Community Project Time

The goal of community project time is to foster the development of the *Soft Skills**: collaboration, communication, content, critical thinking, creative innovation, and confidence (Golinkoff and Hirsh-Passek). Community time is a child-driven class period where learners are encouraged to express an interest and formulate a plan to follow that interest. Teachers purposefully step back in order to allow learners the opportunity to solve problems and experience authentic mentorship and apprenticeship.

Learning of content occurs in many more ways than by reading or writing. According to Gopnik and Bennett, the central tension of cognitive development in childhood is that between exploring and exploiting. Self-directed learning often looks like frenzied, messy, even chaotic exploration, followed by a narrowing of focus and a deepening of understanding. For children in the pre-operational stage (Piaget) especially, but not only, the use of physical materials (blocks, clay, writing) is a way to engage in higher order thinking.

*Soft skills include adaptability, autonomy, communication, creativity, cultural sensitivity, empathy, higher order thinking, integrity, playfulness, positive attitude, professionalism, resilience, self-control, self-motivation, social skills, teamwork skills, responsibility, leadership, learning to learn skills, persuasiveness, organization, initiative, character, goal orientation, and so forth. In *Becoming Brilliant*, Golinkoff and Hirsh-Passek boil these down to six key interrelated skills that develop recursively: Collaboration, Communication, Content, Critical Thinking, Creative Innovation, and Confidence.

Community Project Time: Quail, Snow Goose, and Merganser

Looks like . . . Sounds like . . .	Community Project Time: Goals and Objectives
engagement collaboration excitement kids exploring their own original ideas multi-age kid voices not teacher voices problem solving mentorship & apprenticeship playing working creating deliberations chatting on the couch connection authentic connections sometimes a quiet activity free choice a child finding space intentionally collaborative tapping into an inner drive time to make ideas happen thoughtful and intentional exuberance creative energy kids as leaders	• Our most student-directed and multi-age time of the day. • Develops ***collaboration, creativity, communication, critical thinking, content, and confidence.*** • Provides space for creative and student-directed innovation and allows kids have time to pursue their interests, often in collaboration with other children. • Provides multiple access points into the content. • Honors all modalities of engagement: art, science, dramatic play, building, writing, and social interaction. • Allows children to build relations with peers, experience friction, and puzzle out their role within community. • Allows learners to follow an idea over a longer period of time – an idea can come up year after year. • Provides time for play, the highest form of creativity.

Resources:

Becoming Brilliant: What Science Tells Us About Raising Successful Children, by Roberta Michnick Golinkoff, PhD and Kathy Hirsh-Passek, PhD.

The Gardener and the Carpenter: What the New Science of Child Development Tells Us About the Relationship Between Parents and Children, by Alison Gopnik and Erin Bennett.

The Self-Driven Child: The Science and Sense of Giving Your Kids More Control Over Their Lives, by William Stixrud, PhD and Ned Johnson.

Piaget's Theory of Intellectual Development – 3rd Edition, by Herbert P. Ginsburg and Sylvia Opper.

The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Experience in Transformation, 3rd Edition, Edited by Carolyn Edwards, Lella Gandini, and George Forman.