



# Climb Aboard the Owl Express

## Owl - St. Nicholas: Jr. Camp

### Background

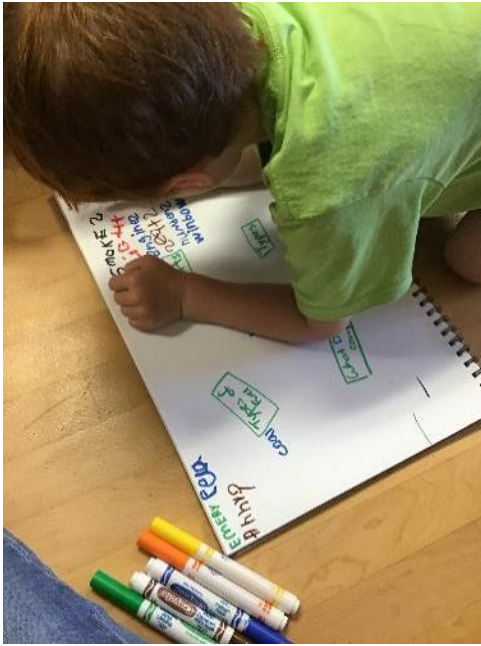
The Junior Camp children at Owl - St. Nicholas showed an interest in trains. This project was completed during July and August of 2019. The age of the children involved was between 4 and 6 years, with 26 children participating at any given time. The educators involved were Ashley Vandermey, RECE and Susan Eggleston, RECE.

### Phase 1: Beginning the Project

The children started showing interest in trains as they took to creating many different designs with the toy train track. They first had it all set up all over the floor. As the days went on they started creating a track that went under the tables and chairs. Gabriel (6yrs) noted that they created garages out of magnetic tiles for their trains to sleep in. We watched many of the children add their suggestions and worked together to create a new track every day. With this observation it showed that the children seemed quite interested in trains. We decided to take this interest and see if their interest grew into a project.

What do we know?	What do we want to know?	Whom we can ask
They ride on a track	Can the track go up hills/mountains	Train Conductor
They run on fuel	What else do they use to run	Books from the Library
They carry people	What else do they carry	People that help out at the ION stations
Trains can be long	What are the different parts of the train called	iPad
The ION is a train	Are there different types of trains	Train Conductor
	How does the ION run	ION Driver

The children worked together and we all created our project web. At first Annya (5yrs) was the one starting the web but as she was adding to it she became stumped on topics to add. This is when she went around asking the children what they think she should add to the web. Tanner (5yrs), Ana Cecilia (5yrs) and Caitlin (6yrs) joined in and helped add their input to the web. They then took a marker and started adding topics to our sub-topics on the web. They were wondering what other parts they could add to the train sub topic, so with Ashley's help they found some examples on the iPad. They added a few more things to the web and then felt satisfied as they took a look at how much information they had put onto their web. Caitlin said, "Wow, we wrote a lot on there." As we learned more about trains we added more to the web.



*Tanner D. (5yrs) adding to our web, putting down different parts of the train that he knows*



*Annya (5yrs) adding a few more trains that she learned about after reading a book on trains.*

## Phase 2: Developing the Project

### Building with the wooden train tack

The project all started off with the creations of the wooden train tracks. Throughout the summer we had many children create, on their own or as a group, tracks in all different ways, styles and sizes. The children started to become creative as they used different materials like wooden blocks and chairs to raise their track. One day we watched a short video of Thomas the Tank and the children noticed the trains slept in garages. After that we observed many different styles of garages take form either over the tracks or at the end of the tracks. Some of the materials used were magnetic tiles. Gabriel (6yrs) said, "My garage door can swing open," as he showed Ashley how he built it and showed pride in his creation.



