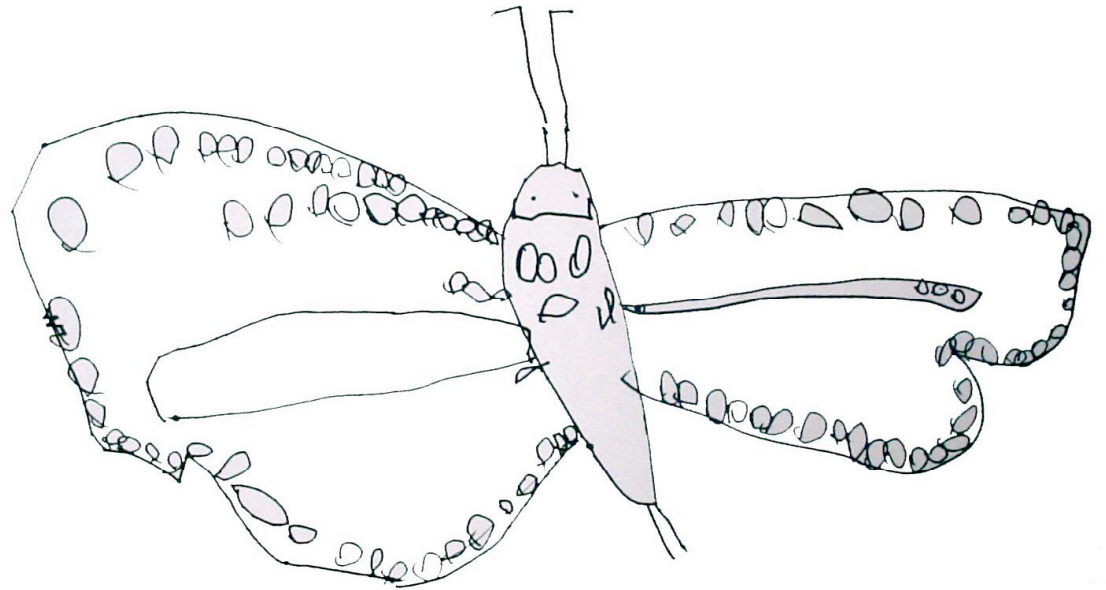


Transformations: Butterflies and Children



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The teachers are interested in a project that will initiate learner engagement, conversation and community-building at the beginning of the school year. They observe:

- During Welcome Meetings with their families and teachers, some children express interest in butterflies and caterpillars.
- Our educational assistant finds and brings a cecropia moth caterpillar to school.
- During the first days of school, the cecropia caterpillar pupates. The children observe this process of spinning a cocoon. The cecropia will remain inside the cocoon all winter, emerging in the spring.



“Does it have skin in there?”



In order to continue to build on this interest in butterflies, while the cecropia is dormant, we introduce Monarch butterfly eggs.

From the beginning, the children gather in small groups to study and share ideas about these creatures.

Teachers introduce drawing tools, observation tools and books to support the children's study. These tools for representation are new to the children, but they appropriate them easily.



“They are much bigger.”

“They are really growing.”

“The caterpillars are longer.”

“They are getting fat.”

“They are eating and eating and eating.”

“I can see their poops.”

“Their poop is bigger.”

“There is lots of poop. Why is there so much poop?”

“Because they eat lots of leaves and then they poop.”





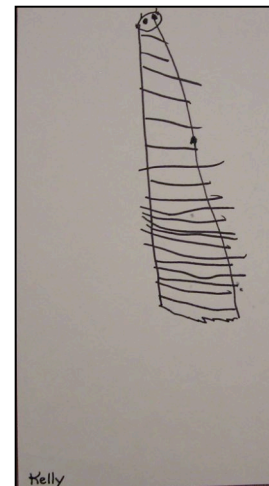
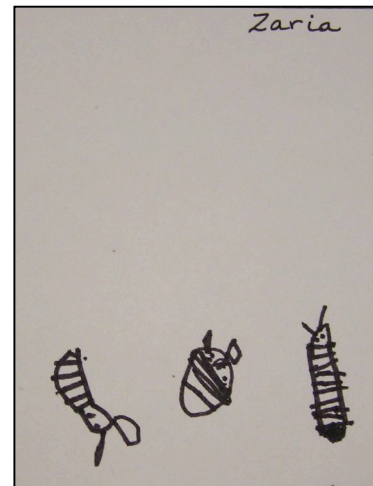
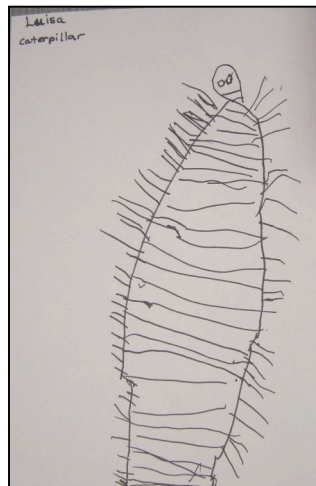
Six days into the school year.

