

A photograph of a grassy hill in a park. In the foreground, a woman in a light blue shirt and a young child are walking away from the camera. The hill is covered in dry, yellowish grass. Several people are scattered across the slope, some sitting or lying down. The background is filled with dense green trees under a clear blue sky.

Playing in the Park – A Curriculum

Mary J. White, MEd

Jane C. Hart, MAT

Why Parks?

Our context:

Miles Early Childhood Development Center

College of Charleston, Charleston, SC

Location: The center of the downtown historic area

Parks available: Many city parks located on the peninsula. We also have access to county park system and some state parks. There is a national forest in our area as well.

Transportation: as a part of the college we have free access to the city bus system

Field trip fund: We have chosen to use our special area monies for field trips. This means we are responsible for music, art and PE.

Resources

In addition to researching our local parks on the web we read the following books:

The park is... (2008). Reggio Emilia, Italy: Istituzione of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia and Reggio Children

Reggio tutta: A guide to the city by the children. (2000). Reggio Emilia, Italy: Reggio Children.

Merz, J. (2007) *Playground day.* New York: Clarion Books.

Ward, J. et al. (2008). *I love dirt! 52 activities to help you and your kids discover the wonders of nature.* Boston, MA: Trumpeter Books.

Domeniconi, D. (2003) *M is for majestic: A national parks alphabet.* Sleeping Bear Press.

James Island County Park



- A class campfire with music and s'mores at James Island County Park
- Many extended families attended and a grandfather and father provided music for out sing-a-long of American Folk Songs
- Huge participation demonstrated interest on the part of children and families

Charlestowne Landing

(A South Carolina State Park)



Nature



The children's interest in the play possibilities and my interest in the connections to culture came together here and began to inform some of our ideas about the possibilities a park unit offered.

Jane breaks her ankle

Our Original Vision

We imagined that the children would decide what made a good park and then rate the parks we visited, but we discovered that the children did not have enough experience with parks to decide what qualities would make a good park. The goal of our visits then for the children to play in the parks and then to decide which qualities they liked in parks.

Our Plans

- Week 1
 - Define a park
 - Key questions
 - Map exploration
 - What jobs do we need and how do we do them
- Week II
 - The children would map parks during their visits
 - Monday – Waterfront Park
 - Thursday – Brittlebank Park
- Week III
 - Monday - Whitepoint Gardens/Hazel Parker
 - Wednesday – Hampton Park
- Week IV
 - Perhaps go back to Hampton Park
 - Put products together

Week One

Getting Ready

Our Study Questions

- What is a park?
- What things make a park a good place to be?

Figuring out how to get around with a wheelchair

- We visited the library and Marion Square Park to test the system



Marion Square Park (Piccolo Spoleto)



First Experiment with Technology and Documentation



Getting around in a wheelchair presents challenges and opportunities

- The children learned that getting around in a wheelchair is hard work. They also discovered the importance of curb cuts, ramps, automatic door openers, and lifts.



Teams for Jobs

The Work Teams

- Maps
- Photographer
- Bus
- Supplies
- The Miss Jane team
- (added after the first trip)



The Things We Need

- cell phone
- maps (bus route/park)
- water
- first aid kit
- towels
- lunch/snack
- kites
- wipes/tissue
- crab nets
- bait
- cast nets
- life jackets
- emergency contact info.
- cameras
- journals/pencils

Figuring out Maps



Week Two

- Waterfront Park
- Brittlebank Park

Waterfront Park



Nature



Birds



Flowers.



Places to sit.



Sitting on a wall



Sitting on the grass



Places to play in the water.





Having a picnic



Sitting with your family



Mommies take children to the park.