*Gabriel (6yrs) and Alex W. (6yrs) building their track on top of wooden blocks. Alex said, "look Ashley now our train is so high!"*



*Omar (6yrs) created a track that went all through and under the table and chairs. He was very excited as she showed off his work to the other campers.*



*Vivian (5yrs) & Caitlin (6yrs) worked as a team to make their vision come to life. Caitlin said, "we wanted our train track to look like a swirl." They were quite focused and it took lots of trial and error to make sure the track pieces lined up just right*



*Tomek (5yrs), Owen H. (5yrs) & Cooper (5yrs) worked together to make a winding train track throughout the one half of the classroom.*

### Creating our very own train station

As the week went on we decided to turn our dramatic play kitchen into a train station. Jason (5yrs) asked, "What does a train station look like?" We took a look at the iPad and found a few ideas. The children went right to work. We taped some large paper to the back of the kitchen set. Cela (5yrs) created an open sign to put on the train station, where as Jason (5yrs) quickly started to cut out tickets. Ashley found a single hole punch for the children to punch the tickets when their peer's board their train. Once the children were satisfied with their station Ashley asked them, "But where should the train go now?" Caitlin (6yrs) brought over some chairs which got Cela (5yrs) and Jason (5yrs) grabbing more chairs to add to what Caitlin (6yrs) was making.

Once the kids grabbed, what they thought was enough chairs, Ashley told them how some trains have a name and listed some she knew. She then asked them what their train should be called. Cela right away said, "Ontario train." She asked the group what they thought and everyone was very excited so they wrote it on their train station. Annya (5yrs) asked Ashley how to spell Ontario Train and she added it to the front of the train station.

Once that was all figured out, Jason (5yrs) and Anthony (5yrs) started to pass out tickets to their peers. Some said no thank you, whereas others looked excited to join the fun. Caitlin (6yrs) and Cela (5yrs) took turns punching tickets as the children started to board their train. Reese (6yrs) sat in the front car and introduced himself as the conductor. He yelled, "All aboard." He pretended to make a chugging sound, while Jason (5yrs) said, "Next stop Northfield!" When they pretended to stop at their destination Jason (5yrs) turned to the children and asked for suggestions on where they would like to go next. This play continued on throughout the day and into the following weeks. One day Caitlin (6yrs), Cela (5yrs), Nylah (5yrs) and Evelyn S. (5yrs) decided to create a train for their toys and dolls from home. They lined the chairs up and even had them sitting in pairs "In case they are nervous on their first train ride," said Evelyn S.(5yrs) They called it their stuffy train. The children have been quite imaginative with the new train station and train that they have collaboratively created.



*Jason (5yrs) cutting out tickets to give to the other campers so they too could join in the fun and have an opportunity to board the train.*



*Caitlin (6yrs) using a hole punch to punch out the tickets as children boarded the train.*



*Anya (5yrs) writing down the name of the train on the front of the train station.*



*The Jr. Campers, Calvin (6yrs), Cooper (5yrs) & Jason (5yrs) take their seats as they head off on an adventure. Even their stuffies climbed aboard and went for a ride.*



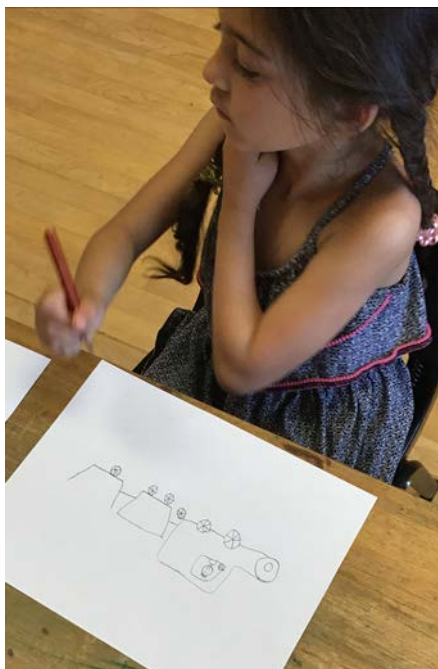
## First and second Drawings of trains

We all gathered around and found a space in the classroom so all the campers had an opportunity to draw out their interpretation of a train. Maria (6yrs) took her time as she sat back and thought out just how she remembered what a train looked like. We had many children add an engineer to their picture. Lumio (6yrs) said, "I added an engineer, I remembered they are called that from our book we read." Some campers added train cars, steam/smoke coming out of smoke stacks and people riding on their train. It was great to observe them through this process as some had to ask for some advice on what others were adding to their train of what they should add to their train. Sutton (5yrs) said "I don't know what a train looks like, I can't draw one." Omar (5yrs) turned to him and said, "Look this is how I am going to draw a train. You need to draw lots of rectangles."

