



Socks, socks, wonderful socks!

Owl - St Matthew: Toddler

Background

The toddlers became interested in socks during the month of February 2019 and ended at the end of June 2019. At the time the ages of the toddler group at Owl – St. Matthew was from 20 months to 32 months old. This project involved 16 children enrolled in the room and their 3 educators, Heather Bonnett-Culberson, RECE, Joanne Thorpe, RECE and Nadine Duimering RECE.

Phase 1: Beginning the Project

Initially the educators in the room observed the children pulling off their socks, examining them and even wearing them on different parts of their body (on their hands for example). They seemed very fascinated by their socks and by the other children's socks too. As the educators showed the toddlers how to place their socks back on their feet, their interest grew. This is when the educators decided to try some sock activities to see if socks continued to spark an interest for the children. As we started the project we continued to watch the children and asked some of the more verbal toddlers what they wanted to know about socks.

What do we know?	What do we want to know?	Who can we ask?
Socks go on your feet - "put on feet" – Avery and Brielle	How to make socks? Brielle	iPad
Shoes go on top – "shoes on" - Avery	How to put socks on? Sophia	Our Teachers
I wear them – Alexis pointed and looked at the socks on her feet	Why don't toddlers leave socks on? teachers	Children
There are two – "two" - Kaylynn	What can you put in a sock? Claire	Our Teachers
Socks belong to people – "Nathan's socks" - Nathan	Why don't my socks match? Stanley	Brittany (Stanley's Mom)
Socks look nice – "Nice" - Claire	What makes socks dirty? What are socks for?	Heather

Phase 2: Developing the Project

Sock Hunt

The toddlers love their socks! We decided to play a little sock hunt game. The children left the room and Joanne read them a story about socks while Heather hid one sock from each child around the room. The other sock stayed on their one foot. After the socks were hidden, the game was explained to the toddlers. “Look at your sock on your foot. You only have one now. The other is hiding in the room. Can you go and find your sock?” Heather asked the children. They went into the room and used their observation and detective skills to find the other half of their pair. “Where could your other sock be hiding?” Some found their match quickly, while others needed some hints or even help to find them. When their match was found they sat down and tried to put on their other sock. Many great attempts were made! A great lesson in independent dressing. They did their best to put on their sock, some needed a little help with this too. Each time they try, they learn a little bit more.



Ellie 2.5 years, finding her socks

First Drawing

Heather put three pairs of socks on the table and asked the toddlers to describe them. “Green,” said Claire. “Blue socks,” said Sam. “Cupcakes,” said Lexi. Heather gave each toddler a piece of paper and crayons. “See if you can draw a sock. You can draw a sock that looks like one of the socks on the table or draw whatever colour sock you want,” said Heather. The toddlers used different colours of crayons and made their first sock drawing. When they were finished, the toddlers showed Heather where the sock was and she labeled their drawing.



Painting our feet to look like socks and walking on paper

In the past the toddler group has enjoyed body painting activities. We decided to apply the same idea to a sock painting activity. Several colours of paint were made available to the toddlers on the floor. Each toddler, one at a time, was given a large sheet of paper, paint brushes and a choice of paint colours. Each toddler removed their pants, socks and shoes and then was asked if they would like to paint socks on their feet. "Which colour would you like to paint your feet with?" They chose their colour. Some chose to use just one or two colours, others used an entire rainbow of colours! As they applied the



paint to their feet some of the colours mixed to make new colours. As the children painted, the socks on their feet turned into knee high socks and some almost covered their entire feet and legs. It became a sensory activity and each child was proud of their finished "socks". After painting they used the paper to walk around on in their new "socks" and leave tracks on the paper. "Look at your foot prints! Do you see the colour your socks made on the paper?" Heather asked.

Examining patterns and colours on our socks

During group time on the carpet, the toddlers sat down and took their shoes off, so did educator Heather. Wow, everyone's socks were so different! So many colours and patterns. We were all intrigued and needed to take a closer look. When everyone looked at Heather's feet they saw very plain socks, but no one knew the colour. They were grey! When Ellie came up in front of her friends they saw red poke a dots on both her socks; matching socks with patterns. When we closely looked at Silas' feet we could see white, black and red stripes alternating in a pattern. The toddlers knew some of the colours like red, blue and green on their friend's socks, but when they looked at some of the socks they also saw different pictures and patterns. Heather sat Sophia on her lap. What colour of socks was she wearing? "Pink!" The toddlers knew this answer right away. Then Heather helped Sophia turn to the side to show everyone the picture on her sock too; both socks had pretty fairies. We tried to make sure to see all the neat things on everyone's socks. During this we figured out that Stanley also had a striped pattern and that Alexis socks matched Heather's grey socks.