Running on the field

“a field can be good for soccer, picnics, ring-a-round-the-rosie, races, flying kites and running dogs”



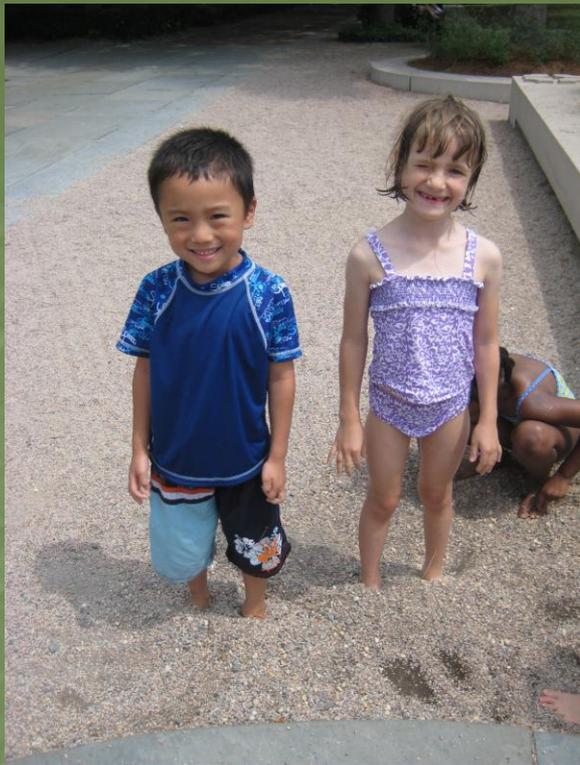
Watching people



Walking a dog



Reading a book



Playing with the little rocks.



Getting on a bike, maybe



Having a Picnic



Swinging

“if there isn’t a playground then you need swings”



Watching the sea

“ maybe there are dolphins”

Looking at boats



Looking at maps



What is this for?



A table, to dribble a ball, picnic



A stage fora fashion show.



A place for games – ring around the rosie.

But, there were problems

- The lift on the bus wouldn't work even though the driver tried for 20 minutes.
- So we had to call Jane's son and he picked her up in the car.
- The rest of us rode the bus and then walked 3 ½ blocks.
- We were very tired when we finally got back to school.