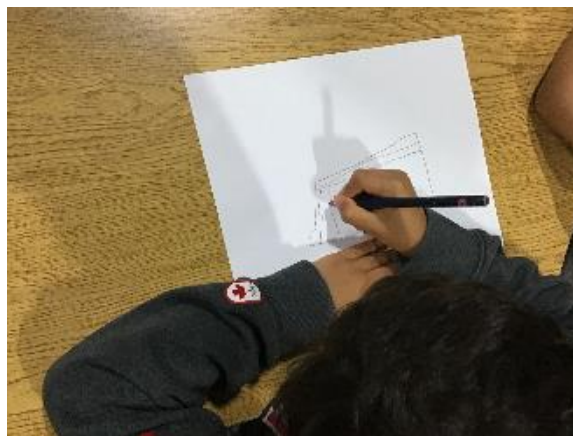
I was glad to see how they came together to help one another to ensure everyone had a positive experience and all were able to be proud of their work no matter how different they were from others. Ashley showed off all the drawings which gave everyone an opportunity to explain their drawing and show off their work. This started off some great conversations and questions which lead to us reading and taking a look at some train books we got out of the library. This helped answer our questions as well as create excitement with some children as they were yelling out that's what I added to my train. We looked forward to seeing how after working on the project some more and more exposed on what trains look like how different their second drawings will look like.



*Oliver (5yrs) doing his first drawing*



*Maria (6yrs) completing her 2nd drawing*



*Camilo (6yrs) adding more detail to his 2nd drawing*

### **Making trains out of foam shapes**

Ashley placed out some coloured foam shapes that she had previously cut out along with some fluffy pom poms. She placed out some paper, white glue and glue sticks and a sign stating, "Let's see your train." Alice (6yrs) first laid out the pieces on the paper. Over a few tries on how she wanted the pieces to line up she was satisfied with her train. She then began to glue the pieces down. Isla wanted to make hearts come out of the smoke stack along with the pom poms. Ashley helped her out in showing her how she could cut some hearts out of the foam. She used her fine motor muscles to

practice cutting out the pieces herself. Isla was quite proud as she was able to make some of her own hearts as well as help her peers in making some for them as well.



*Alice (6yrs) creating a train*



*Isla (6yrs) working hard on her train*

## Building train tracks out of popsicle sticks

Ashley placed out a provocation with masking tape, popsicle sticks and wooden trains on a table. She was interested to see what the children would do with these materials. Camilo (6yrs) walked over slowly and examined the materials. He sat down and started to drive the trains on the table. Then he picked up a few popsicle sticks and started to line them up. He tried driving his train along the popsicle sticks but they would move as he drove the trains along them. He then used little pieces of tape to attach the popsicle sticks together. He seemed satisfied as he then proceeded to drive his train along them once he looked satisfied with the length of the track he built. Some of his peers followed along and added to his track.



*Camilo (6yrs) built a train track with the popsicle sticks*

## Creating trains out of large wooden blocks

The children found ways to create trains all around in the program room. Some of the boys used our large wooden blocks to create different trains. Tanner (5yrs) and Alex H. (5yrs) built one where Tanner could sit inside like the cabin of the train and then Alex added a bed in the back. Tanner said, "It is like the sleeping train we saw on the video." Alex said, "They were taking turns sleeping on the train."

Tanner (5yrs), Omar (5yrs) and Cooper (5yrs) continued all week creating trains out of the large wooden blocks. It was great seeing the teamwork and the communication that would go on during these creative sessions. The boys were supportive, worked together and gave suggestions on where to put blocks. Their one train they created had a spot for each of them to sit because they all wanted to drive the train.



*Tanner (5yrs) & Alex H. (5yrs) created a train, Alex W is pretending to sleep on the train.*



*Tanner (5yrs), Omar (5yrs) & Cooper (5yrs) created a train where there were different stations to sit in so they all could take part in driving the train when the other gets tired.*



## Riding on the train at African Lion Safari

All Aboard! The children were quite excited as they lined up for the train at African Lion Safari. The children were able to sit two to a seat and were pleased to discover that both sides of the train had windows allowing both children to see out their side of the train. The children noticed that they were able to rest their arms on the side of the train and feel the breeze. Others noticed there were no seat belts and were reminded to stay seated at all times. The children enjoyed being able to point out things along the way and talked amongst their seat buddy about what they were looking at.