The children actively pursue new understanding of the caterpillars that have emerged from the eggs.

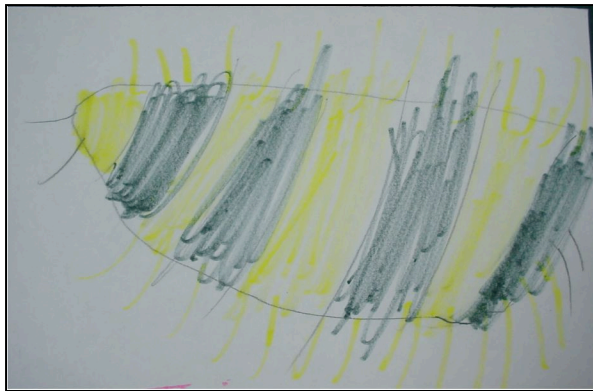
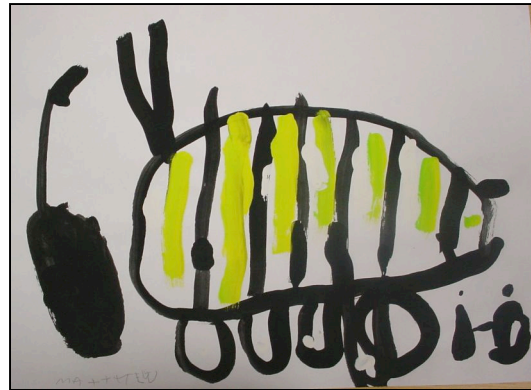
The children are learning many skills;

- focusing their attention,
- working in a group,
- listening to stories,
- sharing ideas and taking turns;

all in the context of their work.



“That’s a caterpillar. It has a body. It has stripes.
It has head. Antennae.”



Transformations through many different media; color pencils, tempera, 2D, and 3D.



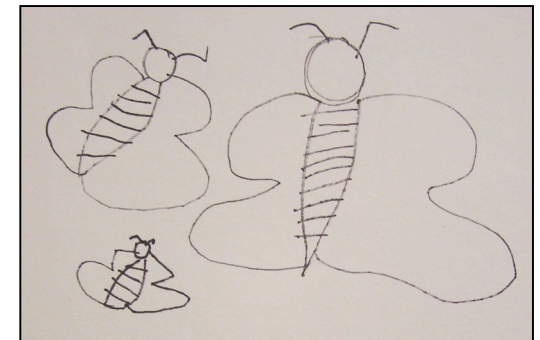


Questions, wondering,
imagining possibilities.

The children draw their
ideas on small paper.

Because the children
clamor for their drawings to
"be bigger, bigger, bigger"
we transfer the small
drawings to a
transparency...

“What do you think it will look like?”



...which we place on the overhead projector. The small drawing on the transparency is transformed!

Children develop new skills:

- control of an art tool,
 - application of paint,
 - confidence in carrying water across the room,
 - making choices independently,
- as they work with color to express their beautiful ideas.

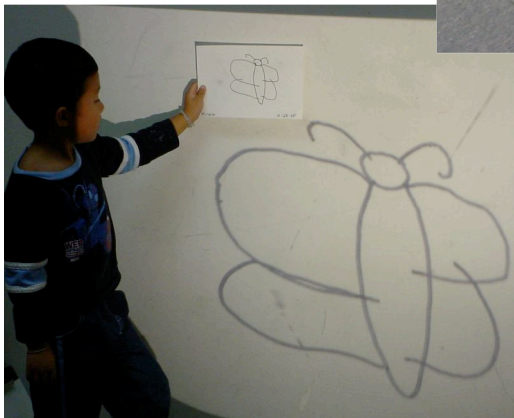


“They are beautiful.”

