



The Butterfly Project



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Heidi Bambauer and Trisha Lucas

Each year in the spring the curious young naturalists at Desert Sun become sharp-eyed entomologists by immersing themselves in learning about butterflies and their life cycle.

The children in each class, from Toddlers to Kindergarten, observe the miraculous metamorphosis as live caterpillars change into chrysalides and then hatch into butterflies. "This community building, school wide, multi-week project approach provides inspiration for learning opportunities in every area of development", explains Trisha Lucas.

Children are drawn to nature and their curiosity and excitement is visible as they observe the stages of growth. They dictate to teachers, "things we know" and "things we wonder". The young scientists predict what color the butterflies might be, how long it will take them to hatch, what they will eat, and what adventures they will fly off to. These higher order thinking skills and cognition lead children to story writing and journaling. Children can be heard using words like metamorphosis and chrysalis. It can be fun to pretend that butterflies are sometimes fairies in disguise. The garden is the perfect place to spy one. The Holly Hocks and Sunflowers they planted are now taller than the building and provide the perfect home and source of food for butterflies.

Children are also invested in their own meaningful text. *The Enchanted Pre-K Class* book is the result of their collaboration. The imaginative play continues with designing and building a fairy house and habitat. Heidi Bambauer adds, "This multiday activity requires creative planning and design, problem solving, self-regulation and perseverance. It's not easy when the walls of your fairy house fall and the first design fails, but this is when the real opportunities for learning take place. It is incredible to witness the focus and attention every child devotes to detail."

The children love dressing up as fairies and butterfly explorers to release the butterflies. Our young scientists take a moment to look up, experience nature's beauty, breath, and feel a sense of peace and tranquility. We watch butterflies fly away with new strong wings.

"Just like children, chrysalides develop at different rates. One chrysalis we named "Leo" (the Late Bloomer) took the time he needed to grow and flew away when he was ready. "

As the school year draws to a close, releasing the butterflies is so symbolic and bittersweet. Like the caterpillars, the children have grown and will soon be ready to stretch their own wings and fly off on new adventures.



Desert Sun Child Development Center is accredited by NAEYC and committed to a teaching practices where children learn by actively thinking and experimenting.