


The Project Approach to Learning at

RisingOaks | Oak Creek Early Learning



Project Name:	Bears
Age Group:	Preschool 1 (2.5 yrs. – 4 yrs.)
Project Start Date:	January 6, 2023
Project End Date:	March 3, 2023



Background

Our bear project began January 6, 2023, and it concluded by March 3, 2023. The children in the preschool 1 room are aged between 2.5 to 4 years old. The educators in the preschool 1 room are Catherine, RECE, Erin, RECE, BA, and Manisha, RECE.

Phase 1: Beginning the Project

Our bear project began thanks to one of the children in the classroom. Promise learned to recite the book "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?" by Eric Carle/Bill Martin Jr. This book soon became a classroom favourite to read during our down time in the day. As we moved into the beginning stages of our project, we soon realized that bears became the forefront of our learning and exploration. As we dug deeper and asked the children what they knew about bears it became apparent that the children were interested in this as a potential project topic. We added more books about bears to our classroom and began to search kid friendly facts about bears.



Figure 1: Promise (3.8 years) reading the brown bear book that started off our project inspiration.

What Do We Know?

- “They eat fish” -Stark
- “Bears are brown” -Promise
- “Polar bears are white” -Promise
- “Bears are big” -Elijah

What Do We Want To Know?

- “How tall are they?” -Stark
- “How big are their paws?” -Promise
- “What do they eat?” -Ezra
- “How fast do they run?” -Elijah

Who Can We Ask?

- “Teachers” -Stark
- “iPad” -Educator Catherine
- “Bear experts” -Promise

Phase 2: Developing the Project



Figure 2, 3 and 4: We used our animal stones to create foot prints in play dough. We focused on bear prints to go along with our bear projected and the children noticed the sharp claws that bears have. We compared the bear prints to other animals like wolves, penguins, cheetahs, etc. Elijah (4.0 years), Charlotte (3.3 years) and Stark (4.1 years) are seen engaged in making the foot prints in the play dough.

We placed a polar bear, black bear, brown bear and brown baby bear on the table for the children to use as a reference for their first drawings. The children made sure to add the features of a bear like ears, mouth, nose, teeth and even fur!

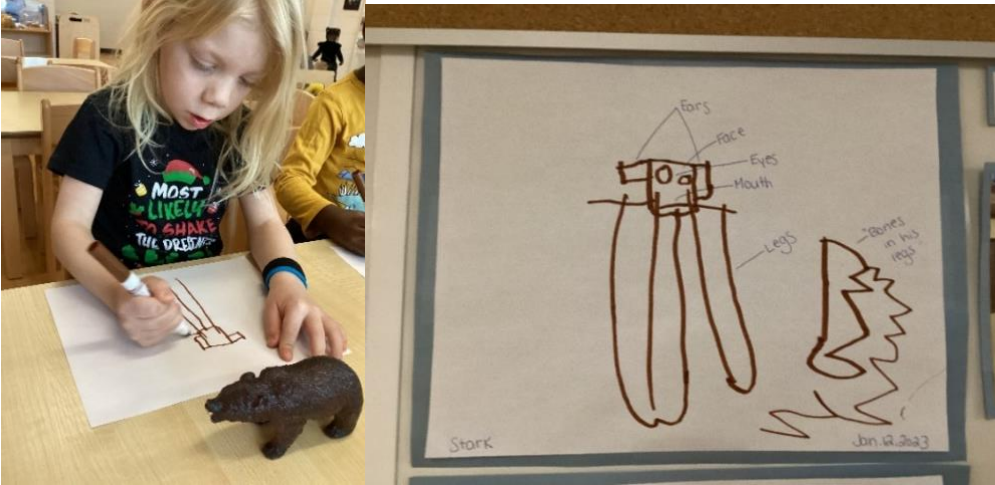


Figure 5 and 6: Stark (4.1 years) is working on his first drawing of bears.