Children are delighted by the transformation of size.

One or two children initiate this project. The learning is contagious. Many children watch and enter into this work of transformation in relation to the butterfly studies.

Other children join in later in the year using this strategy in relation to other areas of study.





“Flitter, flutter butterfly
Flying in the big blue sky...”



Transformation through movement

The children use a new language (dramatic play) to enact the journey of the Monarch butterfly to its over-wintering site in Mexico.

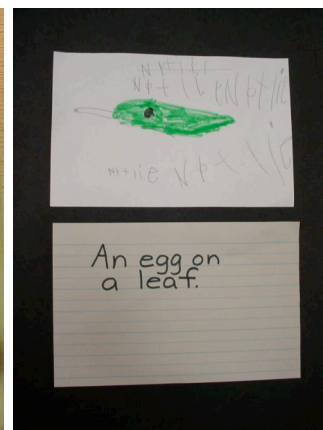
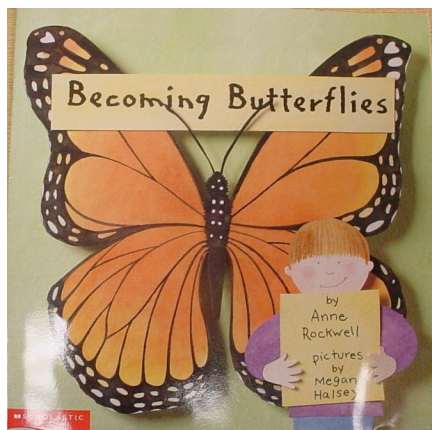


“The butterflies are flying to Mexico.
They fly far away to the mountains.”

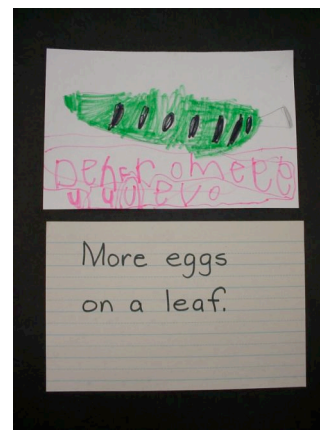


Storytelling is common.

Children tell and retell the story of the Monarch's many life cycle transformations as they dance, paint, sculpt, play act or study books, maps and charts. Book making emerges as a unique language.



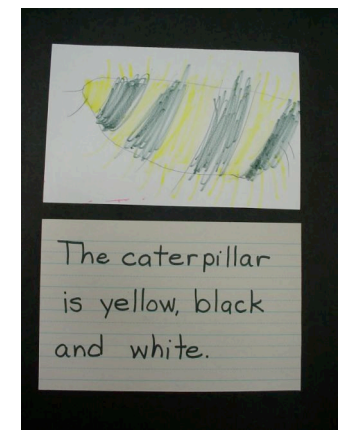
An egg on
a leaf.



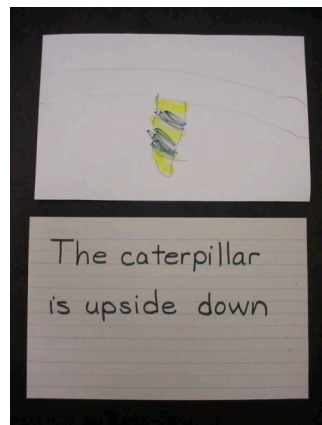
More eggs
on a leaf.



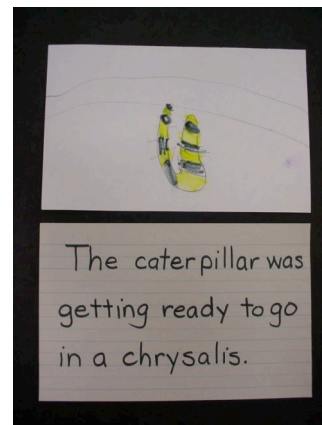
The caterpillar
comes out of the
egg.



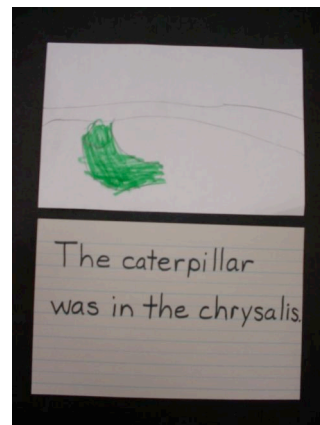
The caterpillar
is yellow, black
and white.