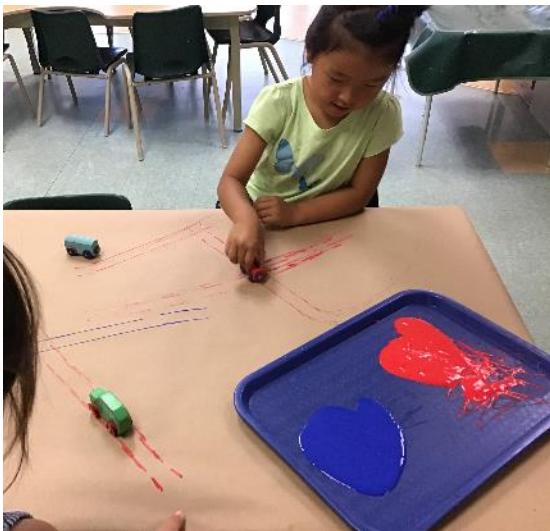
*Train at African Lion Safari we rode on*



*Enjoying the view as we rode along*

## Painting with trains

Susan one morning laid out some large paper on the table top and put a tray of paint and trains beside it. She was curious to see who would take the first drive through the paint with their train. Vivian (5yrs) said, "We can paint with the trains?" Susan said, "Sure you can, I wonder what it will look like when you drive the trains along the paper with paint." Vivian carefully put the train in the paint and started to drive her train back and forth. She smiled and said, "It looks like a train track." Others noticed what she was doing and joined in. Afterwards the paper had track looking marks going all different ways. Ezra (5yrs) said, "Good thing they aren't real tracks or the trains would crash into each other."



*Vivian (5yrs) exploring with the different colours of paint as she created different lines with the train wheels*



*The Jr. Campers made all sorts of tracks with their wooden trains. Some found it hard to turn their train to curve it around, they had to make small turns and keep turning the train the way they wanted it to move*

## **Making train cookies**

Susan had a great idea to make cookies shaped like trains. The children wondered how they would make a cookie that looked like a train. Susan showed them her cookie cutters and explained to them we will cut out the dough into these shapes and then the cookie will bake and stay in the form we cut it. First, she brought out a recipe and ingredients. The children took turns reading the recipe and adding the ingredients into a large bowl. Susan showed them how much a cup was or a tsp was and told them to make sure to add the right amount or it could throw off the taste or how they bake. The children took turns mixing it but noticed that the more ingredients they added the harder and stiffer it was to mix. Susan demonstrated how to roll out the dough so the children could help and give it a try themselves. The dough went from a large ball to smooth and flat. They took turns pressing the train cookie cutters into the dough and placing it onto the cookie sheet. She explained that cracking an egg and using the egg whites and some food colouring it will make the cookies all shiny once cooked.



*Cooper (5yrs) scooping flour into the measuring cup to add to mixture*



*Owen M. (5yrs) helping mix the ingredients together*



*Maria (6yrs) painting her cookie with the egg yolk and food coloring mixture to create a glossy look once baked*



*Finished product, so shiny*

## Survey

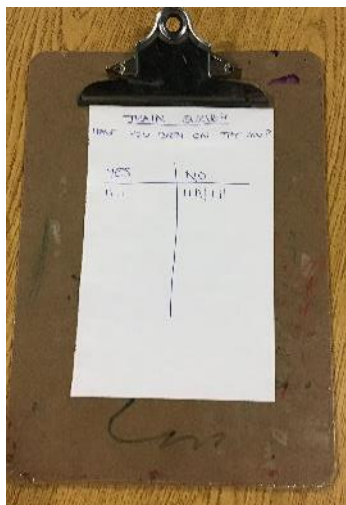
Susan gathered the children and asked them who knew what a survey was. The children didn't really seem to understand what Susan was asking. Susan then began to explain what a survey was and that they were going to complete one for our train project. They discussed what question the children wanted to ask in the survey and as a group they decided to find out which educators have ridden on the ION. A group of children gathered together, went room to room and took turns asking their question and then documenting the results.