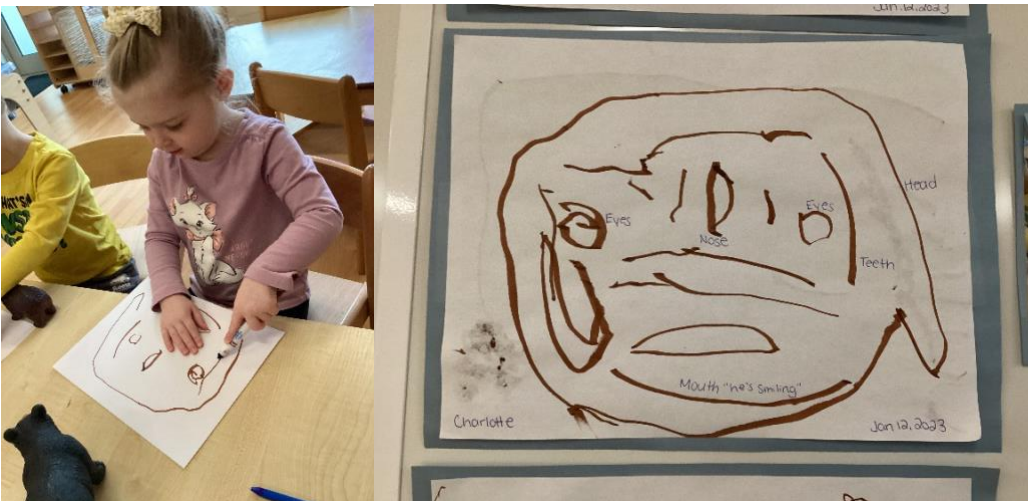


Figure 7 and 8: Charlotte (3.3 years) is working on her first drawing of bears.

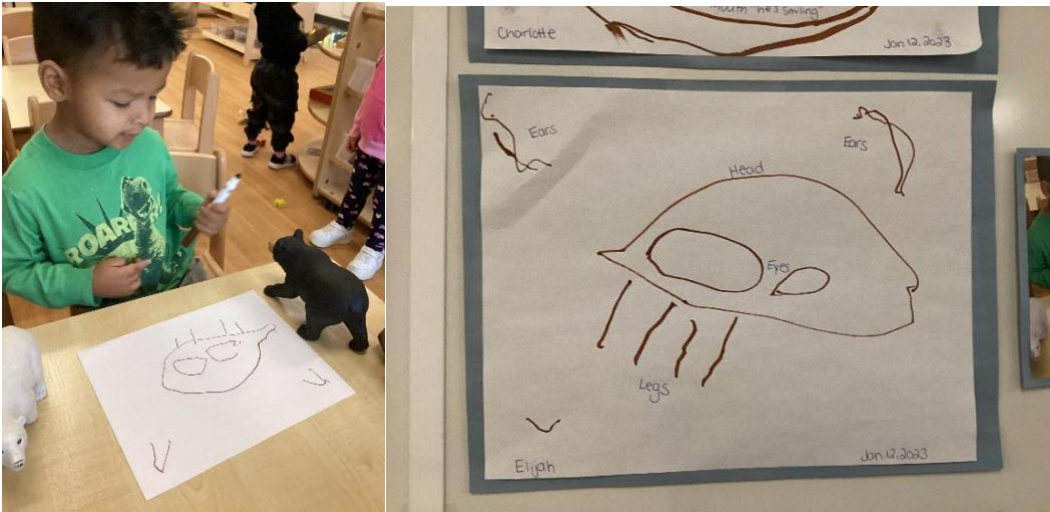


Figure 9 and 10: Elijah (4.0 years) is working on his first drawing of bears.

The children wanted to know what bear was the favourite in preschool 1, so we created our first survey. The children picked between brown bear, polar bear, and black bear. Each child was asked to pick their favourite bear. Together we counted up the total and we had a tie for first place with polar bear and black bear having seven votes each. Brown bear was a close second with five votes. We talked about how seven was a bigger number than five, which is how we determined the winner.



Figure 11, 12 and 13: Stark (4.1 years) went around the classroom asking the children to pick their favourite bear. Alice (2.6 years) is seen pointing to the brown bear for her vote.



Figure 14, 15 and 16: Through research we found out that a life-sized polar bear paw print measures 21 1/2 cm wide, and 25 1/2 cm long with 6 1/2 cm toes. Promise (3.8 years) and Elia (3.9 years) are seen measuring their feet against the size of a polar bear.



Figure 17 and 18: We watched an educational video about bears from Zoboomafoo for our bear project. We saw a four-month-old black bear cub explore its surroundings on the projector. We learnt that bears are natural swimmers and that mommy bears teach their cubs to forage which means looking for food. Bears can climb trees the best because of the way their feet are, using their sharp claws to hold onto the tree. We also learned about bears hibernating which was also called "winters sleep" or "long winters nap".