Claire 2 years, showing her colourful tie dyed socks



A few toddlers examining Mya, 2 years, rainbow patterned socks

Washing socks

"How do socks get clean?"

"We wash them!"

Socks can get washed in the washing machine with soap and water, but we washed ours in the sensory bin by hand. Using a variety of sock sizes and designs, a bin of soapy water and one with clean water plus a board to be our washing board, the children got started. Brielle and Claire each took a sock and then swirled them into the soapy water. As Claire continued to wash her sock a determined look crept across her face, "I do it" she said. Then she looked at the sock, "dirty (sock)". Brielle continued to wash her socks in the soapy water, then she worked hard to rinse them in the clear water and used the board after to hang the socks up. As she hung them there she did her best

to match them in pairs. Nathan enjoyed washing the socks but became distracted by all the bubbles. He smiled, “too much bubbles.” Sophia noticed the colours of the different socks “They are green.” When Avery approached the bin with socks she looked inside and pointed to a sock, “is yucky!” she observed.



Claire 2 years, and Brielle 2.5 years washing out socks together



Making socks with material swatches

Many things interested the toddlers in socks. The colour and learning about the types of fabric that can make a sock were both areas that the toddlers wanted to learn more about. We started our giant fabric sock by first sorting and touching types of fabric. We had a large bag of donated fabric scraps. Using these scraps, we pulled them out and examined which we liked and wanted to become part of our sock. “Do you like this soft pink piece of fabric?” Heather asked the toddlers about this piece and many others. They took turns touching the fabric and if any of them liked the piece it was cut and added into a bin for the sock. The following day when the fabric had been sorted we cut out a giant bristle board sock, then a couple toddlers at a time applied glue to the sock and added fabric of their choosing to it. This continued until all toddlers that wanted to participate in the activity had a turn and the sock was full of a variety of colours and textures. Nathan made sure to use every orange piece of fabric he could find. “Orange is my favourite!”



Stuffing a sock to make a riding horse



Nathan, 2.5 years, taking a ride on the sock horse

We used an adult size sock to create a sock riding horse. The children helped to stuff the sock with material pieces. Sam was really excited to help. He came over with a big smile and said, “I help.” After stuffing the sock, we attached a stick with an elastic to hold it together. Later on a teacher used hot glue to attach buttons on for eyes and yarn on for hair. After the sock horse was complete, the children were able to take turns riding the sock horse to the song, “galloping horses.” Sophia really enjoyed pretending to gallop and ride the horse. Maya enjoyed singing to the song. It was a great opportunity to be creative with socks. We used our gross motor skills, our fine motor skills, our social skills, our turn taking skills and our creativity skills.

Matching paper socks

Joanne cut out sock shapes from some interesting scrapbook paper. Then she put the different socks out on the table and asked the toddlers to find the two socks that matched for each pattern. Nathan tried simply matching any two socks. Joanne showed him how there were two of each design on the table and asked him to match the designs. “Oh, ok” said Nathan. Then he matched all the socks without any help. Ellie, Brielle, Claire, Jane and Avery watched Nathan and took turns matching when Nathan was finished. The girls wanted to help one another find the match, but Joanne asked them to let each friend try to do it on their own. “If she needs our help, she will ask”, said Joanne. The toddlers used pattern matching and fine motor skills to match the socks and practiced patience while waiting for their turn. After everyone had a turn matching, we took the socks and hung them on a clothes line over our pretend fireplace on the bulletin board.



Nathan 2.5 years and Ellie 2.5 years, matching patterned socks

Putting on socks

The toddlers started their interest and the project by pulling off their socks to play with. Some would attempt to put them back on, others tried to find a different spot for them. This made for a great opportunity to use this interest as a way to gain a new independent skill, putting socks back on. As the toddlers would pull off their socks the educators would encourage them to pull them back on. “you can do it! Try to pull it up.” When we played sock games during the project that involved taking them off, then part of the game was to pull them back up. Through this project and with practice some of

the toddlers gained this skill, while other have made steps toward being able to put their own socks on. This made many proud, capable and independent toddlers!



Claire 2 years, practicing putting on her socks

Sock show and tell and singing about socks

“Look at Lucas’ superhero socks, look at Lucas’ superhero socks! Stand up, turn around, take a bow and then sit down...”

This song was sung for each child that wanted to show off their special socks. Sometimes it was used in a spontaneous way and one time we sent out an invitation to the families for the children to wear a special pair of socks for a sock show and tell day. The toddlers were proud to show everyone their special socks and then do a dance as we sang the show and share song to them.



