

Wherever the Road May Lead: Investigating Pathways
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Two children were quietly placing big wooden blocks together on the carpet to form a path. This play was a common sight in our room that I had made note of many times. I had a different plan this day, but as I saw the children's excitement about the block work, I decided to follow their lead to see what unfolded.

The children began moving their bodies along the block path in various ways and as I watched I highlighted what I saw – *"Eva you're moving along the path with one foot on and one foot off. Look at Ryder's idea! He's pulling himself along the path with his arms!!"* I noticed that as I announced each movement the children eagerly began to try them out. Also, the children started to draw attention to their own ideas. *"Look! I used the pillow and made a train ride. Choo! Choo!"* Juno shared as she slid along the track on a pillow.

Over several days the children continued to explore different ways to build and travel along the block path. The paths they created each day were often straight and long until one day Eva placed the blocks around the pergola post, which changed the course of the play. Several children were challenged by this adjustment to the path and put the blocks back in the linear formation. Each time the children moved the blocks back in line, Eva repositioned the blocks around the post. Initially I remained an observer, wanting to give the children the opportunity to work out this predicament. When they didn't seem to be working it out, I brought the children together to give recognition to both ideas being presented. I noted, *"Leilana and Juno, you really like the path to be long and straight. Eva I noticed you were taking the blocks over to the post. You have a different idea."*





Let's watch and see what Eva's idea is." With a captive audience, Eva circled the blocks around the post and shared *"So now we can go round and round!"* Suddenly, the energy level grew and the other children excitedly started travelling this new turn in the path. As days passed, I noticed that her peers appreciated Eva's idea, as this new element became part of all future path constructions. Likewise, Eva delighted in this recognition, exclaiming proudly – *"That be my idea!"*

Reflecting on the many ways the children worked with the paths I noticed that anytime a block shifted out of line it was quickly put back in place. Curiosity led me to wonder

how the children would respond to a broken path. To provoke the children to think in a new way and satisfy my own wonderings I presented a new challenge to the children. As they began building their path I joined in and positioned two blocks with a gap between them. *"Oh no!*

Our path has a hole! How will we walk across our path now?" I exclaimed. The children were drawn in by my dramatic announcement and eagerly took on this problem. Challenged to think of new possibilities the children's ingenuity and resourcefulness shone through. Grace confidently stood up and modeled - *"I take a biiiiggg step"*. Eva maneuvered herself over the hole by crawling on all fours. As I encouraged the children to look around the room to consider what else we could use to get over this gap even more ideas were offered.





Charlotte filled the hole with pillows and climbed over them. At another time she filled the gap with foam blocks to walk across. Leilana incorporated a ramp piece to form a “bridge” to walk across. We took time for each child to share their ideas and for the group to test every idea.

As the children revisited this work for many days, the pathway constructions evolved in complexity. New ideas were incorporated into the building designs and these novel ideas became part of the children’s path building repertoire. Throughout this process I supported the children to share their ideas and negotiate a collaborative vision for the pathways they constructed. The initial linear block path grew to include various materials, follow a winding route that covered the room, and encouraged children to try out

new ways to move on the path- over, under, and around many obstacles. By following the initial interest presented by the children a rich learning journey has been undertaken and continues to evolve. As I have reflected on this work, I recognize that although my curiosity may often lead me to present an idea to the children, it is their wonderings and engagement that determine the path we will follow and it is my response to these observations that will determine the length of our journey.