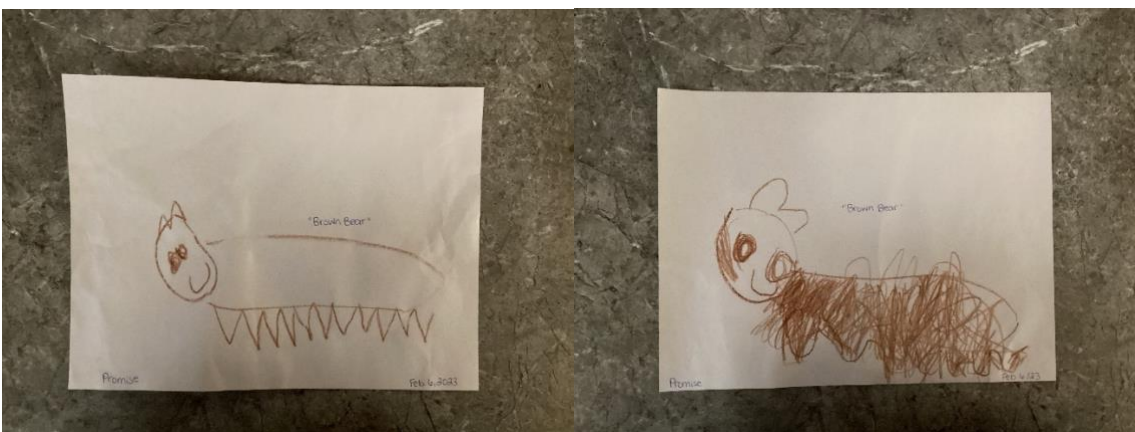


Figure 19 and 20: Promise (3.8 years) drew two different pictures of a brown bear during his free time. Promise emphasized the fur, by colouring in the second picture he drew as pictured above.



Figure 21, 22 and 23: Elijah (4.0 years), Charlotte (3.3 years) and Stark (4.1 years) pretended to crawl like a bear. With bear paws taped to the floor as a guide the children followed the path through the room enhancing their core and gross motor skills.




Figure 24, 25 and 26: When we were researching bears and what they eat, we found out that bears love fruit! We found out that bears are such fast eaters when it comes to eating fruit and plants that they just use their mouths and not their paws. Of course, we had to test this theory out and eat like bears! Charlie (4.1 years), Stark (4.1 years) and Ezra (3.7 years) are pictured above eating strawberries and blueberries with no hands only their mouths.

Was eating like a bear
easy or hard?

Easy	Hard
Stark	Wesley
Elia	Hanish
Charlie	Ezra
Promise	Elijah
Jessa	Shivansh
Naya	Natalia
(6)	(6)

Figure 27: For the children who participated in eating like a bear, they began to talk amongst themselves and if they thought it was an easy or hard task to do. Stark wanted to know what everyone thought so together we created a survey to find out the results. After taking everyone's vote we had a tie between easy and hard.

Bears of North America



	Gizzly Bear Brown Bear	Black Bear	Polar Bear
What is its name?	Gizzly Bear Brown Bear	Black Bear	Polar Bear
What colour is it?	brown silver tips	black cinnamon brown black	white
How big is it?	8-10 feet tall 400-1500 pounds	4-6 feet tall 250-400 pounds	8-10 feet tall 700-1500 pounds
What does it look like?	scoped nose hump on back	straight nose straight back	thick fur pale black skin blubber
What does it eat?	fish berries nuts plants	water honey fish nuts bugs	seals walrus fish
Where does it live?	forests mountains prairies	forests near rivers	Arctic on ice floes
Does it hibernate?	Yes	Yes	No

Figure 28: We have focused our research on the three main bears of North America being brown, black and polar bears. After answering the children's questions, we created a chart tracking our research for the questions we wanted to know about.