*Maria (6yrs) asking Sweety if she has ever been on the ION before*



*Maria (6yrs) & Annya (5yrs) survey one of the educators covering in the preschool room*



*Completed survey*

## Special guest

We brought in our educator Ruchi's children to show off their electric train set. They came over and set up their track for us and the little signs around the track. They showed the children the different signs and asked them what the symbols meant. Gabriel (6yrs) yelled, "That one is a stop sign!" The children listened as Rita explained what the other signs meant, such as the yield, caution and children-crossing signs. Next Senthil passed around the train. The children were asked to use careful hands as they took a closer look at the engine. Calvin (6yrs) noticed the letters CN on the side. He asked Senthil and Rita what the letters stood for. Senthil said, "It means Canadian National Railway." Avery (5 yrs) said, "It looks like a real train." Damain (6yrs) asked, "How does it move?" as he was

trying to move it on the floor. Senthil answered, “It runs on the track and with the help of electricity and the controls it moves along the track.” He came over to him and showed how a little metal needle like object sat in between a slot on the track.

Once the train was passed and seen by all the children Rita placed it on the track. Senthil at first made the train go slowly along the track. After going around once the children yelled, “Faster!” Senthil smiled and turned the knob to a higher number to allow the train to go faster. He showed the children that there were numbers on the dial and the higher the number the faster the train could go. The children became very excited and yelled, “Put it on the highest number.” Senthil turned the knob all the way and the train started going super-fast. The children hooted and hollered as it started to go faster and faster until it ran right off the track. Tomek (5yrs) picked the train up and passed it to Senthil. Senthil said let’s start the train off slow and slowly turn the knob and see how the train reacts to that. The train stayed on the track!

After watching for a little bit Senthil let the children, who wanted a turn, try driving the train. Most of the children were very eager for this opportunity. Some of the children took it slow around the track and then slowly increased the speed where as others started out fast and watched how quickly the train flew off the track and how they learned quickly to take it slow at first. The children seemed quite proud that they were aloud this chance to drive the train. After all the children had a turn, we cozied up beside the track and listened to Rita read us a story from the library all about steam trains.



*The children were given an opportunity to pass the engine around and explore it. Some of the children commented on how it looked just like a real train*



*The children watching as the train was going around the track*



*Here Sophia F. (5yrs). Was trying out the controls. She was hesitant at first and moved the train slowly around the track*



*Tomek (5yrs) learning his way around the controls*



*Rita is reading a book from the library. It showed us how trains run, where they ride and how they can go up tall mountains and carry people*

## **Riding on the ION**

We were very fortunate to have the opportunity to do our field study on a real train this summer. We took a ride on the ION. We purchased some tickets which got us on the city bus which then gave us a transfer to get onto the ION. The educators wanted the children to get the most of their ride so we decided to ride all the way to Fairview Park Mall in Kitchener. When the educators told the children that we planned a trip on the ION there were lots of children jumping up and down excited that we

were going for a ride on it. Some children were yelling that they had never been on before. The other children that had experienced it before were sharing their stories. Before going on this adventure we talked about how we should conduct ourselves while on the city bus and ION. The children quickly shared how we use our inside voices, stay with your buddy and teachers and sitting on the seats. While waiting for the bus the children said it was taking a long time. This started a conversation on why it could be late. We talked about how the buses make lots of stops and sometimes there might be a lot of people to get on or traffic which could all be reasons why it would be late. When the bus arrived we boarded, some of us sat in the back of the bus with an educator and others sat in the front of the bus with an educator. The children found the bus very bumpy and we had to make sure we held on tight to the bars as it made lots of stops. Ana Cecilia was able to pull the cord to tell the bus driver our stop was coming up.



*Waiting for our bus just out front of camp*



*Boarding the bus and paying for our fares*

Wow, what a cool experience we had on the ION. When waiting for the ION at the University station we were able to listen to the person on the speakers and hear how many more minutes we had to wait for the ION. The children became very excited when we heard only one more minute left. When the ION was approaching everyone stood back as it slowly came to a stop. Once it had stopped we filed in finding the nearest seats. Once the ION was on the move the children noticed it was a much smoother ride. Lumio (6yrs) said, "I don't have to hold onto my seat when the ION stops. It doesn't make me fall forward." Ashley noticed up above the windows was a routine listed all the stops the ION will make. Ashley was able to show us where we got on to the ION and where we will be getting off. We counted the stops and found out that we would be getting off at stop number 15. Calvin (6yrs) said, "Wow we are going to be on here forever!" Maria (6yrs) asked, "When do we know when to get off?" Ashley told them that if you looked up near the roof there was a sign that changed as it approached each stop. She showed on the above ION route that the stop on the route matched the stop that was being addressed on the sign. We also could listen to what stop was coming up next as they made announcements as well. It was fun listening to what the next stop was going to be and then find us on the map up above our heads.

