

Fall 2020



# TOWSLEY CHILDREN'S HOUSE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



Dear Families,

We have been absolutely delighted to welcome back staff, children, and families to the center! After several meetings with health practitioners, UM COVID Leadership team, UHR Work-Life program Leadership, and all 3 Children Center's Directors, Towsley Children's House reopened in July with lots of caution and creativity. We have updated our drop off procedures to include health screening, curbside drop off, and curbside pick-up.

We reopened with approximately 19 teachers and at 30% enrollment capacity. Center hours for July-August are 9:00-5:30. In our reopening part 2 in September, we will welcome back the remaining full time teachers and enrollment will increase to approximately 50% of our full capacity. September and moving forward, our hours will remain 9:00am-5:30pm.

Additional modifications to our operations that you can expect this year:

- Field trips have been limited to walking trips only. Busses will not be used until further notice.
- Center-wide family gatherings will not be held until further notice.
- Staff professional development will be web-based and self-paced with monthly focus topics.
- Staff meetings will be virtual.

For a review of pandemic procedures:  
[UM Children's Centers Reopening Policies](#)

[Welcome Back Families](#)

[Meals and Snack Guidelines](#)

This has been an unusual year and series of events and we thank you for your patience and flexibility. The children have transitioned well to their new rooms and classroom communities. Our pandemic procedures have proven to allow for engaging experiences for children while keeping everyone safe and healthy.

Sincerely,  
Beth Ann

UM Towsley Children's House Center Director  
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### IMPORTANT DATES:

- Center CLOSED— September 7th Labor Day Holiday
- Center CLOSED— Nov. 26 & 27 (Thanksgiving Holiday)
- Center CLOSED— Dec. 22 through Jan. 4 (Winter Break and Professional Development)

# Project Work



Birch children sharing their knowledge about bugs with Magnolia children



Sycamore had a parent expert come in to share about how he works from home during their Office Project



Ann Arbor Police visit Sassafra children as they gathered information during their Transportation Project

## **HOW WE ARE LEARNING: An Introduction to the Project Approach**

### ***What is the project approach?***

The project approach is a method of teaching in which an in-depth study of a particular topic is conducted by a child or a group of children.

### ***How is it different from other ways of learning?***

Our children study one topic for a long time period. The topic is selected partly because they were interested in it and it is meaningful to them and their lives. The children will go into great depth and often at a level higher than many adults would expect for this. The teacher integrates content knowledge like math, reading, and science into the project.

### ***How is a project planned?***

The children make many of their own plans with the teacher's help. Plans usually include an on-site visit and/or interviews with experts. An expert is anyone who knows a great deal about the topic of study.

### ***How will children learn?***

Children use a variety of resources to find answers to their questions. These include traditional resources like books. They also conduct in-depth investigations on site visits. The children plan questions for interviews and have assigned tasks for trips or for interviewing experts. They make field notes and draw or write on site. They make plans for building structures and play environments that will help them sort out what they are learning about the topic.

Children do their own problem solving with the teacher structuring problems and assisting in finding solutions and resources. Children will redraw and rewrite as their knowledge grows. Some of the ways that they will record their learning are project books, posters, murals, artwork, graphs, charts, constructions, and journals.

### ***How does the teacher know if children are learning?***

The teacher collects children's work, observes what they do, and analyzes their work. This is called documentation. The curriculum goals of the school or center are reviewed and documentation is planned to be sure that children are learning concepts and skills specified in the goals. Often a display will be prepared that shows what students are learning.

### ***Is this the only way these children are learning?***

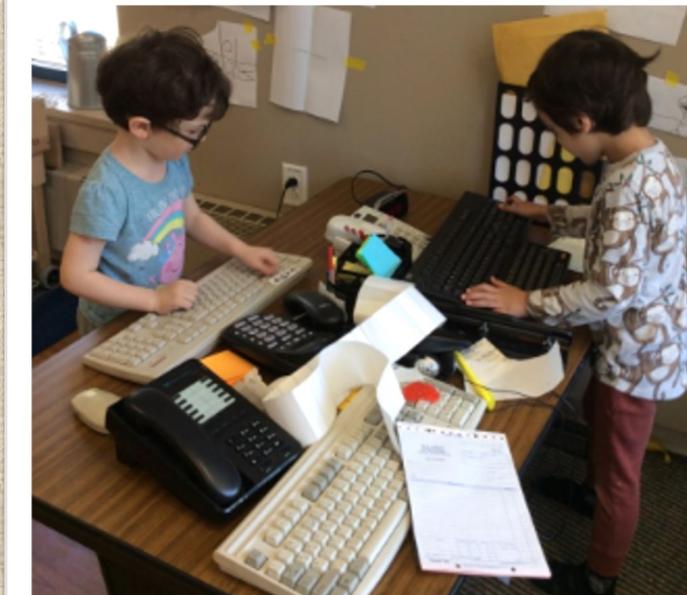
The project approach is one way among a variety of ways that children learn. The project integrates much of the same knowledge and skills presented in more formal ways in the classroom. Projects have the added advantage of providing an opportunity for children to apply and use what they are learning as they solve problems and share what they know. It provides opportunities for developing group skills such as working with others and challenges children to think, which supports brain development.

