

2022-2023 OMEP ESD AWARD PROPOSAL FORM

Title of the Project	Children and Teachers Together – A Study on ESG in Children’s Play - from a Teacher’s Perspective	
Name of project leader	Choi Eun-joo	
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School or institution	Yangji 2 Childcare Center	
Names of others on the project team (if any)		
National OMEP committee		
Signature of the National OMEP Committee president	<i>Soonhwan Kim</i>	
Project participants	Participants	Number
	Children (include age)	36 (6 years old)
	Teachers	4
	Families	
	Teacher education students	
	Others	
ABSTRACT, including project aims and outcomes (max. 250 words)		
Recent increase in interest in ESG, there is a widespread movement to apply the concept to other fields as well. Childcare Center are also making a leap forward in practicing ESG. During our Childcare Center’s development of a program that reflects ESG to transform into an institution that practices sustainable development, we learned that the teachers’ understanding of		

ESG was lacking. Therefore, while we acknowledge that the current childcare centers practice ESG, our aim is to gain a deeper understanding of what ESG is, and ultimately why it should be practiced within the institutions. Also, we want to find out ESG that may be unconsciously present itself in various plays of children, and assign significance to it.

The program result is a change in teachers' perception of ESG programs. First, ESG allowed me to witness the process of meaningless plays transforming into meaningful experiences. Even my small changes led to a significant change in the classroom. Second, We found that the plays that started from a small interest were something that the children knew more about than the adult teachers. Found ways for sustainable development that the children could carry out on their own. Lastly creating a happy and inclusive Childcare Center as a community begins with small changes made by both teachers and children. Furthermore, I realized that creating an equal, transparent and ethical Childcare Center was something that could also be practiced in the classroom.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT (max. 4 pages). You may attach photos as an appendix. However, please note that photos should be considered supplemental to the written narrative about your project.

Korea is a country characterized by four distinct seasons: spring, summer, fall, and winter. Especially in spring, new sprouts grow and flowers bloom, marking the beginning of the seasons. Children observe the changing landscape day by day, and even announce the arrival of spring by saying, "Spring has come." Also, they did not stop at just observing nature, but also pick and play with flowers and sprouts that they found pretty. Seeing this, we discussed ways to play while respecting and protecting nature.



In addition, we shared our opinions on the ways to preserve the memories of spring while promoting respect for nature. The children who enjoy taking pictures on a regular basis wanted to remember the beautiful spring through photographs. They individually took cameras and freely captured

their own idea of spring at the park near the childcare center. The pictures taken by the children were used to make wall displays and postcards, which were then given as gifts to their friends or parents through letters.

Additionally, we made frames with the wooden sticks in the classroom and framed the nature. We completed our own frames by attaching fallen branches on the floor to the frame and sticking colored papers on the branches.

To celebrate Arbor Day, we planted lettuce seeds in the vegetable garden with the children. They carefully held the small seeds in their hands and planted them in the garden, saying things such as "How long does it take for plants to grow?", "Can we eat the lettuce when it grows?", "I can water them every day." The children watered the lettuce every day, expressing their 'love language' and watched as the lettuce grew. After harvesting the lettuce they have grown with love, they made lettuce wraps for lunch. Even the children who did not like vegetables before enjoyed the 'delicious' lettuce they had planted and grown themselves. They also learned about the principles of sustainable food production by observing another lettuce growing in the same spot where they had harvested the first one.



Also the children became curious about the rainwater storage tank that their senior class has made, as they watched the rainwater collecting inside of it. For the curious children we went to the senior classroom to ask about the rainwater tank, and learned more about it. After listening to the explanation that the tank helps reusing rainwater to conserve water, the children showed their willingness to participate in the activity. They showed their commitment to take part in saving the environment by reusing the rainwater, using the water collected in the rainwater tank when watering the vegetable garden or washing their hands after playing with sand.



