

Phase 1: Beginning the Project

The children's interest in the dramatic play center started immediately at the beginning of the school year. However, the kitchen area was only big enough for 2 or 3 children to pretend play at one time. We expanded the kitchen area and created an entire restaurant area where many children were excited to role-play and engage in imaginary play.

The students took turns being a server, customer, cook, etc. and acting out the various roles.



Student Web

The children brainstormed a list of things found in a restaurant and jobs/roles performed there. They also came up with a list of ideas for naming the restaurant and discussed foods that make up a healthy meal. I recorded their ideas below.

- Jobs:**
- cook/chef
 - server (waiter/waitress)
 - customers
 - host
 - cashier
 - busser (clear plates and set table)
 - dishwasher

- Name:**
- What will we call our restaurant?
 - How do we choose a name?

Restaurant

- Food:**
- Healthy foods
 - Menus
 - Recipes
 - Where does the food come from?

Things in a Restaurant:

- food
- menus
- pots, pans
- plates, forks, spoons
- kitchen
- money
- debit cards

H, playing the role of waiter, asks, "What would you like?"

M replies, "Umm...some spaghetti, please."

"Okay, coming right up!" replies H as he makes marks on his clipboard to take the order. He walks over to the kitchen and says to the cooks, "Make spaghetti! They want spaghetti!" He then returns to M and places the pieces of yarn we made to look like spaghetti on her plate, "Here's your spaghetti."

"Thank you," M responds.



New items were continuously being added to the restaurant and kitchen areas. Some students made money out of paper for the cash register.



Other students drew pictures of the food they were making similar to the pictures of the foods found in their recipe books.





Phase 2

Naming the Restaurant:

We brainstormed a list of ideas of names for the restaurant. I recorded all of the children's suggestions. We then talked about which names were the best and which ones didn't really make as much sense. We narrowed the choices down to three options and the students voted for their favorite name.

The students voted and the majority chose to name the restaurant "Alphabet Soup".

The children worked together on painting the letters for the sign and the giant soup bowl.



Healthy Foods:

We discussed what kinds of foods make up a healthy meal. We talked about the four food groups and the children sorted pictures of healthy foods into each of the food groups. The students then used pictures from flyers and magazines to create a representation of a healthy meal. These plates of foods were later added to the restaurant area for the children to serve to their customers.



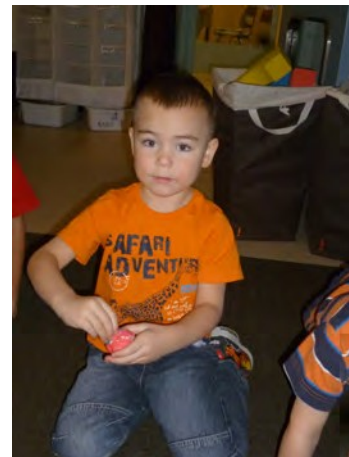
“I made a cookie. It’s brown and black,” M. explains. “I made a strawberry. I made it red with green leaves.”



A. describes her project, “It is black here and brown. It is a bun.”



E. recalls the experience. “I made an apple. I rolled a ball and pinched it.”



Some children made menus for the restaurant. A regular menu was created using markers to print the word "MENU" and to draw the foods for the front cover. Magazine clippings were used to represent the items that could be ordered at the restaurant. The same was done to create a Dessert Menu.



Kitchen Tour:

We toured the daycare kitchen inside our school. The cook for the daycare gave us a tour of all the equipment inside the kitchen. She showed the children the ovens, freezer, fridge, cupboards, and sinks. She asked them what types of foods should be kept in the cupboards, fridge, or freezer in order to keep them fresh.



The sinks were so big we could almost take a bath in them!



Kitchen Tour Continued...

We had many questions...What do you need to do before you prepare the food? We always wash our hands and make sure the counter tops and work surfaces are clean.

How do you know how much food to prepare for so many children? She talked about serving sizes and cooking just the right amount so as to avoid waste.

What kinds of foods do you prepare? Today the children were eating chicken fajitas. Lemon loaves were baking in one oven for snack later that day and a turkey was cooking in the other oven for lunch the next day. It smelled delicious in the kitchen!

She showed us what types of things go in the garbage and what types of things can go in the recycling bins.

When we returned to the classroom, the children were excited to share what they had seen in the kitchen and learned. They drew pictures and talked about their drawings to represent their learning.