### ***How can others help with projects?***

Realize that children have their own questions and are learning to use you and many resources to find answers. Take their questions seriously, and listen to what they have to say. Provide space and opportunities for them to draw or photograph what they are studying. Children learn best when many senses are involved, so anything that they can touch, see up close, or hear is helpful. Things that can be borrowed for study in the classroom are valued and appreciated, especially parts of machines, tools, samples of products, and so forth. We hope you will follow up, view our documentation, and find out how children have processed what they have learned.

# Play

We believe play is essential to children's growth, development, and understanding of the world around them.



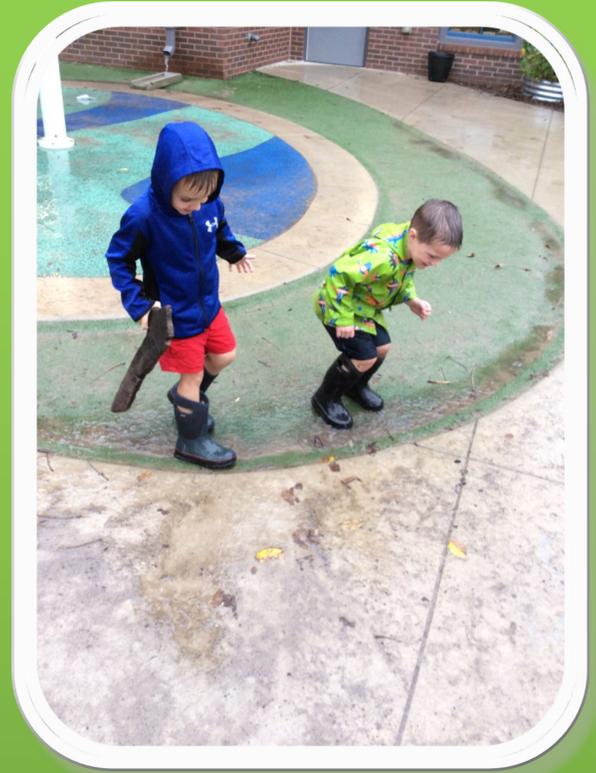
Play is the  
highest form  
of research

Albert Einstein



# Nature

We provide children with connections to nature to experience all of Earth's wonders.



## NATURE PLAY

TEACHES KIDS TO

CLIMB HIGHER — THINK CREATIVELY  
FIND THEIR OWN RHYTHM — EXPLORE  
IMAGINE — RELY ON THEIR SENSES  
ASSESS RISK — TEST THEIR BOUNDARIES  
USE THEIR OUTSIDE VOICE — OBSERVE  
NURTURE LIFE — RESOLVE CONFLICT  
CULTIVATE A SENSE OF PLACE & SELF  
IMPROVISE SOLUTIONS — FEEL FREE  
RECOGNIZE BEAUTY — COLLABORATE  
BE RESILIENT — REGULATE STRESS  
LEARN THROUGH PLAY — WONDER WHY  
GET MESSY — DEVELOP THEIR STRENGTH  
BUILD IMMUNITY — GAIN PERSPECTIVE  
**FEEL CONNECTED TO THE WILD**

WILDY CHILD | WWW.WILDYCHILD.COM

# Exploring Nature in our Community



Nichols Arboretum



East Quad Garden



Diag

# Creating Natural Play Spaces

An on-going project at Towsley Children's House is to transform the outdoor classroom into a more natural space. We want to provide children with a space where they have contact with plants, animals, water, sand, dirt, air and natural loose parts.

