

# The Teachable Moment

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Meaningful learning occurs when children are fascinated, engrossed and curious about something that is happening right before their eyes. On an outdoor walk early this week we observed a bobcat. Our plans for the walk and for our themes this week changed so we could seize the moment and observe closely, ask questions and learn about our new Holcomb Farm neighbor.

We had just crossed the road and were headed into the meadow when one of our friends noticed a movement. It was a bobcat! How were we certain? We were fortunate that very day to have a parent, Emily Trenkner, who had been helping us out that morning, decide to stay a bit longer and hike with us. Coincidentally, she knows a lot about bobcats, and has been helping to track their movements in Granby and, when necessary, trap and relocate them. She elicited great observations from our friends, including what they saw it doing – walk, pounce, sit, lay down and possibly eat something. We walked to different vantage points to see it from different angles. All the while Emily told us about bobcats in Granby and her work with them.

The next day Emily sent in many books about bobcats, and marked specific pages appropriate for our friends, which we both read to our friends, and displayed so friends could explore them independently. She even sent in a stuffed bobcat for the children to observe. We looked at body parts and talked about special adaptive features, their habitat and what they eat.

Our “what/why do you think” queries (What Do We Wonder? What Do We Think?

Will it change? What Do We Think is Happening? Why?).

These queries foster deeper thinking, language development through more complex answers, and continue to extend to many aspects of our walks, including

Puddles, water and ice – We noticed that ice on most of our puddles had melted, and discussed why. One friend found a piece of ice and wanted to put it

in a puddle to see if it would melt. It took a while, but it did melt, and we learned about properties of water. Science inquiry through seizing the moment. Playing in the mud and puddles after rain is one of most popular activities which always leads to awareness of its properties through exploration, discovery and play!

Our compost pile – Observing our compost pile we noticed that our scraps from before vacation have changed. We asked how they have changed (color is different) and why they think they are changing (and our queries led to a new word, decomposing).