As part of our sewing project, the children had shown a continued interest in cross stitching. This part of the project portrayed opportunities for us to be co-learners as we knew very little about the process and what was involved in cross stitching. First, we did some research on the iPad to figure out what we would need to do this activity. We learned that we would need some embroidery hoops, embroidery floss, sewing needles, patterns of what we wanted to sew, and cross stitch fabric. With that in mind, we got what we needed and started our journey of cross stitching. First, we learned how to do a complete cross stitch when Nyah said, "This seems confusing." Then Avery J. added, "Well, I am doing okay, but I don't know how to start back on a new line when I am done with this one." The dilemma continued when Emily commented, "Well, all my stitches are getting caught underneath and I can't see them." As the children continued, we quickly realized that the fabric was making it hard for us to do the stitches properly, and that we needed to figure out a solution by getting some better fabric. So, we did some more research on the iPad and were able to find a different type of fabric.

The next day we got the fabric and then started the process again. The hoops were ready and the sewing started. We printed some cross stitch patterns with the alphabet because the children wanted to sew their initials. Valentina said, "The V for my name looks very hard to follow." Avery F. also said, "I finished my first line for my A, but I don't know how to start the next line." Will B. who was trying to figure out what to do was getting frustrated and said, "I will try to do this again tomorrow." Lucy who was sewing her initial said, "Mine is okay, I just have to do the same amount of cross stitch on all the lines." Will T. who was curious asked Lucy, "How did you start a new line?" Then Lucy replied, "I only have to do one X all the way down and across to do my L." With our limited knowledge and determination, we decided to do some more research and quickly learned that being beginners of cross stitching, if we made half of a stitch by doing a diagonal line all the way in one direction and then went backwards to complete the stitches, it would be easier to start a new line because we would be back to the beginning of the line. We also got some new patterns that were easier to count.

As Nyah was trying to cross stitch her initials, she was having a hard time getting the thread through the fabric to do her second row of stitches, then she said, "It is so thick that I can't get the thread through." We took a closer look and realized that we were using more than two strands of thread, when the recommended amount is two. This situation was sorted out quickly and the sewing continued. Emily announced, "I am going to sew the initials of my whole family. K for my mom, M for my dad, W for my brother, E for me, and a T for my family name." Then a few other children followed and said that they were doing the same. While Will B. was sewing, his mom came in and asked, "What are you doing? That looks amazing!" Will B. answered, "I am doing cross stitch and I am sewing the letter T." Then his mom replied, "I can't believe you are doing that all by yourself, great job buddy." As the sewing continued, we would hear some of these familiar words: "Oops, I think something is wrong, I need help. Oh no, I have a knot in my thread. Oh! Oh! I missed a hole. Not again, my thread is broken. My thread is too short, I need a new piece." Even with all the roadblocks and issues, the children were still determined to successfully complete their designs. When the patterns were finished, the children

hot glued them onto a piece of cardboard and used craft paper to cover the back. They then attached a piece of ribbon to the finished product and proudly said that they would hang them on their walls at home.

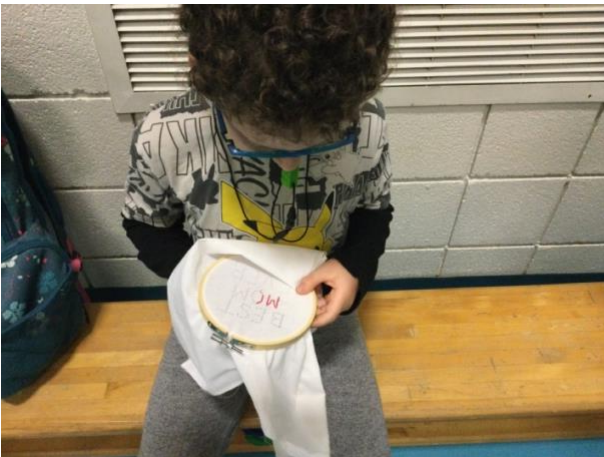


Embroidery Sewing

As we were researching some more ideas for our sewing project, the children were intrigued at the designs and techniques that are used to create amazing embroidery. First, we gathered all the materials that were needed in order to start our embroidery sewing. The patterns were chosen and printed on the fabric with the intention of making the finished embroidery patterns into something special for our moms for Mother's Day. Although it was a project for our school-aged Group 2 children, some of the before-school children wanted to participate in this activity. When Sophia started her sewing, she said, "This will be really special for me because it will also be a birthday gift for my mom because she was born on Mother's Day and also that is why I am sewing a big heart around my pattern." Olivia then commented, "Well, I am making mine a bit different; it will be cursive writing

