

A STEAM-Rich Morning

Here's an example of activities that emerged one week when I placed mini pumpkins in the environment, both indoors and outdoors. There were a dozen assorted Jack-Be-Littles and small gourds that we harvested from the children's garden.

8:00 AM Free play time inside and outside: Children arrive and find pumpkins and gourds added to the reading area, dramatic play/kitchen area, block building area, and outside play area.

The children explored and experimented:

- Smelling, touching and feeling, holding, carrying, transporting from one area to another
- Stacking, rolling, and bouncing
- Counting, weighing, categorizing by size, shape, and texture
- Pumpkin store – selling them, fitting as many as possible into a purse, cupboard, and refrigerator.
- Storing them in yogurt containers – will the lid fit?
- Creating a mini-pumpkin catapult – we guided this one to continue this one outdoors!
- After exploration came questions - What's inside them? Do they sink or float? What are these squishy things – bruising.

10:00 AM Morning group: We took a moment to talk about those pumpkins and made sure to take notes. What do you know about pumpkins? What do you want to know about pumpkins? Do you have one at home? What do you do with your pumpkins at home? How many do pumpkins do you think there are? How are they alike or different? What did you do with them? What happened? What would you like to do with them? We watched a 3 minute video on pumpkins.

10:20 AM: We had to open one up to explore the innards using spoons and hands, using lots of vocabulary words to describe the contents and the feel of the pulp.

- Named the parts of a pumpkin (pulp, skin, ribs, stem, seeds)
- Children had clipboards and drew a picture of their pumpkin before opening – then drew a picture of what the insides looked like after opening.
- Carved a jack-o-lantern and took turns choosing shapes for the eyes, nose, and mouth.

10:30 AM: Then, a few children wanted to see if they floated – as seen in the video. They float! Then, they experimented with most of the other small toys in the environment to see if they also floated. They made predictions first and then placed the time in the water, then sorted them into float and sink piles.

11:00 AM Baking activity: What can we make with pumpkin? A friend made some awesome pumpkin cookies that were so easy.

Chocolate Pumpkin Brownies: 1 boxed devil's food cake mix, 1 can of pumpkin. Bake at 400 in a greased 9-inch square pan for 25 minutes. That's it!

5:00 PM Transition to home: Write down three things that we did today on a white board as conversations starters. This helps parents to avoid that dreaded response to the question that all parents ask, "what did you do today?" in which the response is always either "nothing" or "I don't know."

These STEAM activities all occurred before lunchtime and involved the following areas: Earth Science, Physics, Engineering, Technology, Art, and Math

