

Wolsfeld Woods

Fall 2007 visit of the Highcroft Pre-K Class
the first of three seasonal visits

Field trips are viewed as opportunities to directly experience the world outside of school. An inspired educator once offered us the notion of a field trip being a trip to an actual field, an idea that tickled our imaginations. She used to take her young children to the same field in three different seasons. Running with her idea, we began a Pre-K tradition of visiting and revisiting a natural location through the school year. The Blake campus Pre-K visits Minnehaha Falls. Highcroft Pre-K visits an old-growth woods just a few miles from the school. Both locations have a degree of "wildness" to them that is often absent in public parks and playgrounds. Our intention has been to invite the children to interact with these spaces through the seasons and then reflect with them in various ways drawing from their experiences.



The fall visit was the children's (and many of the parents') first exposure to Wolsfeld Woods. We organized them into small groups so they could explore according to the interests and energies of just a few children, and we provided each child with a small sketchbook to capture what they noticed. We invited them to share their observations afterwards, verbally and in drawings.

Jackson - *I saw 2 worms under the log.*

Kylie - *My team saw a grub worm.*

Zoe - *I saw 3 spiders...*

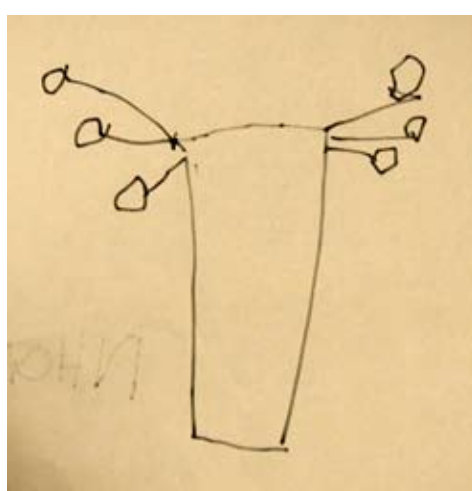
Will - *The evil tree arms were trying to grab us.*

Kylie - *A duckie in the lake*

Zoe drew a crack in a log. *There was just a little bit of water. Why is there just a little bit of water? Maybe there was a little bit of rain.*

Sargent - *This branch doesn't have any leaves. The leaves are blown off. It's going to fall into the lake.*

John - (responding to Sargent) - *Why don't you draw a line so people know it's going to fall into the lake?*





The children reflected on their pathways through the woods, from the parking lot where we left the bus, along the path, over bridges and all the way to Wolsfeld Lake. The encountered flora, fauna, terrain, bridges and water along the way.



The children's drawings made during and after their explorations of Wolsfeld Woods were projected onto one huge piece of paper. The children each traced one of their drawings, first in pencil, then going over it with a marker, work that took place over the course of a few weeks. Color was added using pastels after all the drawings had been added. The finished mural included the school buses, our pathway through the woods, trees, the lake, leaves, children, teachers, bridges encountered along the way, a spider web, "evil tree arms" and mushrooms.



The presence of the finished mural is an ongoing memory of our first trip together into the woods. A number of the children have commented on how much they love it, a project in which everyone had a part.