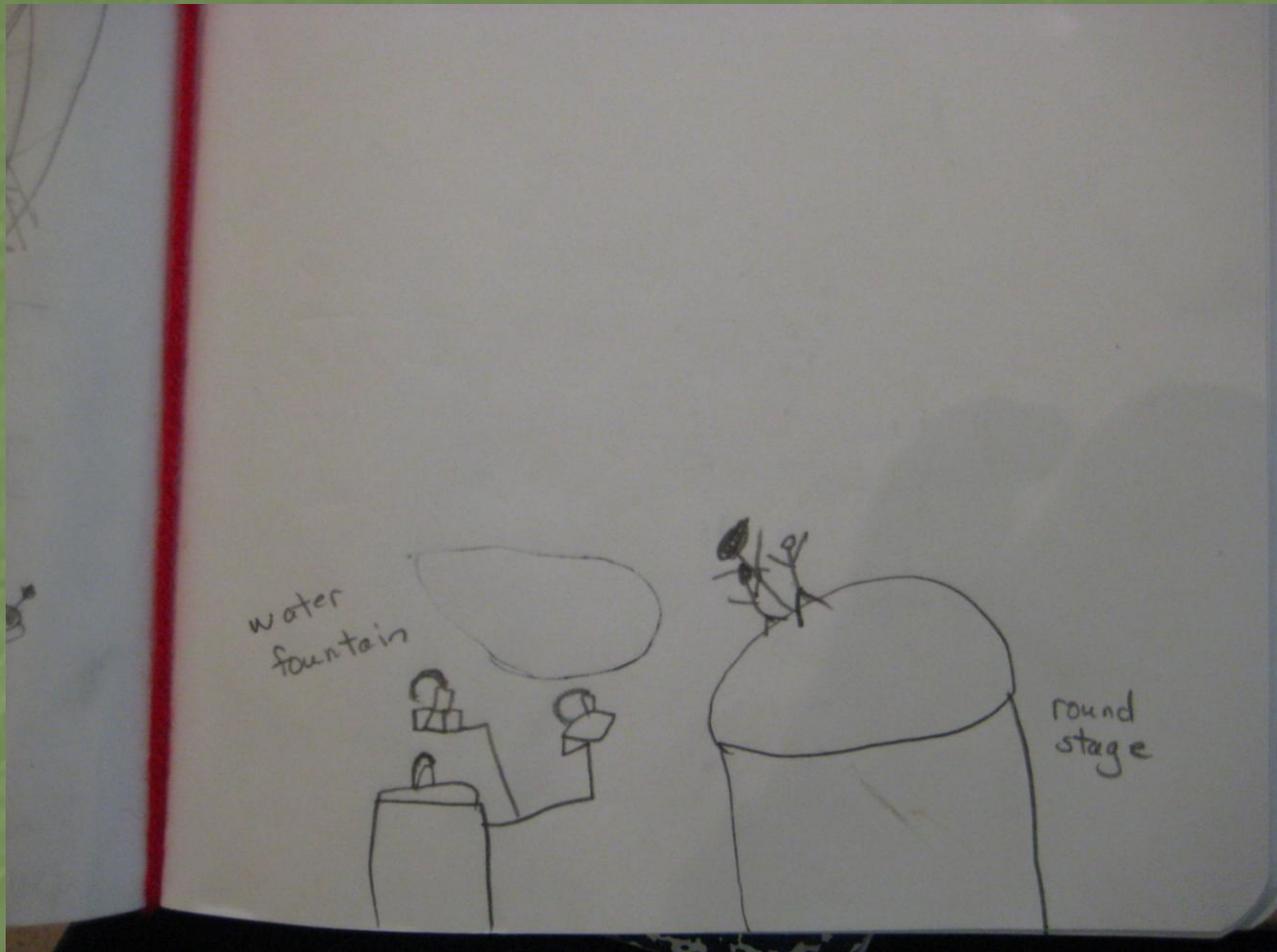


The Waterfront Park as Template

To help children organize their thinking so we used observational drawings, journal entries, discussions, charts and venn diagrams