As we were riding along we noticed something interesting on the ION. When we turned a corner we noticed the back of the ION disappeared. As we straightened up it looked like a snake slithering. The children laughed as we watched our educator and some of our peers disappear around the corner and then reappear as it straightened back up. Once we reached our destination we all exited the ION and walked onto the Fairway platform. The campers asked when will the next train would come. Susan showed the campers how there were no more track behind the ION and also pointed out that the driver had left the back of the train (which was the front of the train and where we were facing) and is now at the front of the train (which was the back end of the train on the ride up). So Susan said, "All aboard." And we boarded the same ION that took us to the fairway station that will now take us back to the University station. The children were quite amazed at how the train was reversible and could go one way and then what was the back of the train now was the front of the train. This was a cool experience that hopefully we will be able to utilize for the summers to come.



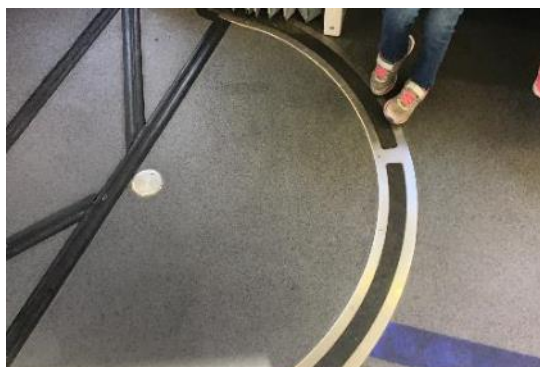
*Walking up to the ION stop getting ready to line up against the wall to wait for the ION safely*



*Adham (5yrs) and Maria (6yrs) looking out the window of the ION. Adham was pointing out scenery to Maria as we passed some interesting things*



*Ashley was showing the children what stop we got onto the ION and were we were getting off the ION.*



*The children noticed that sometimes their feet would move while resting on the floor. We took a look and noticed that as the train moved around the corners part of the floor would move to allow it to turn the corners smoothly and stay along the track*





*The campers enjoying the ride and taking everything in as we discovered new things along the way*

## Vocabulary List

During this project we recorded words that the children already knew as well as any new words to the children's vocabulary as we came across them. As the staff started recording these words we realized there were quite a few that were new to children.

- Train
- Engine
- Steam
- Coal
- Wheels
- Conductor
- Train Car
- Boxcar
- Whistle
- Valley
- Country Side
- Locomotive
- Smoke Box
- Track
- Gas
- ION
- Engineer
- Brake
- Chimney
- Mountains
- Fields

## Phase 3: Concluding the Project

### Final Project

The children were always using the chairs to create a train; Ashley thought it would be fun to make a train that the children could sit in out of cardboard boxes. Ashley asked the children if they would like to create a train out of cardboard boxes and they were excited to get started. They asked how they were going to do this. Ashley suggested that they create a list of how they would like their train to

look. At first the kids were having difficulty coming up with the details for the train. So Calvin (6yrs) asked if we could look on the iPad for pictures of trains. The children all seemed to like the old fashion steam trains. We decided to create ours in a similar way.

The children decided what colour they wanted their train to be. Then they talked about details like adding a smoke stack, coal and a shovel to move the hot coal. They also wanted steam to come out of their train. So we got to work, first we built the boxes and even created a seat in one box which was our locomotive for the train engineer to sit. Once the boxes were built the children reminded Ashley what colours they needed to paint their train. The children split up in groups some painting the locomotive and others painting the wagons also known as passenger or freight cars. The children did a great job at working together to paint the train. Once the paint dried, the children immediately started to set it up in the back of the room and started to pretend it was a train. The children played in it for a bit until more details were added.