The day we wore two different socks in honour of Downs Syndrome awareness day

A note was sent by email to all of the families the day before to make them aware of World Down Syndrome day. Each family was asked if their child could come wearing two different socks to honour this special day. During the day we looked at our mismatched socks and made observations about them. The toddlers were told that we wear the mismatched socks because everyone is different and special.



Tie dye socks

The toddlers love identifying the colours of the socks they wear. They enjoy learning colour names and every time we sang a special song about their socks they enjoyed showing them to off. So when invited to participate in tie dying a pair of their own socks the toddlers could hardly wait to help! Each child had a turn to choose what colours they wanted to use (yellow, orange, blue and purple). They chose how they wanted to have their socks tied with elastics to make different patterns. (straight, twisted or spiral).

Once the children chose their colour and the elastics were all tied on, the socks were placed into a basin. The child then picked their first colour to start dying their socks with. Brielle knew what colours she wanted as she requested both “purple and yellow”, Mya said “yah” when asked if she would like to use the blue dye and Sophia shouted with excitement “yellow!” for her first colour choice. Each child squeezed the dye from the bottles onto the fabric to begin the dying process. Some used lots of colours while other toddlers preferred just a couple. Nathan was happy to find that orange was one of the colour choices. He used lots of orange and then added a bit of yellow onto his socks. We could see the dye turning the socks very deep colours. After everyone completed the socks they were wrapped in plastic wrap and then rinsed and washed the next day. The colours were no longer super dark and instead when the toddlers helped reveal the finished socks they were pleased with the swirls of lighter colours found on the fabric.

Everyone was excited to test out their new socks after they were washed and dried. They started pulling off their own socks and trying to pull on the new tie dyed socks. After they were on, they danced around the room in their new tie-dyed socks!



Claire (2 years) tie dying socks



Brielle (2.5 years) holding her finished tie dye socks



A few finished pairs of tie dye socks

Sock cookies with Emily



We began with the toddlers joining both Emily (student teacher) and Heather around the table. We followed a sugar cookie recipe to make the dough for the sock cookies. The toddlers took turns assisting in measuring, pouring and mixing in the ingredients. Nathan even helped crack an egg using the hand over hand technique with Heather. When the dough was finished it was formed into a ball and put to chill in the fridge. Later, Emily returned with the ball of dough. The toddlers again were excited to join her at the table and help use a rolling pin and sock shaped cookie cutters to cut out the sock cookies.

Each child was given a cookie, icing paint and some small paintbrushes. Brielle painted her cookie mostly red, blue and a little green. She concentrated on the cookie as she slid the paintbrush across it to cover its full surface. Claire liked using the green icing and attempted painting lines on her sock cookie, then she filled in the gaps with more green! Everyone chose their own colours and technique to decorate their cookie. It was a little challenging for the toddlers to paint on dough, some of the cookies crumbled a bit but when that happened the child was ready to try again. It was exciting as well, dough provided a new medium to paint on instead of paper. After the cookies were baked the toddlers ate up their art at snack time. Edible art! Yum!

Getting the frozen socks out of the ice

The toddlers really enjoy water and sensory play, so we wanted to incorporate that into our sock project as much as we could. One way that we did this was by placing a sock in a container of water

and then placing that container in the freezer to see what would happen. Brielle said, “it will get wet.” Ellie said, “it will clean the sock.” Avery said, “it will make the sock dirty.” The next day when we took the container out of the freezer the sock was inside a giant ice cube. We brought the sock into the class and let the children experiment with the frozen ice block. Nathan was excited to look at the sock. He touched it and mentioned how cold the ice was. As the ice was in the classroom it started to turn into water. Lucas was really excited; he enjoys water play. He kept playing with the ice and soon it had all melted and the sock was wet and cold. We talked about how water turns into ice when it is really cold and how ice turns into water when it is warm. It was neat to see the children’s faces as the ice turned into water.



Sock bunny

The toddlers love their stuffed animals so we thought it might be fun to make our own out of socks. Each toddler was given a white sock. There were pompoms, elastics, ribbon and fabric markers on the table. There was also a big bag of rice, a cup and a funnel. “What are we doing?” asked Ellie. “We are going to make a bunny,” said Joanne. The children scooped the rice and poured it into the sock while Joanne held it open. When it looked like we had enough, the children chose an elastic and some ribbon. Joanne used the elastics to create the head of the bunny. The children helped cut ribbon to use on the ears. Using another pair of scissors, the children helped cut the sock ears so they would flop over. Then with a little help, they made black dots for the eyes and a pink nose. We tied the ribbon on the ears and moved to the counter. It was time to put on the tail. With help from Joanne, the toddlers used the glue gun for the first time. The toddlers put a dab of glue on the back of the bunny where they thought the tail should go. “No touch”, said Ellie. “That’s right. Let’s just put the pompom on the glue. Easy does it”, said Joanne. Some of the children even put their bunnies on their beds at sleep time. All the bunnies went home that night.