Maps of the park

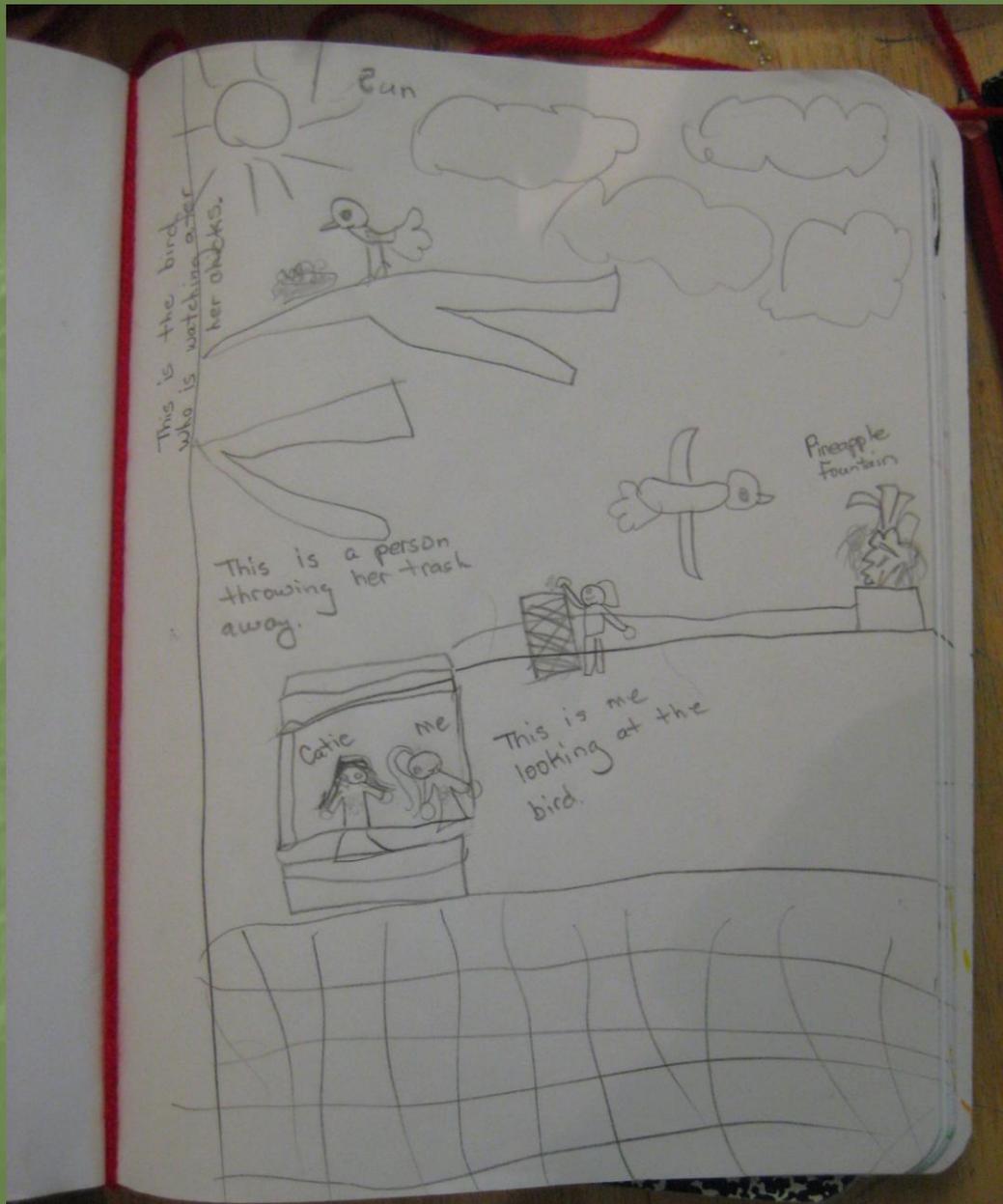


This is the isometric view. This is a method for visually representing 3-dimensional objects in 2-dimensions.
(Katharine)





This child has represented the fountain using birds-eye-view and horizontal view in the same drawing. Her benches are also interesting.
(Sarah)



The bottom shows a birds-eye-view of the brick work on the ground and the rest of the picture is horizon view. (Mila)

Brittlebank Park



- flying kites
- playing on the playground
- BUT, Jane is frustrated by her inability to get around

Using a cast net and crabbing



- crabbing
- throwing a cast net to catch fish
- learning to bait a fishing line
- meeting new people

Bus Issues?



Waiting for the Bus



Chance meeting

Social Interactions in the Community

Week Three

- Whitepoint Gardens changes to Waterfront Park
- Hampton Park

Hampton Park



- walking through the “little woods”
- looking at flowers
- exploring off the paths



The children enjoyed walking the paths, and doing some of the activities on the fitness trail.



Feeding the ducks



Climbing the trees

Week Four

- Revisit Hampton Park to explore plantings with the city arborist
 - The heat index causes a change in plans.
- “This had nothing to do with the fact that our tongues were hanging out by that time.”



Mapping

A Map of our Field Trips





A Park Is...

a place to have fun outside

The children decided that

A Park Should Have...

- Water you can touch
- A place to run
- A playground
- Plants and animals
- A place for a picnic
- Trees to climb
- A place to roll down the hill

Fall Semester

- Wannamaker County Park
- Beachwalker County Park
- 2nd Saturday at the Park

Wannamaker County Park



rolling down the hill





more play with little rocks

a quiet place with a friend



Playing with Grandmother

Beachwalker County Park Kiawah Island



Searching for Treasure



Horseshoe Crab



Ghost Crab



↑ Watching
and digging →





A sand angel



Picnic on the parking lot



“Rowing the boat”



Going to the beach...

"is different from going to other parks because you only need the beach"

2nd Saturdays at the Park





“parks should have places to hide” - Eli

Our Current List

A Park Should Have...