with a tiny heart on the side.” The patterns were chosen and also the colours of thread that they wanted. Will T. said, “I will use a different coloured thread for each word.” Thomas, Will B. and Ethan agreed that they would do the same. The children were given some instructions and started to do backstitch on their patterns. As Ethan was sewing, his thread came out of the needle, so he asked Will T. to help him rethread his needle. As Will T. tried to use the threader he murmured, “Uh oh, the threader is broken.” Luckily, we had another one that he could use. As we continued with our sewing, we realized that all of our threaders were broken except for the one that was secured with some tape for durability. Thomas commented, “We have to get some more threaders just in case this one is broken.” We were able to get some new ones which we thought would be sturdier, but as the children tried to use them, Sophia said, “I can’t hook the thread with the new threader, I am trying and trying but it is not working.” We quickly realized that the embroidery thread was way too thick for the new threaders. So, with one almost broken threader, we needed to find a solution to this problem without having to buy new ones. Lucy then suggested, “Maybe we can use a paperclip to make one.” She tried the paperclip but it was too thick for the eye of the needles. We thought we could use some fishline string instead, but that didn’t solve our problem. Then Ella suggested, “Maybe we need to use some thinner fishline string.”

The children searched through our bead bucket for different types of string and after a few trials, Lucy said, “I think this blue string will work.” So, she took a piece of tape and made a loop with the blue string, then she tried to thread her needle. She then started yelling, “It works, it works, I made a threader!” Lucy continued to make a few more threaders and when her dad walked into the classroom, Lucy said, “Hey Dad, we don’t have to buy threaders anymore, I made some.” Her dad replied, “Well you can have your own business making threaders and we will be rich.” As the sewing continued, Thomas commented, “This is easy, all you have to remember is to sew backwards.” Ethan who was sewing nearby added, “That is why it is called backstitch.” When Stanley saw what the boys were doing, he wanted to have a turn to sew his pattern. So, he chose red thread for his first word. Emily and Nyah wanted to add some extra flowers to their designs. So, this gave them an opportunity to try some new stitches. With some research and guidance, they were able to practice doing chain and stem stitches. Olivia decided to do the satin stitch to fill in the outline of her heart. As Sophia was doing the chain stitch for the heart around her design she said, “It does look like a chain. I guess that is why it is called chain stitch. As some of the children continued with the chain stitch, Nyah and Emily periodically would yell out, “Oh no, I forgot to make the loop for the chain, so it is messed up now, it doesn’t look like a chain.” That was quickly fixed and the sewing continued for many days until all the designs were completed. The finished products were sewn later on to make Mother’s Day pillows.



Expert: Joanne Neeb

Questions we asked our expert

- How old were you when you started to do cross stitching?
- How long did it take you to finish one of your Cross Stitch designs?
- How much did you pay for one of your patterns?
- Do you ever sell any of your cross-stitch patterns when they are finished?
- How many different types of stitches do you know?
- Did your patterns come with all the materials, or did you have to buy them separately?