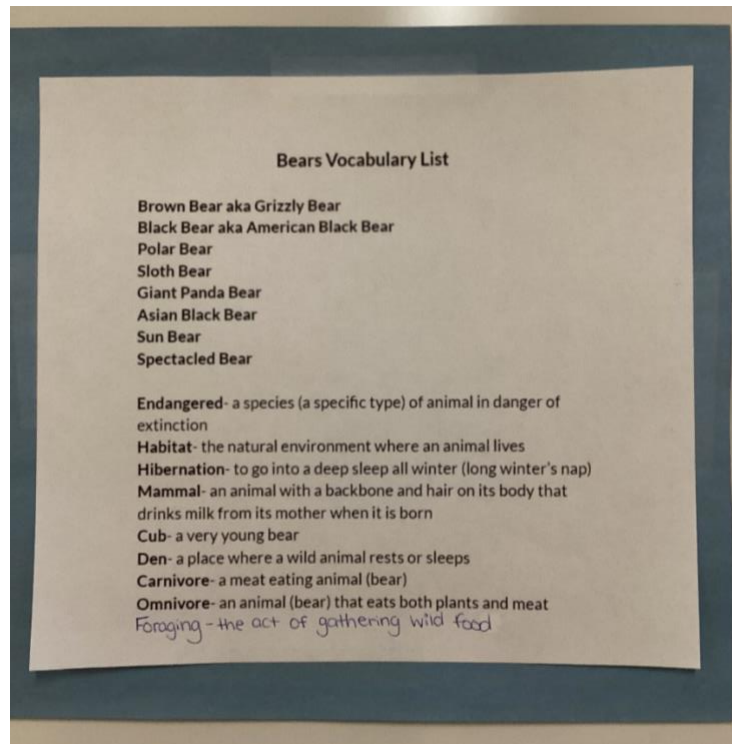


Figure 29: As a class we created a vocabulary list for our bear project. We listed all the bears we could find worldwide, along with other main words we have used while furthering our project.

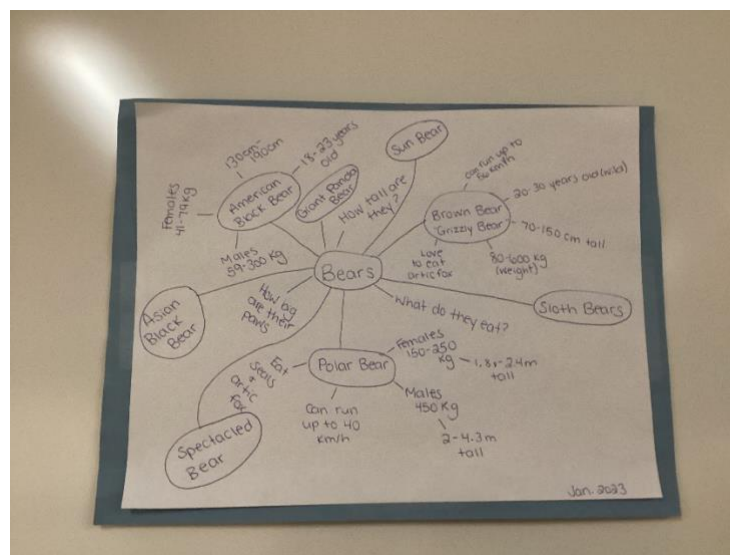


Figure 30: Our bear web chart we created for our project once we narrowed to the three main bears for North America.

The preschoolers worked on their second drawing of bears. We set up the table like we had done at the beginning of January by placing a polar bear, black bear, brown bear and brown baby bear on the table for the children to use as a reference. They worked hard on their drawings, making sure to add the features of a bear like ears, mouth, nose and legs!

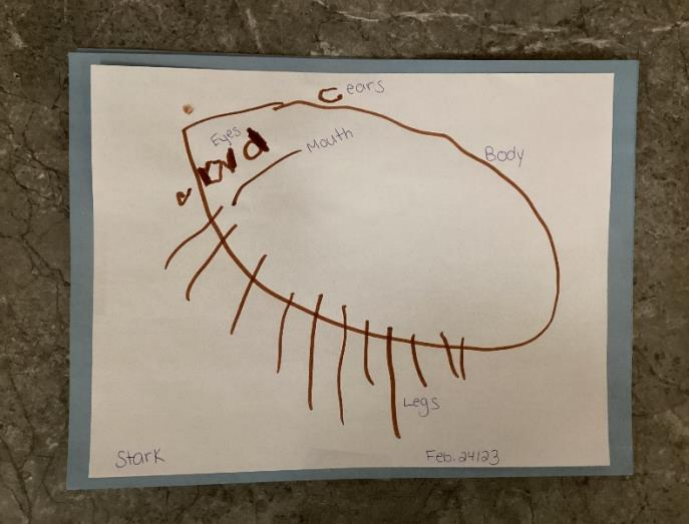


Figure 31 and 32: Stark (4.1 years) is working on his second drawing of bears.