*Anya (5yrs) & Isla(6yrs) working together to paint one of the train cars*



*The finished painted train*

Judy, our supervisor, bought us some stuffing which we used along with some wire to create our steam. The children made the steam come out of the smoke stack and rise up to the ceiling with help from Ashley. Riley (5yrs) said, "I can't reach up to the ceiling, Ashley!" as she stretched her arms up towards the ceiling. Ashley stretched her hands up as well and said, "Well I can't either so how are we going to get the 'steam' up to the ceiling then?" Damian (6yrs) said, "We need a ladder!" with excitement. Lumio (6yrs) jumped out of one of the train cars and said, "I want to help too!" The children were able to climb a ladder to reach the steam as it rose to the ceiling. Some of them weren't too sure about how to stand on the ladder feeling secure and use both hands to create the steam. Ashley assured them and helped stable them as she held onto their waist. This allowed the children to have more ability to feel comfortable to let go of the ladder and focus on wrapping the stuffing

around the wire. Once the children were satisfied with how the steam looked we stepped back and took a look at it. Calvin said, “Wow that looks like a real train now!”



*Damain (6yrs) helping to build up the steam for our steam engine*



*Calvin (6yrs) working hard at binding the stuffing onto the wire*



*The finished product of the steam soaring up to the ceiling*

Ashley then brought in some black building blocks which they used as their coal and she brought in a shovel at their request to transfer their "hot" coal. Jacob said, “We need another box to put the coal in, the coal doesn’t go in the train cars.” Lumio said, “It’s the smoke-box. It makes all the smoke so the train can move.” Ashley found a smaller box for the children to store the “coal” in and then they transferred it to the front of the engine under where they taped on their smoke stack.



*Reese (6yrs) and Jacob (6yrs) using a shovel to transfer the “hot” coal into their steam*



The children used their train all summer and played different parts and roles. Alice (6yrs) would pretend to cook for her peers that where on the train and pass them food as they sat in the passenger cars. Clayton (5yrs) and Reese (6yrs) would dump buckets of toys in into the train cars and pretend

they were freight cars. It was great seeing how creative they became and how most of the children played and acted out some role that had to do with the train.

## Teacher Reflections

Ashley Vandermey, RECE reflection

It was amazing to observe the children and how they not only incorporated trains into their daily play but the creativity that was shown on how they created them. This project I was really able to learn alongside the children and become engulfed in the project as much as they were. We were very fortunate to be able to ride on a few different trains this summer, one at the Lion Safari as well as the ION. This gave the children an up close look at a few different trains and how they run. Throughout this project the children had many questions and ideas, which is where I feel my role as an educator shown through. I was able to give them access to many different resources for their answers as well as help build on their creative ideas to allow their cardboard box train come to life. I believe that it's the experiences and materials that you allow them to have that help them flourish and build on their imagination, their interest and their creativity. I was glad to be a part of this learning because to be able to see their ideas come to life, their input expressed and heard and how proud they became as their work came to life was amazing to see. I was also able to sit back and let them take the lead and work as a group/team on a lot of the work and learn alongside with them rather than just being the educator. I found that allowing them to be co-learners with you gives them an opportunity to ask more questions, find the answers themselves and become the educator as they then start sharing their knowledge with others. This allows more independence and helps build their confidence and brings their ideas to life. I find with each project I do with the children it helps me grow as an educator, reminds me how children love to learn and if given the right tools and freedom how much they flourish. This was a great project and so glad I was able to be a part of this journey.

Susan Eggleston, RECE reflections

Ashley and I started the summer with a plan to provide provocations that would lead the children towards a project on kites. During the first week we quickly discovered that our provocations weren't necessary and that our project topic already existed and it was all thanks to a box of trains with tracks and the City of Kitchener Waterloo. I feel that the recent opening of the ION led the children's investigation and curiosity and we were pleased to have the opportunity to allow them the experience of riding on the ION alongside their educators. Our summer was packed full of learning, investigation and curiosity both by the children and the educators. Ashley and I truly were co-learners and loved the opportunity to discover and grow alongside the children. We heightened the learning by providing many opportunities to research ideas and by providing a variety of activities based on the children's curiosity. Finishing the project with a trip on the ION was the highlight for most and certainly mine. Like many others it was probably the only opportunity to ride the ION. We even had the opportunity to provide help to a fellow traveler who was also new to the train riding experience. Not only did this project allow us to learn more about trains it also allowed us to share our knowledge with others.