The children were very excited for our expert to visit. They had some of their questions prepared and were ready for the day. Some of the before-school children joined our group when Jo (the expert) visited. They also prepared a special treat, which was enjoyed after the presentation. First, Jo displayed all her Cross Stitch materials and finished patterns for the children to look at. She then asked the children if they loved doing cross stitch, and what made them want to learn to do cross stitch. Quickly Lucy responded and said, "Well it looks cool and at the end you get a beautiful design to put on you wall." Nyah answered, "Well I like the different patterns that I can create." As the presentation continued, the children asked their questions, which were answered by Jo. She told the children that she had been doing cross stitch and also knitting since she was a young child. Also, that she does not sell any of her finished products because they take a very long time to finish and they are very special to her. Will B. asked, "How do you keep your thread from not tangling?" Jo then showed the children how she wrapped and sorted her extra thread on tiny cardboard spools to keep them from tangling and also so that she would be aware of all the threads that go with each specific pattern. She also told the children that she bought her patterns and they were very expensive. Jo also explained to the children the process of making different types of stitches while they are doing cross stitch. Some of the children were able to learn about half, quarter, and three-quarter stitches. There were many tips and suggestions that she gave the children like how to always try and keep the back of their designs clean without knots and dangling threads, and how to use the same hoops that they used to create their designs as a frame for hanging the finished product.

The children were given an opportunity to examine her finished products very carefully and were intrigued at the intricate designs and clarity of them. Some of the children talked about their favourite designs and what they liked about them. Emily said, "I would love to buy my own pattern with all the stuff in it." Jo then commented, "Maybe you can start with a small simple pattern until you are able to practice more and then get a bigger one." Lucy was looking at one of the designs and said, "Well I like this one with the little girl and the bird because it reminds me of myself when I was a toddler." There were lots of questions, comments, and observations during the presentation, which ended with our delicious brownie treat.



Phase 3: Concluding the Project

Final Event: Mother's Day Pillows

As part of the final event, we decided to sew pillows for our moms. The children had already done embroidery on fabric with special messages for their moms, so to finish our project they wanted to sew the pillows and present them to their moms for Mother's Day. When the children started to sew their pillows Ethan asked, "Why are there pins on the fabric?" Will T. then answered, "So that you can sew the fabric and it won't move and get messed up." While Nyah was sewing, the needle snapped and broke, so with Avery J's help we were able to replace the needle and continued sewing. As Thomas started to sew his pillow, his dad walked into the classroom and asked him what he was doing. Thomas answered, "Well I am sewing a pillow for mom for Mother's Day." Then his dad replied, "Well I hope that I will get something just as special for Father's Day." Thomas just smiled and went home with his dad. When it was Stanley's turn to sew, he commented, "I bet my mom will love this pillow because it is so special." The children then started to stuff the pillows with batting. While they were doing that, Ella said, "I am putting lots of stuffing in mine to make it softer." Will B. then intervened and said, "If you put too much stuffing, you won't be able to sew it shut." Each child had a turn to sew their pillow. The children finished their pillows and were ready to wrap them for their moms. They used white construction paper to make gift bags that were decorated, and special messages were written on them for their moms. The pillows were carefully packed into the bags and white tissue paper was stuffed into the bags to prevent the moms from seeing them until Mother's Day. The pillows were given to the moms with instructions that they were not to peek into the bags until Mother's Day.



Teacher Reflections

During the project the children were able to learn and develop lifelong skills. They can independently sew a loose or missing button, and also do some mending of clothes. They practiced the skills of using a sewing machine and how to control the speed of the machine. They learned how to do different types of stitches, threading needles, and refilling bobbins. They also developed fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, and turn-taking. They listened and followed instructions throughout the project. We also had an opportunity to bridge the gap between the childcare, school, family, and the community. This was done by some of the children starting to take knitting lessons at school to practice some of their knitting skills. They also made scrunchies, book bags, stuffed teddy bears and bunnies for friends at school. A few of the children started to take sewing lessons in the community to develop their sewing skills. We also donated the finished hats and neck warmers to the community. The families were involved by donating scrap materials, and some moms and grandmas helped the children be more confident in their sewing and knitting skills by practicing at home. Some of the finished items, including stuffed footballs, were taken home for the families to enjoy. During the project there was lots of evidence of co-learning. With limited knowledge about what to do and what materials to use, we were able to learn together by using the iPad to Google information, and by watching videos about the topic. We also learned through a lot of trial and error. Although the activities were time consuming, the children persevered to the end, and were very proud of their skills and achievements.