I See A Story: Collage as Imaginative Device in Early Childhood Education

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Pre-K and K Standards:
GELDS CD-CR2 - The child will create and explore visual art forms to develop artistic expression.
APL2 - The child will demonstrate interest and curiosity.
APL5 - The child will demonstrate a cooperative and flexible approach to play and learning.
CCR SL 1. Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups

Big Ideas for Us:
- Relationship between image and narrative
- Children’s interests and affinities
- Representation vs. abstraction
- Process vs. product
- Collaboration as a generative process
- Children’s meaning making vs. adult meaning making

Big Ideas for Young Children:
- Journey as a story genre
- Relationship between stories and the world
- Textures and colors in our environment
- Shapes and our Imagination
- Group story telling

“"When I was a small boy, my father would take me on walks across meadows and through woods . . . in my books, I honor my father by writing about small living things."” Eric Carle

Introduction (15 minutes)
- Read Brown Bear, Brown Bear What do you see?
- Discuss the idea of Journey and things we see on walks
- Talk about textures and colors of things we see on walks
- Because we don’t have time for a Journey or walk, I’ve brought some of the outside in: water garden
- Discuss water garden, feel textures and notice colors, discuss things that might live there
- Is there a journey story in the bog garden?
- Discuss the ways that what we see can inspire stories
Demonstration and Workshop (30 minutes)
- Discuss and demonstrate ways that Eric Carle uses paint to create collage materials to illustrate his stories
- Ask participants to make their own collage materials inspired by colors and textures in the bog garden

Gallery Walk (15 minutes)
- While materials are drying, lead group through the Eric Carle exhibit.
- Discuss collage techniques of layers and overlapping as well as narrative and story-telling ideas

Discussion and Workshop (40 minutes)
Lead group back to classroom and discuss ideas for making a group collage. Possible ideas include:
- Tearing or cutting collage papers and other materials to create a variety of random shapes
- Tearing or cutting collage papers and other materials to create a variety of intentional shapes inspired by bog garden or Eric Carle exhibit
- Loosely arranging shapes to suggest elements from the bog garden story or Eric Carle exhibit
- Loosely arranging shapes based on color, texture, etc. and let the story follow
- Let individuals compose collage in a spontaneous way
- Discuss composition in groups beforehand and plan
Using results from discussion, tape collage elements to mural paper
As a group discuss final composition
- What images or associations are implied? (For young children, call on individuals or groups to brainstorm ideas. For example, Meghan, Meghan, what do you see?)
Write elements of narrative on whiteboard or Poster paper
As a group make final decisions about the Journey narrative in terms of setting, characters, and action
- Extension: Classroom teachers can extend lesson by working with group to expand and add details to story and illustrate with images from collage to make a class “Book” or print group story and allow students to illustrate individually.

Reflection (20 minutes)
Document collage and story and reflect on process
- What did you enjoy/struggle with in terms of material processes?
- What did you enjoy/struggle with in terms of ideas?
- How do you think this would work in your classroom?
- How can you adapt elements of this lesson to work in your classroom?

Materials List
- Brown Bear, Brown Bear or other Eric Carle journey book
- Tank with aquatic plants or other texture inspiring materials
- Magnifying glasses, sketchpads
• Assorted papers, opaque, translucent and textured
• Water based paint
• Brushes and non-traditional painting materials (sticks, leaves, pinecones, rocks, etc)
• Hair dryer
• Scissors
• White board or sticky notes for brainstorming
• Mural paper
• Duct tape