- Water you can touch
- A place to run
- A playground
- Plants and animals
- A place for a picnic
- Trees to climb
- A place to roll down the hill
- A place to be quiet
- A place to hide

Reflection

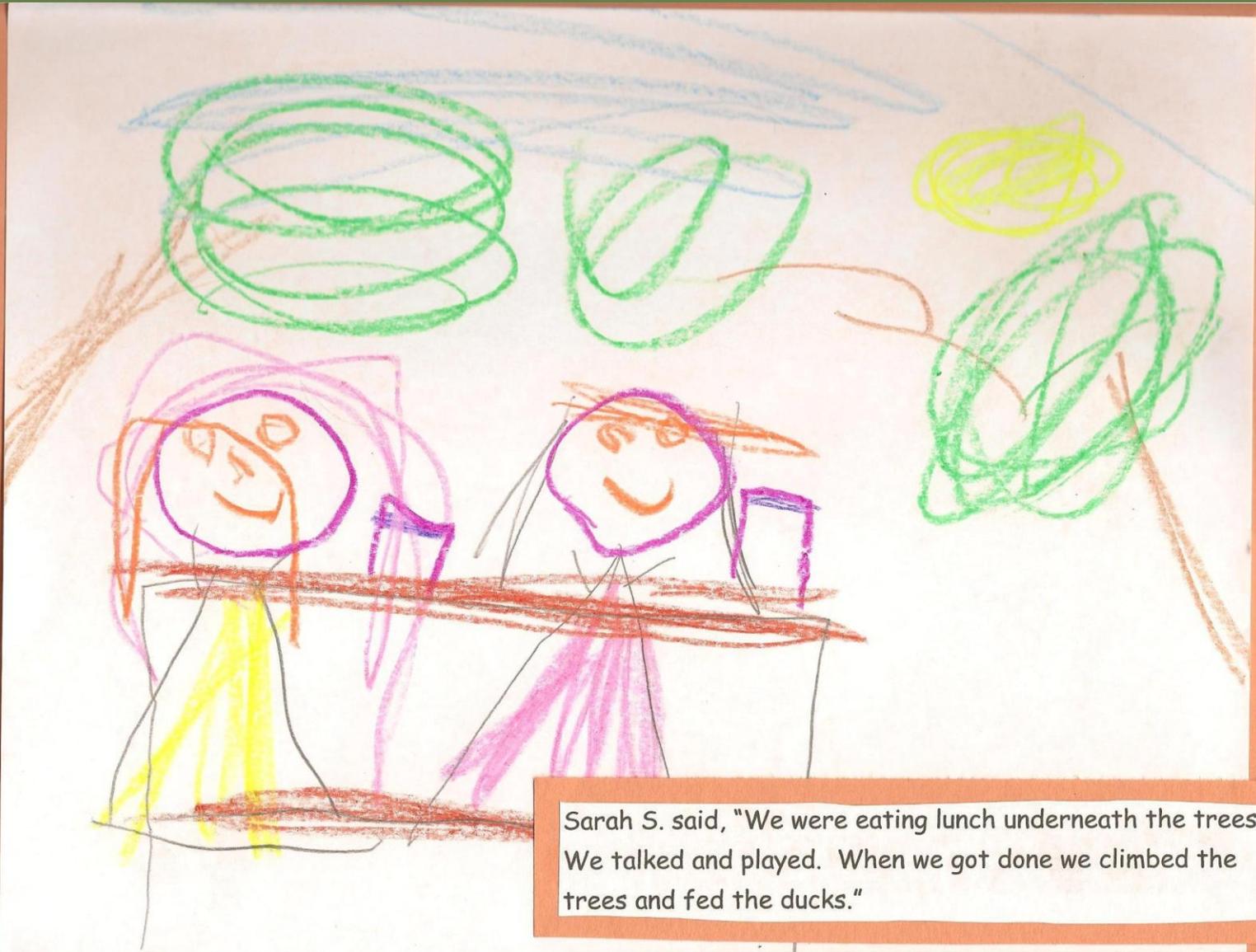
- Planning – detailed planning coupled with a willingness to change direction was essential.
- Technology - everything in this presentation came from the “Voices in the Park” blog. This level of technology use with children was new to us.
- Safety – there are some things I would do differently.

Reflection cont'd.

- Value of family participation – families influenced things we did at the parks but we also influenced families.
- Activities – next time I plan to teach the children to crab and to use a cast net. In addition, we have been a lot more conscious of involving the children in all kinds of cultural opportunities primarily because we aren't scared of the bus.