Phase 3:

We invited parents and caregivers to our restaurant. The children decided that since the name of our restaurant was “Alphabet Soup” that we should serve alphabet soup. The students got busy chopping vegetables and adding spices and other ingredients to the soup.

They also made signs and labels for the soup.



The children carried out the various roles in a restaurant as they welcomed parents, seated the customers, took their orders, served the food, and accepted payment at the cash register. Food items were also collected and donated to the Food Bank just in time for Christmas.



Many satisfied customers!



Social/Emotional Skills

- Developing Self Awareness – communicating who they are (making reservations; stating their role in the restaurant) as well as identifying likes and dislikes (ordering food; choosing a job/role in the restaurant)
- Developing a Sense of Belonging – participating in dramatic play and demonstrating care with materials
- Interacting with Peers – playing with others; taking turns, sharing materials, and working together to achieve a common goal
- Resolving Conflicts – compromising and problem solving independently with peers to find a mutually acceptable solution to conflicts
- Practicing Using Manners – please, thank you, table manners, etc.
- Community Engagement – exploring jobs/roles in a restaurant; participating in collection of food for the Food Bank

Intellectual Skills

Using Language:

- Listening with interest and engagement during brief experiences with spoken language (discussions and stories about foods or restaurant research; tour of daycare kitchen)
- Incorporating ideas and vocabulary from prior listening experiences (stories, discussion, kitchen tour, research) into play and exploration
- Responding to communication initiated by others (taking menu orders, taking/making reservations, placing an order, paying or receiving money, etc.)

Understanding Language:

- Exploring the use of new words (food and restaurant vocabulary) and increasing the length of word combinations
- Using language to inquire/ask questions and express thoughts and ideas

Developing Literacy:

- Engaging with stories and books about foods and restaurants (fiction, non-fiction, recipe books, menus) and gaining meaning from a variety of visual formats and text materials
- Recounting an experience or event (kitchen tour, parents invitation to the Restaurant Project)
- Exploring meaningful images/symbols and how print works (recipes, menus, reservations, signs, etc.)
- Representing ideas using expressive forms such as drawing, painting, collage, sculpture, clay/dough, dramatic play

Mathematics:

- Exposure to numerals, counting, one to one correspondence (taking reservations, seating, place settings, handling money), sorting, measurement, matching shapes and symbols

Science:

- Measuring and mixing ingredients in cooking/baking activities; engaging all the senses and exploring sensory activities in cooking and dramatic play

Creative Arts:

- Exploring a variety of art processes (drawing, painting, collage, sculpture, clay/dough) using a variety of materials; music; dramatic play

Wonder

- Sense of Imagination – restaurant play/dramatic play; pretending and acting out various roles and jobs in a restaurant
- Exploring “why things are the way they are” – exploring various roles, the processes involved in ordering food and running a kitchen/restaurant, etc.
- Curiosity about the way things work – where the food comes from or how it gets to the restaurant, how various foods are made/ingredients, etc.
- Developing an appreciation for the work that others do and the preparation involved in cooking, cleaning, etc.
- Observing others and their jobs
- Displaying creative abilities
- Expressing joy, excitement, curiosity

Physical (Fine and Gross Motor Skills)

- Use of cooking tools to stir, mix, cut, roll, scoop, pour, sprinkle, pinch, squeeze, etc.
- Using a pencil, marker, paintbrush, clay/dough to create and represent learning
- Using cutlery to feed self

Restaurant Project Information and Reflection

General Information about the Project

- Title of Project: Restaurant Project
- The age levels of the children who participated in the project included 3 and 4 year olds.
- There are 16 children in the Pre-Kindergarten class.
- It is a half day program.
- This project was completed in about 6 weeks.

Teacher Reflection:

The Restaurant Project provided an excellent opportunity for children to build upon and explore their interests. It provided many opportunities for growth and development in each of the four essential learning experiences (social/emotional, physical, wonder, and intellectual) as outlined in our Play & Exploration guide provided by the Ministry of Education. Children were engaged in their learning and constantly adding new materials and ideas to the dramatic play area to enhance their role play. Preparing a meal and inviting parents to our restaurant was a nice way for families to be involved in concluding the project together. Donations for this Family Day event were made to the Food Bank and provided an opportunity for families to get together and give to others just before the Christmas season.