Joanne and Ellie (2.5 years) gluing buttons onto the sock bunny



Sam (2 years) playing with his new sock bunny

Sock puppets

The teachers noticed that the children liked to take off their socks at sleep time and put them on their hands. Sometimes they pretended they were mittens but most times they used them as puppets. So we handed out socks and fabric markers one day and invited the toddlers to create their very own sock puppet. The toddlers made lines, squiggles and dots all over the socks. We used different colours of yarn for the hair and different colours of pony beads for the eyes. Joanne put all the sock puppets in separate bags, took them home and sewed on the hair and the eyes. When Joanne brought all the puppets back, the toddlers were so excited. “Where’s my puppet?” asked Nathan. Everyone sat on the carpet and waited for their sock puppet. We put them on and sang songs with our puppets. “My puppet is a good singer,” said Avery. “Me, too,” said Jane. Lucas thought his puppet tasted pretty good. Stanley liked his puppet so much, he took it home and it went to bed with him.



Paint socks with taped stripes

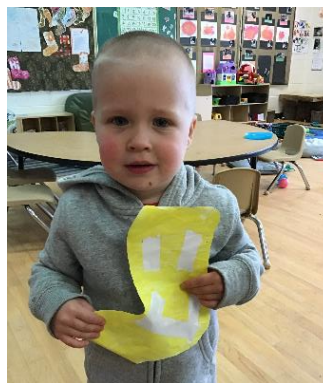
One day, Joanne came in with big cardboard socks. The toddlers were invited over to help put strips of masking tape on the white cardboard socks. Then each toddler chose a paint colour to use on their sock. Some painted with brushes, some used their hands and some even used their elbows to cover their sock with paint. We put the socks on the drying rack for the morning. “What do you think will happen if we take the tape off your socks?” asked Joanne. “On no!” said Silas. “Don’t rip it,” said Claire. “We will be careful,” said Joanne. As the tape peeled away, the toddlers began to see that where the tape was removed, there wasn’t any paint. “Pretty,” said Lexi. Even if more than one toddler chose the same paint colour, everyone had a different sock based on the design of the tape. “Every sock is different, just like all of you,” said Joanne.



Brielle (2.5 years) painting a paper sock using her hands



Silas (2.5 year), using his whole arm including his elbow to paint his paper sock



Silas showing what his sock looks like after the tape is removed

Sock expert and Final drawing

We tried to watch a video about making socks but the toddlers were not very interested. So, Joanne offered to bring in a variety of socks from both her and her husband's collection to show the toddlers. Heather offered knitted socks and Nadine brought in different kinds of sport socks to add to the collection. Joanne sat with the children and showed them different patterns, textures, colours, sizes and styles of socks. We passed the socks around so everyone could examine the socks up close. We learned why soccer socks are so long, learned about the socks that go with an Oktoberfest costume, when to wear short socks and why people wear stockings. The children picked their favourite pairs and shared what they liked. "These are soft," said Avery as she held the blue socks. "I see orange," said Nathan. "Those are silly," said Brielle when she saw the stockings.

The toddlers were invited to pick a sock that they wanted to draw. When everyone had a sock, Joanne gave them paper and markers. Claire, Sam and Brielle chose markers that matched the colour of the socks. Avery put the sock on her hand and used it to hold the marker as she drew her sock picture. After their drawing was finished, the toddlers held up their sock and sock drawing for a picture. We talked about what was different and what was the same when looking at their drawing and the sock.



Claire (2 years), Nathan (2.5 years) & Mya (23 months), examining the different socks Joanne brought in



Joanne showing the group a variety of socks



Mya (23 months) and Brielle (2.5 years) working on their final sock drawing

Books

The children enjoyed listening to and looking at our sock books throughout the project. We used “A pair of socks” for all our matching sock days. The toddlers liked the colours and designs of the socks and enjoyed taking turns pointing out the matching socks. The Robert Munsch book was not a favourite as it was a little long and wordy for toddlers. “Fox’s socks” has flaps that lift to reveal the things Fox is looking for so it was another favourite book. Dr. Seuss’s book was also little bit too wordy for the toddlers but they did like the colourful pictures. The favourite book was “Five Stinky Socks”. Nothing makes a toddler laugh more than a word like “stinky”. We still read about those stinky socks every week.