Reflection cont'd.

- Risk taking – wheelchair, bus system, people trying new things (blog)
- The unexpected bonus was the way in which visiting parks has been a means of connecting with community – a sense of place, people, and the arts.



Sarah S. said, "We were eating lunch underneath the trees. We talked and played. When we got done we climbed the trees and fed the ducks."

Mila said, "I am feeding the ducks. I saw some baby ducks.
They are so cute. I fed them bread. They loved it."



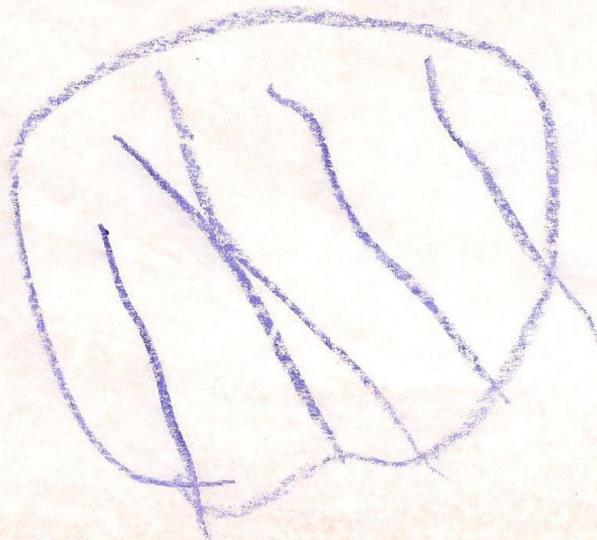


Mae said, "We climbed on trees at Hampton Park but I am not in this picture."

Annika said, "This is the playground at Hampton Park. It was fun. I liked the swing the most."



Anna Bess said, "A beach ball was rolling around without anyone capturing it."



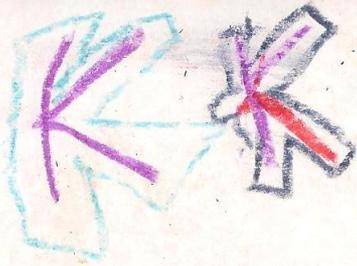
Anna Bess



Anna Bess said, "That's the bus and it is very cool. It has comfortable seats. It is very awesome. Our class is riding on the bus."

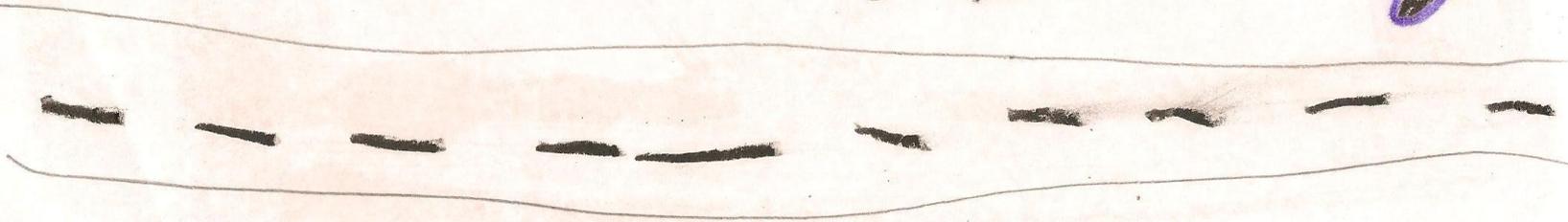
Harry said, "The parents were going with us to help. My mommy, Sarah J.'s grandmother, Sarah S.'s mother and Evy and Mae's daddy went with us. When we got back to ECDC, they left."