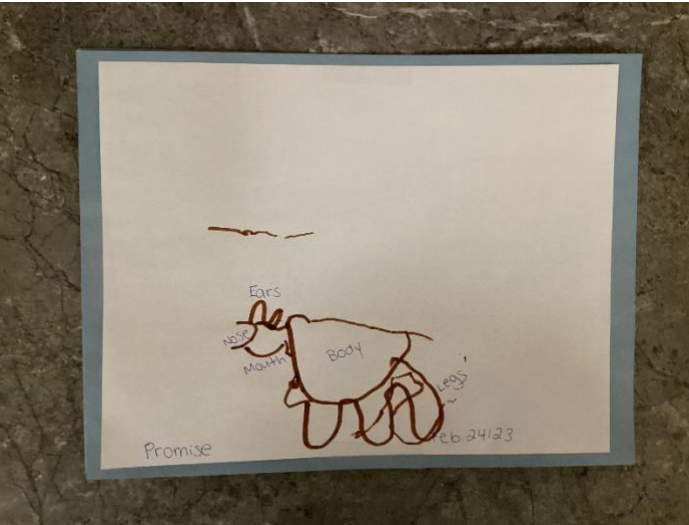


Figure 33 and 34: Promise (3.8 years) is working on his second drawing of bears.



Promise 35 and 36: Elijah (4.0 years) is working on his second drawing of bears.

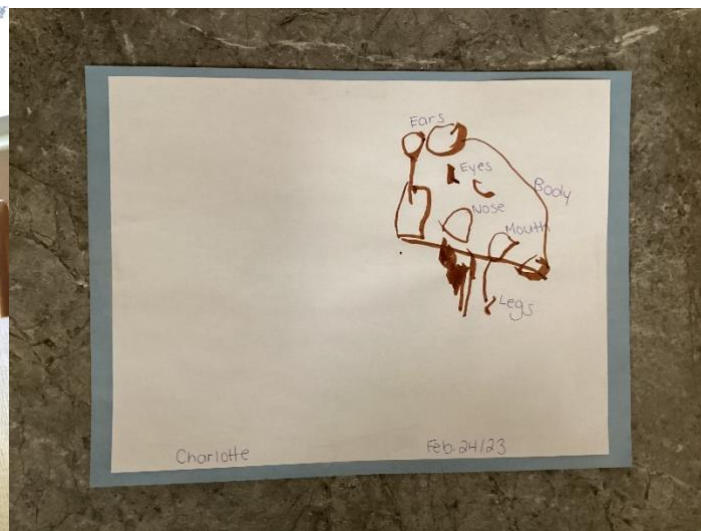


Figure 37 and 38: Charlotte (3.3 years) is working on her second drawing of bears.

We downloaded the Toronto Zoo On Thin Ice app, which allowed us to take photos with a life size polar bear. Some of the children were able to see the Polar bear stand up to see the size comparison.

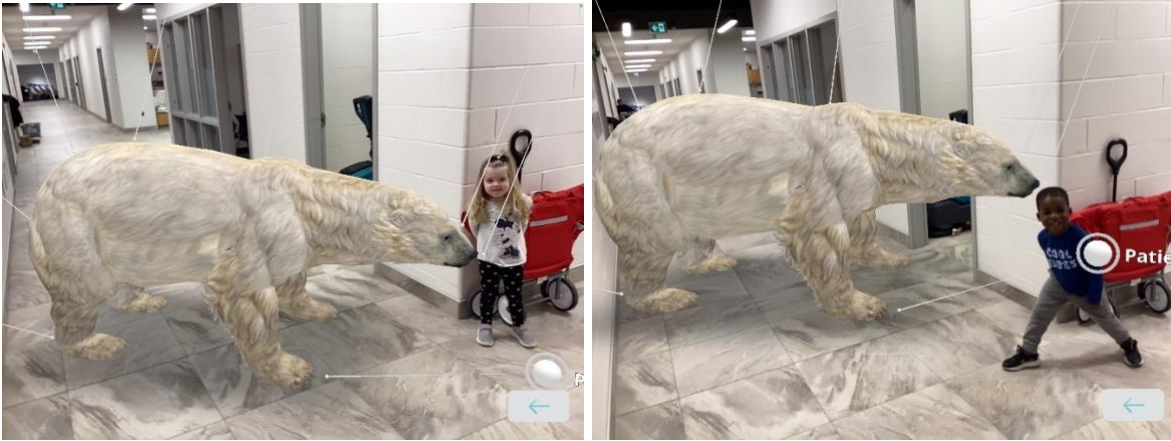


Figure 39 and 40: Charlotte (3.3 years) and Promise 3.8 years) are posing to see how tall they are compared to a polar bear.