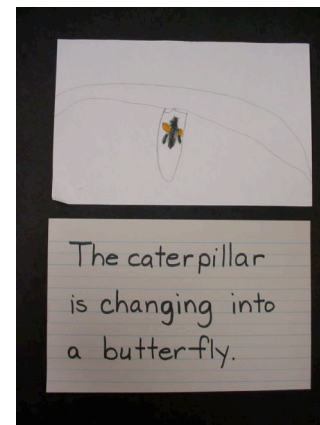
The caterpillar
is upside down



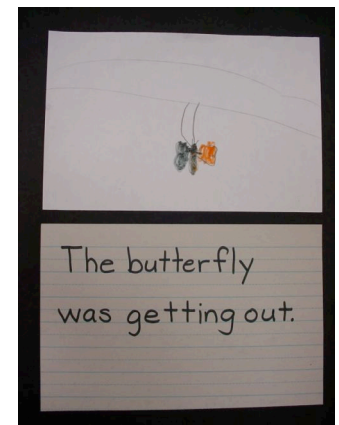
The caterpillar was
getting ready to go
in a chrysalis.



The caterpillar
was in the chrysalis.



The caterpillar
is changing into
a butterfly.



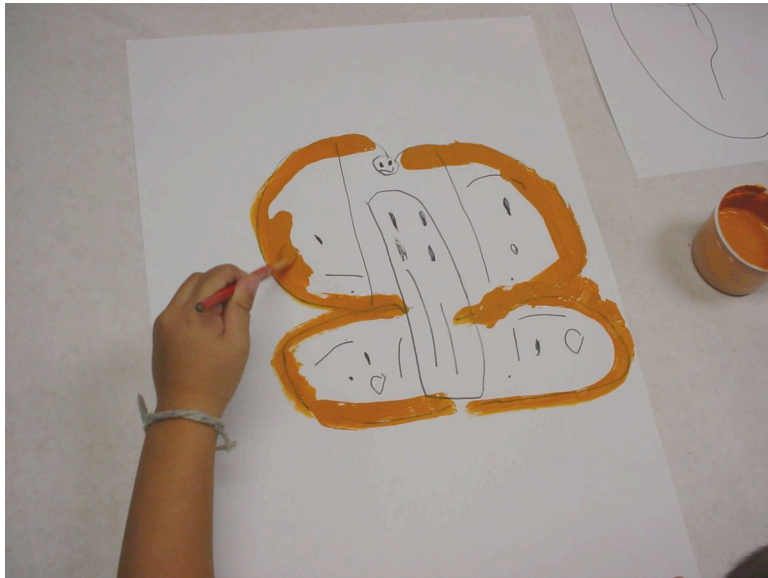
The butterfly
was getting out.

From the fantastic to the real:
now children's representations are based on new knowledge as our butterflies emerge.