Natural objects found during a walk can become toys for children. Sometimes they also **find edible ingredients**. This day, they found mushrooms growing on a tree trunk. The children were excited to see mushrooms they recognized from their meals and wanted to touch them, saying things like "I love this mushroom.", and "Let's take it and cook it." The teacher warned them that "Mushrooms can be good for our health, but there are some that can make you sick if you touch or eat them. So be careful and don't touch or eat any mushrooms you find." Children replied, "I know. It's a poisonous mushroom. If you eat it, you can die." The children also learned about **'what is safe to eat and what is not.'** We talked about how spring greens can be healthy, but they should not be consumed or touched carelessly without first checking for safety, **as they may have been sprayed with insecticides to keep off pests.** Furthermore, we discussed how it is important to only consume food given to them by their parents at home, and the teacher at the childcare center as a part of "medication misuse education."

We decided **to grow shiitake mushrooms** that can be safely consumed. We sprayed the mushrooms with water regularly with a sprayer, and they started to grow in a wooden container. The children documented the growth process of the mushrooms through pictures and drawings and they learned more about the mushrooms through books and online resources. As they continued their research, they discovered that mushrooms are actually a type of **fungus**. Although some children were initially repulsed, they quickly learned that mushrooms **are a beneficial microorganism that can promote good health**. After ten days, the children harvested the shiitake mushrooms themselves and asked the chef to boil them. The children then mixed the boiled mushrooms with sesame sauce to make a salad, which they enjoyed.

The children who were playing in nature and observing the daily changes began to show interest in spring flowers, saying things such as “yesterday it was a sprout but today it bloomed into a flower” and “Teacher, what is the name of this flower?”. With growing interest, the children started to search for flower names with their teacher. Their fascination with spring flowers grew stronger each day, leading them to visit a plant nursery near the childcare center. The plant nursery boasted an impressive collection of flowers that far exceeded those seen at the park near the walking path. We satisfied our curiosity by asking the nursery owner about the names of the flowers and how to care for them. After asking for the children’s thoughts, we bought a Dahlia plant, watering and watching it grow. This was a meaningful experience, allowing us to appreciate the beauty and preciousness of life as we observed the sprout blooming in to a flower, and eventually withering away.

The children’s fascination with flowers remained strong. One of them suggested that we make a flower garden in the Childcare Center’s sandbox, so we consulted with the center’s director and decided to go ahead with the plan. We discussed the desired shape and color of the garden and sought the assistance of a landscaping specialist. The children participated in every aspect of the process, from removing the rocks stuck in the soil to leveling the ground, and purchasing and planting the flowers. Even after the flower garden was completed, the children continued to care for it with affection.

During outdoor playtime, the children ran to the teacher, covered in sweat, and said, “Teacher, it’s hot.” We discussed the difference between the actual temperature and the perceived temperature and debated whether we should wear or remove our outerwear when going outside to play. Opinions were divided, and the children were split into two groups: those who wore outerwear and those who did not. While playing on the playground, the children who wore outerwear could not tolerate the heat any longer and took it off, reigniting the argument with comments such as “See, I told you it was hot!” and “But my mom told me to wear it this morning.” Back in the classroom, the children discussed appropriate clothing for spring weather and realized that each person has a different perception of temperature. The children reconciled their differing opinions and concluded the argument by

saying, "Let's wear or remove thin outerwear according to the situation to protect our health."

The children started to become concerned about their health during the spring season when they saw a friend with red eyes. They had to frequently wash their hands and faces due to pollen and fine dust. They even had to check the weather and the level of fine dust in the morning during their greetings. Fine dust has become a major worry for the children. When they were feeling down as they could not go outside due to the invisible fine dust even if they wanted to go play outside, one child said, "I will get rid of the fine dust" and swung their arms and legs in the air, and other kids joined in swing their arms. They also checked the level of fine dust using a measurement device located in the playroom on their way to school to see if it was safe to play outside. The children also learned about ways to reduce fine dust in their daily lives, such as growing air-purifying plants and using am op instead of a vacuum cleaner. They also participated in the [Stop Fine Dust Now] campaign in collaboration with their families and took part in activities to reduce fine dust.

In all types of play, the children takes the lead. From planning ways to protect spring, to planting and harvesting crops in the Childcare Center garden, decorating flower beds to executing the said plans, children discuss and determine the steps with the teacher. In this way, the children's thoughts and plans are respected in all types of play, and the teacher gives their support. Through this process, the children could learn to respect and value each other's opinions and experience the satisfaction of seeing their ideas becoming a reality.