

A Year of Learning
at
Red Hook Playgroup

Remy Popper
2017-2018

Remy at School

Although Remy entered the Green Room in September eager for school, it took him some time to adjust as he learned to manage his feelings about having his mom close by, but not completely available to him. By October, Remy was more comfortable with the routines of school and increasingly able to navigate his days independently.

For Remy, the first few months at school involved learning, testing, and ultimately internalizing the routines and rules of RHP. During Green Room work time, Remy was most interested in works that engaged him physically. He often chose to try practical life work or to explore at the texture table. Works that involved mastering the mechanics of a material were especially engrossing; one day in November, the process of filling up a plastic bottle of water, twisting the cap on, and squeezing it out captivated Remy for a full hour of work time!



Remy Contributes to Collaborative Stories



"He's sad. His mama is gone. He's crying because he wants his brother back. He wants to go home. Scary. The baby is crying. He's gonna drop, drop, drop. He's wiggling. Where is his mommy? He wants to go find her but he's lost. He wants to go out of our school to his home. He's not crying! He happy and cute. He is resting."

Remy started the year ready to freely express his thoughts and ideas. At almost any moment during the day, Remy would offer his creative ideas to the work that was happening. He always had a great deal to say about the critters living in our school. One day in October, he noticed that our praying mantis was eating a cricket. We all gathered around to watch. Some children began talking about the bug. "He's sad" one child said. Remy joined in: "He is crying because he wants his brother back. His mommy is gone." Remy's contribution helped structure the conversation into an imaginative story rather than simple observation. Observing and discussing nature with peers was a frequent theme for Remy as he explored storytelling throughout the fall.

How did Remy work with math this fall?

Throughout the fall, children had many opportunities to work with math through shelf work, small math groups, and everyday routines. Shelf work and small math groups focused mainly on counting, one-to-one correspondence, and sorting by color and shape. Remy enjoyed exploring the math work in the fall and was especially drawn to the works that lent themselves to being used in alternate ways. He shows an interest in numbers and a good understanding of early mathematical concepts. During work with all subjects, Remy is most successful and focused when there's a physical element to his work, so we tried to incorporate kinesthetic math challenges into his learning. One morning in November, Remy had a particularly good time as part of a small group engaged in sorting by color. The activity involved full body motion and Remy had a blast running and wheeling from one end of the multi-purpose room to the other collecting pattern blocks and depositing them on the plate with the corresponding color.



Remy Learns through Action

Throughout the fall, Remy's learning style was characterized by physicality. He was drawn to any work or activity that allowed him to manipulate parts or move his body. When working on any task that provided these opportunities for him, Remy could show great focus and see his work through to the end, even if the task was very difficult for him. One work from the practical life shelf that Remy returned to frequently was the table and chair washing work. His favorite aspect of this work was manipulating the spray bottle and wetting down the chair or table. At first, learning to pull the trigger was a bit challenging for Remy, but with patience and practice he mastered it. His next challenge was learning to share the work with others! While this was occasionally difficult, he mostly demonstrated patience and fairness. He would often state how long he wanted to have the spray bottle, and then give it to his partner after the time was up.



Remy Practices Self-Control



This fall, Remy would often seek out work that combined dramatic play and gross motor engagement. Using hollow blocks to create a home could amuse him for an entire work time. While this play was engaging, it could also be overstimulating. In these moments, Remy might use a louder voice or use his body in unsafe ways. We helped Remy with messages to control his body and sounds. Sometimes these messages helped Remy regain control, but other times they did not, which resulted in a teacher asking him to leave the work. This was very disappointing for Remy. One day in November, Remy was working with two large cardboard boxes with a small group of children. Remy was leading the play, which involved hiding from a monster. Remy said, "Close the door and roof!" The four children would screech in delight as they hid in the box from monsters. We told the group that the game would be closed if they could not stop screaming. Remy took this message seriously, offering reminders to his friends if they got too loud. "No screaming or shouting!" Remy's intervention helped his friends regain control, resulting in a sustained and joyful play period.

Remy Writes a Story about the Giant

"So, he's all red and he has no clothes at all. He can't talk at all. I hit him on the head and he's dead and his body's broken. He was fighting me and I got a sword and I trapped him. These are locks and I locked him in the jail. There's a bed in the jail where he sleeps all day. He's angry about the jail cuz he didn't want to get in jail."

Remy came into school ready to engage in social play and share his ideas verbally, which made him an influencer in our investigative work throughout the fall. He was enjoyed working with Krok, particularly if this work involved dramatic play or storytelling. One day in December, he told a lengthy and suspenseful story about a feud between the giant and himself. His story has a clear beginning (background details about the giant), middle (action-based fight sequence), and end (resolution of fight). Remy's love of storytelling was an asset to the evolution of our investigation, which often used narrative and imagination as a propelling force.

Remy

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Remy Pretends to be Krok

A big part of how the Green Room children interacted with our investigation this year was through telling stories and then later acting them out in small groups. Remy took his role in our investigation very seriously and enjoyed participating in many of our investigative projects. He delighted in dressing up as Krok and acting out stories. He frequently chose to join groups heading out to the multi-purpose room to work on story acting. He was committed to portraying Krok in the most genuine way possible, imitating how he thought Krok might move and steadfast in maintaining his silence. Remy enjoyed sharing his ideas on how the scene should play out, thoughtfully providing direction: "You guys should go to the house!" or "Now move here." His enthusiasm and thoughtfulness during these activities made him an integral player and positive leader in our investigation work. As the investigation continued into the spring, we hoped to see Remy's enthusiasm continue to thrive and sought additional ways we could challenge him to take on a leadership role.