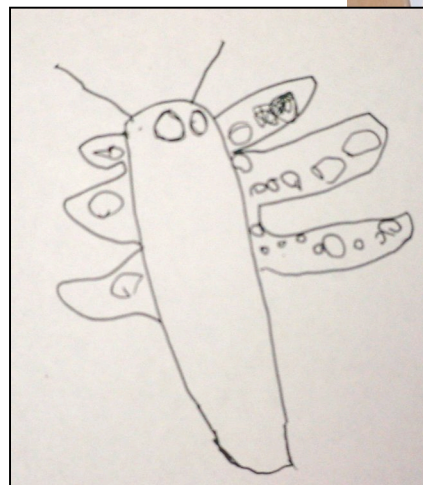
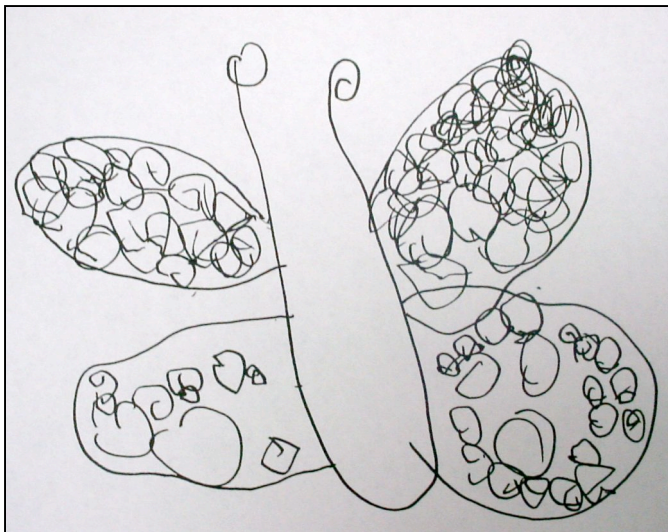
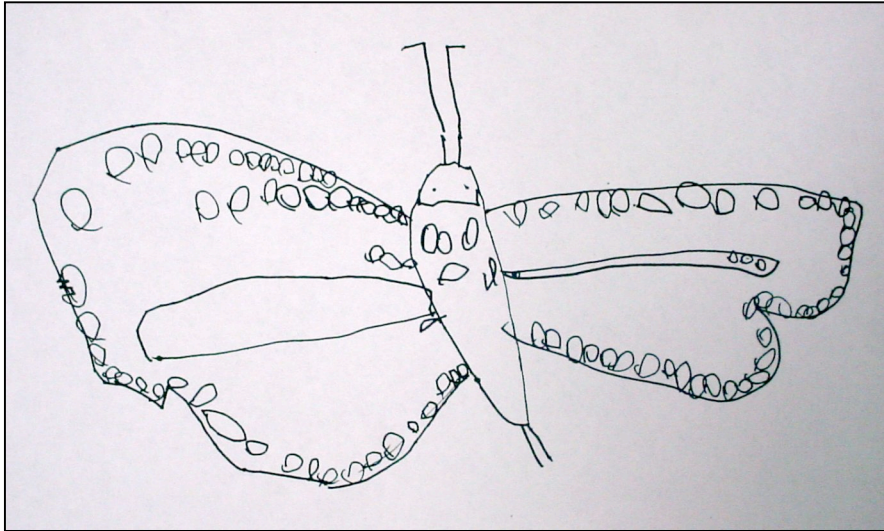
The children want to represent the butterfly colors accurately. They engage in a study of color mixing, using primary colors and black and white that continues to engage their attention throughout the year.

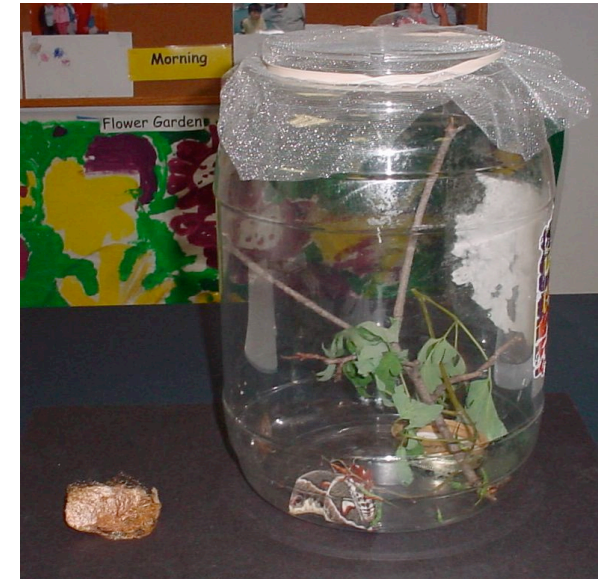
This study lasted 7 weeks in the first phase of the year.
Children build new skills in creating and then implementing a plan.



“Tomorrow, I will paint.”

Children's interest in butterflies persisted long past the release of the butterflies.
Skills that they learned during this study were exercised all through the year in many domains.





When the cecropia moth emerges in June, the children know exactly what to do.

They come together.

