

AN EYE INTO OUR EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

A Study on the Sukkot Desert Scene

Dear parents, we are sharing with you the thinking the intent behind our educational approach. Thanks for expressing interest and encouraging us to communicate. Please send us feedback.



WE LEARN BY ADDING NEW KNOWLEDGE TO EXISTING KNOWLEDGE. If a lesson assumes a child's prior knowledge, and the child does not in fact have that prior knowledge, the rest of the information that follows will not be able to take root in the child's mind. The child will be able to repeat the new information, but not connect to it. (Think about it in your own learning experiences: Have you ever been offered new information without enough background to support it?)

With that in mind, as the Sukkot holiday approached, we studied about the desert before we began to tell the children the Sukkot story (which occurred in the desert). The children looked at photos of scorpions, touched prickly cacti, walked in sand, etc. The children interacted with a desert diorama that we made for them in the entry hall.

LESSONS MUST 'HAVE LEGS' - that is, there must be continuity to the units of study. Knowledge is continuous, ongoing, and builds upon itself.

Now that the Sukkot holiday is over, what should we do with the desert scene? The entry hall is a community space that highlights timely messages (autumn, upcoming Torah event, etc.). We knew we had to make room for the next message. Rather than just dismantle it, we asked the children whether they wanted to continue interacting with the desert. They are competent and have opinions!

The 3-year-old children wanted it to go into their classroom. They wanted to play and tell stories and relive their desert knowledge.

The pre-K/K children were given the opportunity to choose one element of the diorama to keep in their classroom. They chose the cactus plant. They chose an appropriate place to put it and will do some research to see how to properly care for it. After a discussion, the class agreed on a safe location for this plant. "We need to put it by the window so everyone can see it, and so no one will touch it because it is sharp."

INVITE VISITORS TO JOIN IN THE LEARNING - we are a learning community, everyone should be part of the process.

To call attention to this learning process, and to create intrigue, we posted a question on the 'site' of the diorama: "Where is the desert scene?" Here were some suggestions:

- "It is probably in the Sukkah display"
- "The birds probably ate it."
- "It went away. So-and-so and his friends took it away."
- "It is in our hearts and minds."



*At Zimmer, real learning happens...children construct their own knowledge, real knowledge, lasting knowledge.
Sincerely, Malkie*