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Matching our own socks and The Sock Toss

We began wrapping up our sock project with an activity that the toddlers loved – taking off their socks. The toddlers were asked to take off their socks and go play for a few minutes. While they were playing, Joanne laid the socks out on the floor randomly. The children came back to the carpet and sat in a circle around the socks. “When I call your name, please find your two socks – just your socks. When you find them bring them to me and go back to the circle and sit down,” said Joanne.

It was so hard to wait for their turn, especially when they could see their two socks. It was also hard not to pick up a friend’s socks but we did it. “I found mine,” yelled Nathan. When everyone had their socks, Joanne asked them to identify their own socks rolled up in a ball. Then each child took their balled up socks and tried to toss them into a plastic bin. When someone got the sock in the watching toddlers cheered. We finished our morning by sitting down and putting on our socks and shoes. Well done, toddlers!



Brielle (2.5 years) holding up her pair of socks



Sloane (2 years) throwing her matched pair of socks into the bucket

Phase 3: Concluding the Project

To end the sock project, we thought it would be appropriate to have a Sock Hop! Not only do the children love socks, learning about them and taking them off, but they also love to dance! We informed the parents and the toddlers came dressed and ready in their sock hop clothes, including of course a great pair of socks. We had a great time ending the project. First we sat down and looked at all of our colourful socks. Each toddler received a turn to stand up, show everyone their socks and do a dance as we sang for their fun socks. We had a special frozen yogurt popsicle snack as our party treat too. Then lights went out and it was time for our sock hop! We had colourful disco lights gliding all over the ceiling and wall, the music was some rocking oldies and all the toddlers started to move on the dance floor. We tried new moves, showed off favourite poses and danced with friends.



Sloane (2 years) during the glow in the dark sock hop



Ellie (2.5 years) dancing at the sock hop



Brielle (2.5 years) and Mya (2 years) dancing together at the sock hop party



Joanne and Nadine assisting the toddlers with a limbo game at the sock hop



Mya having a frozen yogurt pop at the sock hop party

Teacher Reflections

What would I learn during a sock project with toddlers? I already knew enough about socks, so this wasn't as much of a co-learning opportunity, instead I found I learned more about the capabilities and determination of the toddlers in the group. They developed a love for socks and wanted to know more about them and they too found out more about what they could do when they tried a new skill. I watched how they would encourage each other to be independent when attempting to pull on socks (sometimes a difficult task for the 18month to 2.5 year old age group) in a group activity. I watched a quieter child that typically was more reluctant to preform self-help / dressing skills watch those around him and wanted to try too. Trying is key. Wanting to and being determined to do something is key. These are not only great qualities to have to make an attempt to pull on a sock or dress yourself, but these are wonderful qualities to begin to build on at this age and amazing qualities to have to be successful in the future. I observed toddlers grow as independent, capable people.

Heather Bonnett-Culberson, RECE

When Nadine and I went for our Project Approach training, we used socks as our project focus. We had so much fun, we thought maybe the toddlers would enjoy a sock project, too. I knew the children loved exploring the socks but I didn't realize we would keep their interest for so long and find so many ways to have fun with socks. The toddlers became very attached to their sock creations like the sock puppet, the sock bunny, the tie dye socks and their sock art. Working with socks also helped develop their colour and pattern identification skills, fine motor skills and matching skills. They explored fabric crayons, sewing and hot gluing for the first time. Socks took on different forms, textures and colours. I was amazed at their ability to match sock patterns and colours. We continued to explored matching after the project with a variety of matching games. It was also interesting to see the growth in self-help skills that began with putting on a pair of socks and continued with jackets, hats and shoes. The toddlers expanded their interest in socks while developing independence, patience, fine motor and numeracy skills. Who knew socks could do all that?

Joanne Thorpe, RECE

In the cooler seasons the toddlers would often take their socks off multiple times a day, so we thought why not turn this into many opportunities on how to teach the children self-help skills and fine motor skills by teaching them how to put on their own socks. We would sing songs as we put the socks back on their feet or we would turn the sock into a puppet to help soothe an upset child. We would use fun socks and patterns to help encourage the children to keep their socks on, especially on cold winter days. Eventually it became our sock project. The teachers in the room worked together and collaborated with excitement realizing all the fun things that we can do with socks. This project helped bring all of us together, the children and the teachers. There were so many different skills and strategies to be taught and by incorporating socks as the main focus it helped everyone to work together. The children were soon helping each other put on their socks for one another. It was a great way to bring everyone closer together while learning many new skills for our future.

Nadine Duimering, RECE