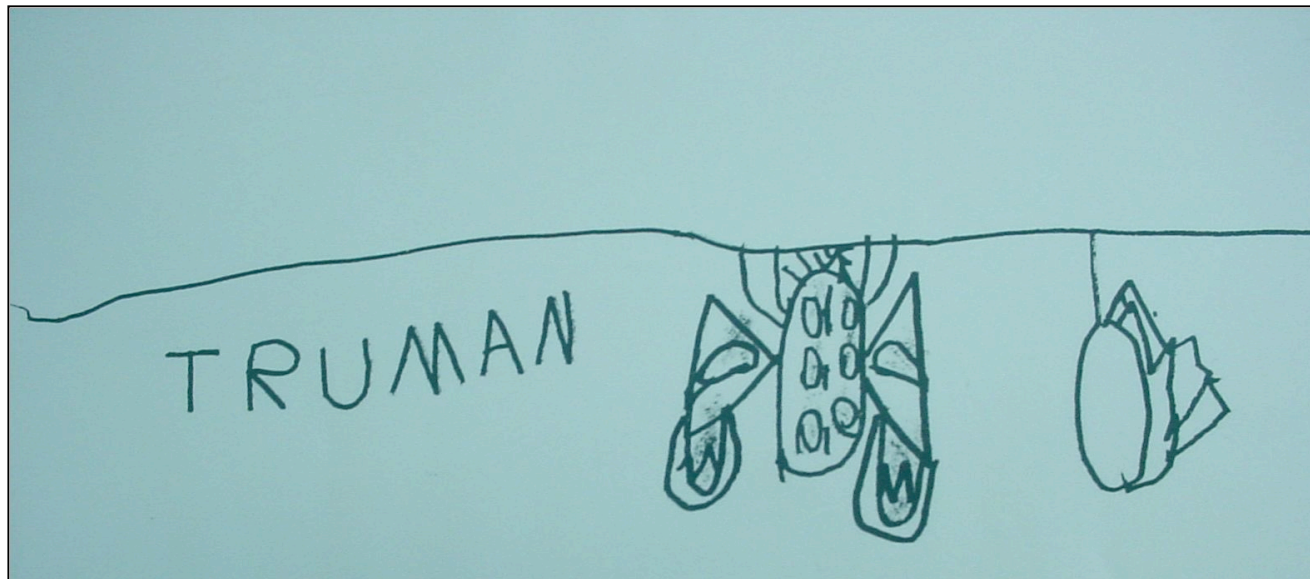
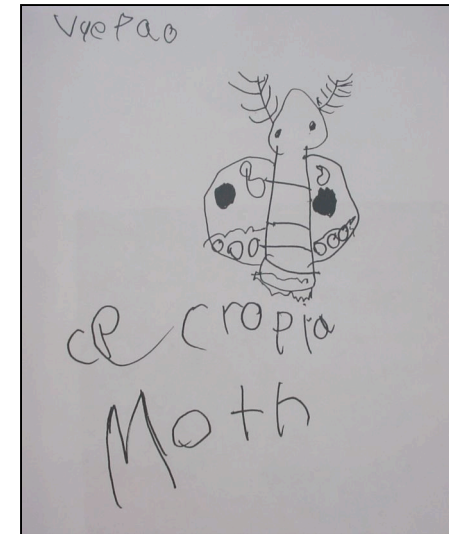
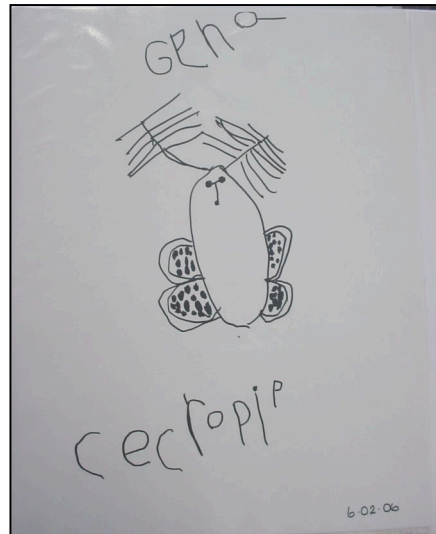
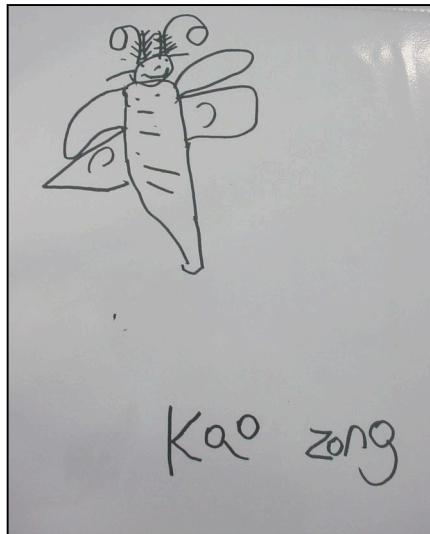




They observe and study.



They draw and write.



They enter into conversation about their theories and ideas as researchers, using books as a reference.





They enter into the role of protector.
They have formed relationships with these creatures and wish to protect and care for their environment.