

Our Favorite Tree

First Grade Project with Monica O’Gara
City Neighbors Charter School 2017



What are these things?

First graders became interested in the leaves and acorns of an oak tree which was their daily location at dismissal time. Over a number of days they spent time



outside observing and sketching this favorite tree. In documenting what they had learned about the actual shape and representation of the tree, they were introduced to ideas at their level about working a project to excellence (“our first try is usually not our best try,” “draw what you see not what you think you see,” “can another try add more detail and make it better?”) They gathered

their own bags of leaves and acorns from this tree and took them to the classroom. They spent time inside learning about leaf and tree identification.

This work was powerful for these six and seven year old children as it showed them that they could follow a spontaneous interest in school, and deepen their knowledge of the subject using their developing skills of observation and research. It allowed them to “show what they know” in a variety of ways—learning about tree identification, artistic representation, with their growing writing skills. It introduced them to the City Neighbors Way of working to excellence in project work.