Figure 41 and 42: Stark (4.1 years), Elia (3.9 years) and Shivansh (3.5 years) pose with the polar bear while it stands on it's hind legs.



Figure 43 and 44: Charlotte (3.3 years), Ezra (3.7 years) and Elia (3.9 years) enhanced their fine motor skills by cutting with scissors and colouring with crayons, which will be turned into bear head bands for our 3D model.



Figure 45, 46 and 47: Elia (3.9 years), Charlotte (3.3 years) and Promise (3.8 years) help educator Erin build a bear cave for our 3D model. They used blankets to make the cave nice and dark to give the children a visual on how dark bear caves can get.



Figure 48: Elia (3.9 years) and Promise (3.8 years) show off their new bear cave. Look at their expressions on their face!



Figure 49: (from left to right) Shivansh (3.5 years), Charlotte (3.3 years), Elia (3.9 years), Charlie (4.1 years), Promise (3.8 years) and Jessa (2.9 years) pose for a picture to show off their completed bear cave.

Phase 3: Concluding the Project

February 27 is International Polar Bear Day! We celebrate this day by having a private tour of the Polar Bear enclosure from the Toronto Zoo via Zoom. In preparation for our field study, we asked the children if there were any further questions that they wanted to know as we had answered all of our “What do we want to know” questions. We came up with seven more questions. We watched the bears walk and swim around the enclosure. Even though we couldn’t see them in person, this was the next best thing.



Figure: 50, 51, 52, 53 and 54: Pictures we took during our Zoom call with the Toronto Zoo.

Toronto Zoo Q&A

How do polar bears take a bath?

“Polar bears can clean themselves. They love water and don’t need soap and shampoo like us humans do.”

How fast do polar bears run?

(Is a polar bear faster than a cheetah)

“A polar bear is fast, but not as fast as a cheetah. They can run faster than a human for sure.”

What do you feed them at the zoo?

“Veggies and fruit are their main source of food. They love grass and plants in the summer time. Berries are also a go-to for the bears. Polar bears also love seals in the wild.”

How many bears are at the zoo?

“We have five polar bears. Three girls and two boys.”

What are their names?

“Nikita and Aurora are sisters. Aurora has had three babies and their names are Juno, Hudson and Humphrey.”

How old are they?

“Juno was born in 2015, which makes her seven. I am not sure about the other bears but Polar bears can live up to 20 years in captivity.”

Upon further discussion we found out that Aurora (mother of Hudson, Humphrey and Juno) and twin sister Nikita were born in 2000. Hudson was born October 11, 2011 at the Toronto Zoo. Humphrey was born November 9, 2013. Juno was born November 11, 2015.

What is the polar bear's favourite thing to do?

“Polar bears love water. They also play with these toys which are called enrichment toys. They look like barrels but inside is food for the bears. They have to play with the toys to get their food. We have some in the water but also on land too.”

The children used a shape sorted toy, thanks to the infant room, to put the right shape in the right slot. This activity was based off the enrichment toys we saw the polar bears using in the water and land earlier this week from our Zoom call. The children found it easy to put the shape in but the real trick was to try and get the shapes back out the way they put it inside. We explained that the polar bears have to manipulate their enrichment toys like this shape sorter to get their food out which keeps their brains active and helps them problem solve. Even polar bears have to problem solve just like us humans!



Figure 5 and, 56: Jessa (2.9 years) and Shivansh (3.5 years) use the shape sorter to try and put the shapes into the right slot.

Our final task to do before we wrapped up our bear project was to come up with a name for the polar bear we adopted. Even though we won't get to see the polar bear in person we became ambassadors to help the polar bears! Of course, we had to come up with a name so we took a vote! We would like to introduce you to Snowflake. Even though our bear project has officially come to an end, we believe bears will still be a forefront to our learning and exploration!



Figure 57: Our official certificate of adoption for our polar bear.