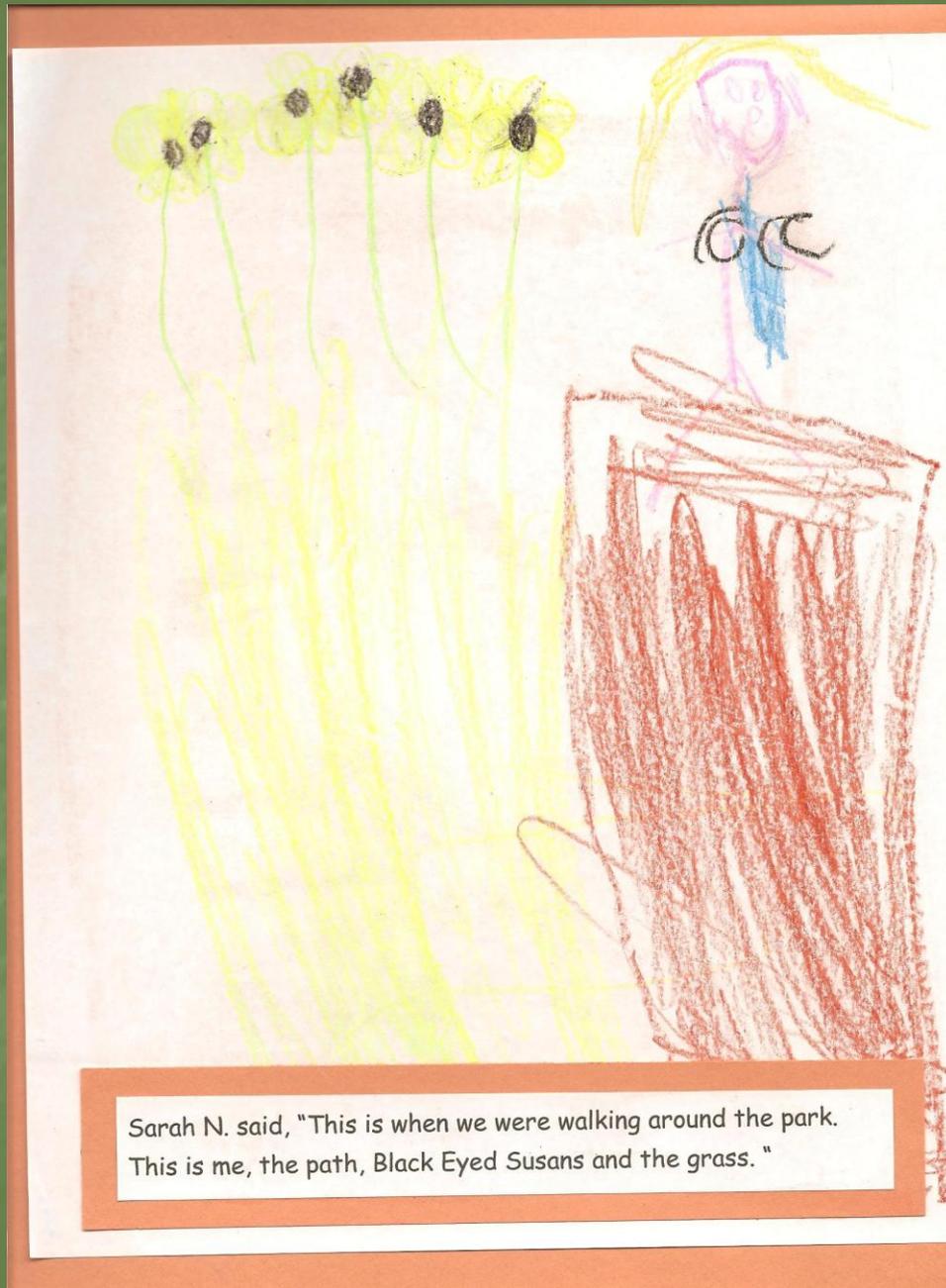




Katharine said, "This is all of us lining up to walk to the bus."







Sarah N. said, "This is when we were walking around the park. This is me, the path, Black Eyed Susans and the grass. "

Evy said, "The Muscovy duck started chasing us so we thought it was a bad duck. We didn't want to give him anymore duck food. He was also the Greedy King of the Ducks."