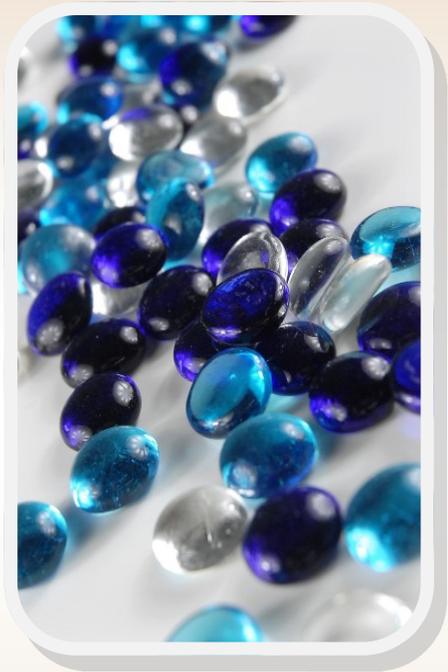




## Natural Loose Parts Wish List

*We could use your help gathering natural items for "Loose Part" play. If you come across these items while cleaning please donate them to Towsley.*

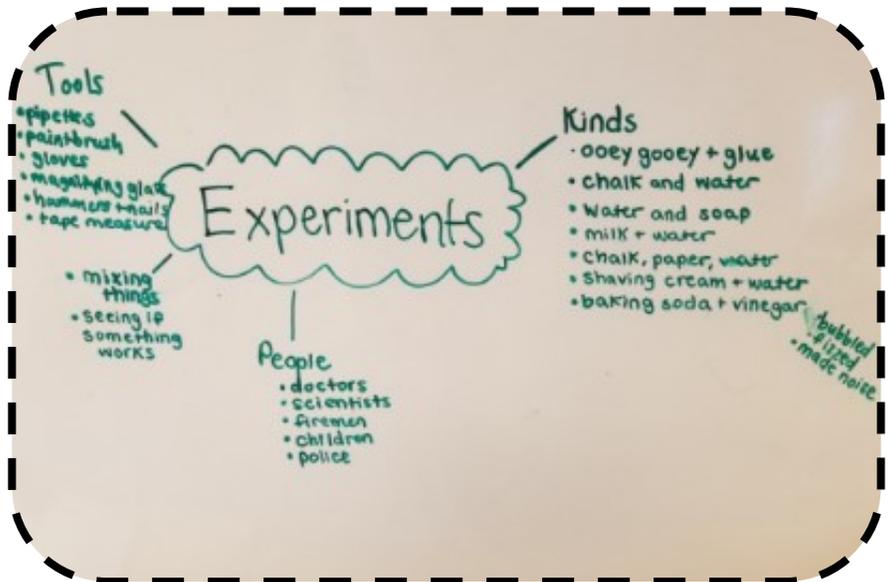
- ◆ Rocks (various sizes)
- ◆ Boulders
- ◆ Tree Cookies (see above picture – sliced branches/stumps)
- ◆ Tree stumps
- ◆ Pine cones
- ◆ Sea shells
- ◆ Pine needles
- ◆ Sticks/twigs
- ◆ Bamboo
- ◆ Seed Pods
- ◆ Glass gems





# Inquiry

We create an environment where children are encouraged to ask questions, investigate, collect information and represent their understanding.





*inquiry*  
“We learn more by looking  
for the answer to a question  
and not finding it than we do  
from learning the answer itself.”  
~Lloyd Alexander





## WHY ARE MY TEACHERS WEARING A MASK?

*Sometimes children ask us questions that are hard to answer — The link below will provide you with some useful tools to help you explain.*

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/why-are-people-wearing-masks-answering-your-childs-questions>



## Sunscreen Application

It is the family's responsibility to apply sunscreen to their child before s/he comes to school and provide permission for program staff to reapply sunscreen or sun block with UVB and UVA protection of SPF 15 or higher to exposed skin in the afternoon.

## Minimize Exposure

Suggestions for the minimizing of exposure to the sun include wearing hats, visors, shirts with sleeves, and long shorts or pants.





Calendar

2020 - 2021

First Official Day of School.....Monday, August 31

CLOSED – Labor Day Holiday.....Monday, September 7

October.....Parent Teacher Conferences throughout month

CLOSED - Thanksgiving Holiday .....Thursday-Friday, November 26-27

Last Day for Children (before Winter break) .....Monday, December 21

CLOSED Staff Professional Development.....Monday, January 4

THE CENTER WILL BE CLOSED FROM
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 22nd THROUGH MONDAY, JANUARY 4th
PLEASE ARRANGE ALTERNATE CHILDCARE FOR THIS TIME.

Children Return from Winter break .....Tuesday, January 5

CLOSED - Martin Luther King Jr. Day (Professional Development).....Monday, January 18

March.....Parent Teacher Conferences throughout month

CLOSED TO CHILDREN (Professional Development) .....Monday, May 3

CLOSED -Memorial Day Holiday.....Monday, May 31

CLOSED - Independence Day Holiday.....Monday, July 5

Last day of 2020-2021 school year .....Friday, August 20

CENTER CLOSED.....August 23-27

First day of 2021-2022 School year .....Monday, August 30

CLOSED - Labor Day Holiday.....Monday, September 6