Remy Makes a Lovey for Krok



Remy was a motivating force in our investigation this year. One project that he was particularly involved in was making Krok's airplane-shaped lovey. He returned to this work again and again over the course of several days and seemed content and engaged throughout each work time. While Remy enjoyed using his sewing and hot gluing skills to construct the lovey, he seemed most interested in talking about his work. Some of this discussion impacted the way kids worked on the stuffed airplane. When we were trying to figure out what shape an airplane wing is, Remy stated, "It's like a big pizza. Like a shark fin!" Other times, he discussed how Krok might use the lovey: "He needs it so he can sleep on his mat. He gets tired. He says, 'I wanna take a break,' and he just goes to bed." He has an innate ability to invent new and creative ideas, make connections between past experiences and his work at hand, and use narrative to propel discussions about investigation-related topics. These qualities made Remy a dynamic leader in his investigative work.

Remy Enjoys Process-Based Work



*“Chomp, let it drip,
put it in the
compost. Chomp,
let it drip, put it in
the compost.”*



When Remy works with something he enjoys, he can focus for long periods of time. He is often drawn to process-based work with concrete, ordered steps that can be mastered with practice. One day in January, Remy was part of a group that worked on dyeing fabric with cabbage. After the cabbage was chopped and boiled, it needed to be picked out of the water and put into the compost. Before jumping in, Remy watched as we showed him how to use tongs. As he watched, he narrated the work: “Chomp, let it drip, put it in the compost.” This became his mantra throughout the work. He repeated it over and over, often to some sort of tune, to help him keep track of what step he was working on currently and what step came next. He was focused and engaged on this process for about twenty minutes, enough time to get all of the cabbage out of the water! As the winter progressed, we found that this format for work was frequently what Remy gravitated towards. While open-ended materials could be engaging for him, the inherent directionality of structured and orderly work seemed more appealing to him, and he chose more and more task-based work as the year went on.

How did Remy work with language in the spring?



Throughout the winter and spring, we focused on letter and sound recognition. Our group letter meetings introduced Remy to each letter and sound of the alphabet while shelf work gave him the opportunity to practice letter work independently. One work that Remy particularly enjoyed was the language pictures. He quickly learned that the purpose of this work was to identify the object in the picture, say it aloud, and think about what letters might be in the word. One day, Remy chose a picture of an ant. We asked, “What letter sounds do you hear?” Remy correctly identified the letter N and T. In the spring, Remy invented a fun game with teachers in which he would dictate a series of letters and then ask, “What’s that say?” By the end of the year, Remy was well on his way to developing an understanding of the alphabetic principle - the fact that words are made up of letters and letters represent sounds - an important skill when learning to read.



How did Remy work with math this spring?



Remy's understanding of early mathematical concepts continued to blossom throughout the winter and spring months. Although math wasn't always his first choice, he did enjoy joining small groups for math lessons and games. When working in small groups, Remy was a focused and active member. One day in the Green Room, the teacher was showing a new work to Anna and Lewis. Remy walked over to see what was happening and the teacher asked if he would like to join the group. He readily agreed and sat down to watch as they put the number stones in order from zero to ten. When they got to three, Anna and Lewis were unsure of what came next. Together, the group counted the stones already there: "One, two... what's next?" Remy immediately exclaimed, "Three!" Then they had to find the three stone. Anna picked up the four stone, but Remy corrected her: "No. That's four not three." After some searching, Remy found the three and placed it in the lineup. For the next few minutes, the group worked together to put all the stones in order. As Remy recognizes numbers and is able to rote count, Anna and Lewis often asked him for help if they were having difficulty. Remy has a good grasp of early mathematical concepts and is always comfortable taking on a leadership role when working with his friends.

Remy's Kindness with Friends



Part of the Green Room social and emotional curriculum is to help children to learn to be kind. This comes up in many ways. When friends are frustrated with one another, for example, they need to learn to express that frustration in a way that is not overly harsh. Remy worked hard on this skill this year. In the spring, we included hollow blocks in the Green Room. Soon after, we noticed a big change in the way Remy dealt with conflict, and in general the way he approached his friends while working with them in the hollow block area. When working with hollow blocks, Remy's creative contributions were welcomed and valued by his peers and they often looked to him for guidance. As a result, we observed Remy's self confidence grow, which may have contributed to his kindness and leadership that we noticed during hollow block play. Lewis was a frequent collaborator for Remy in hollow blocks. One morning in April, the two worked nonstop for a full hour, building and rebuilding a boat! As small problems arose between the friends, Remy was quick to find a solution. Lewis became frustrated because he wanted a big block like Remy had for his bed. Remy used a calm voice, never reacting harshly to Lewis's frustration. He said, "Okay, okay, that's good. We can use these blocks for your bed." Later that month, the two friends paired up again in hollow blocks. While building, Lewis slipped backwards. Remy quickly grab his hand and pulled him up, stopping him from a hard landing. "Oopsy daisy!" Remy said. "Thanks Remy," Lewis replied.

Remy's Year



What a year full of growth and learning for Remy! When we first met him in the fall, he already had so many talents, interests, and skills to share. His drive to learn was evident in the way he openly engaged in conversation and debate about a variety of topics including Star Wars, snails, and volcanoes! Much of our work with Remy was devoted to helping him harness his limitless creativities into productive and fun play experiences with his friends. With ups and downs throughout the year, Remy took on this challenge and had many great experiences in the Green Room. His love of imagination and storytelling made him an important contributor to this years' investigation, playing an active role in the story acting with Krok this winter. Friendship was also important to Remy and by spring, he had developed many strong friendships. We know that he will use all the skills and interests that he discovered at RHP to help him thrive next year in Pre-K. We will miss him!