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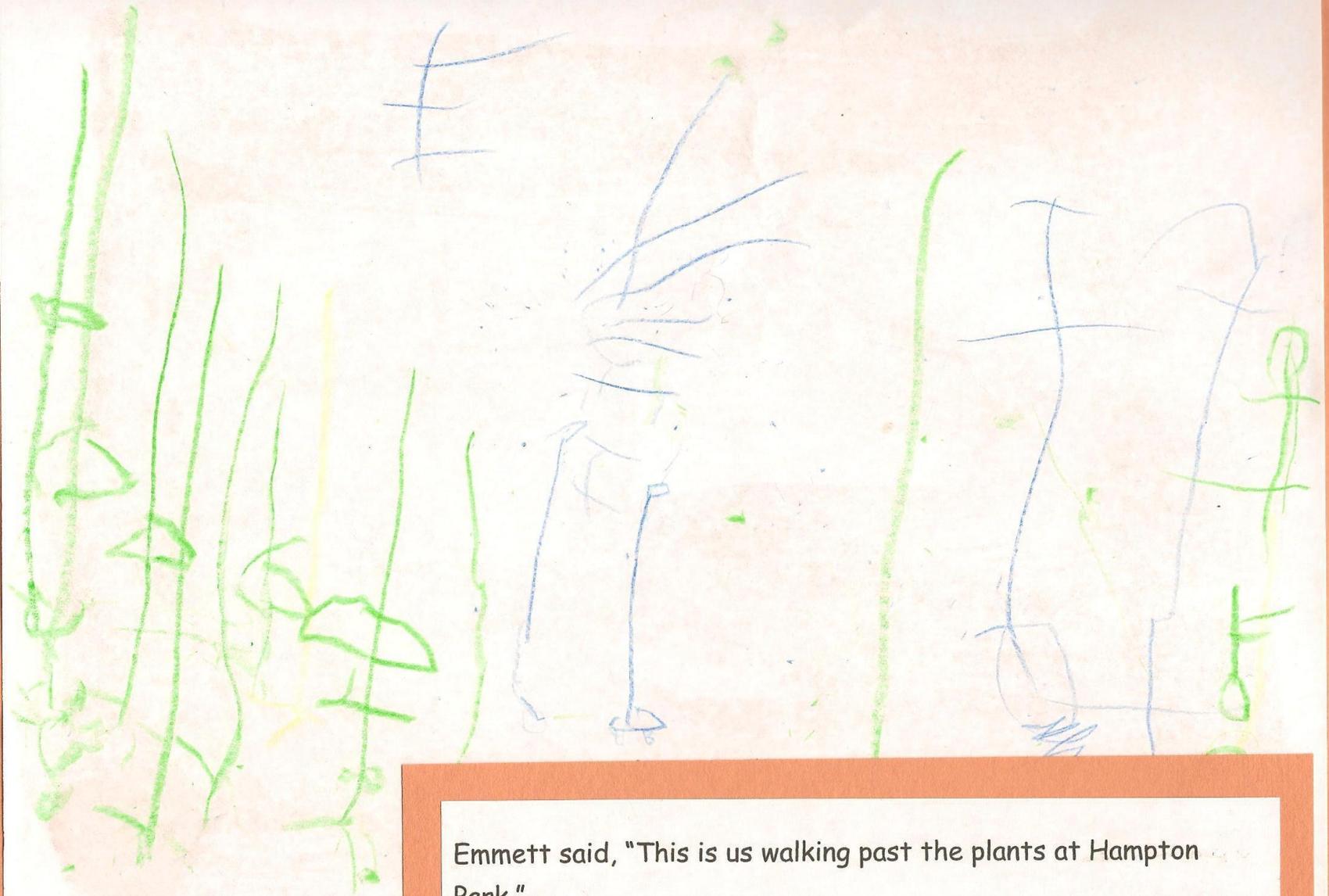


Catie said, "This is me swinging on the tree while I am waiting for my mom to pick me up. I did not ride the bus to the park or back from the park. My mom drove me. My mom drove me because the doctor said my daddy can't drive and my sister does not have her driver's license yet. She has to be 18. My papa has to wait until his back is all better before he can drive."



Sarah J. said, "Miss Mary is getting the stuff from around the room in the basket. She used the Inventory Sheet to know what we needed."





Emmett said, "This is us walking past the plants at Hampton Park."