

summer
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OPEN CONNECTIONS™

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Cover: Our 2026 Shaping Your Life Graduates Brian, Thomas, Søren, and Locke have a total of 39 years of OC between them.

Right: Maggie, Everleigh, and Rhian whiz down the sledding hill on a delightful snow day at OC!

Open Connections Magazine

Issue 89 / Summer 2026

Mission

The goal of this *Open Connections Magazine* is to inspire and connect, both with the Open Connections community and beyond. We hope to entice a wider community to get engaged with Open Connections by telling the stories of our community in these pages. As a small and established nonprofit, located just outside of Philadelphia, PA and centered on the mission of empowering people to live their lives full of purpose and fulfillment, we firmly believe that we can have an impact beyond our physical campus. Our hope is that the stories depicted in this magazine will inspire a connection of some sort. Maybe you'll feel connected to your own purpose. Maybe you'll find a connection that resonates with your values. Maybe you will spark a connection with a friend or family member as you have a meaningful conversation about what you've seen printed here. Maybe you'll connect with a story that brings to mind a meaningful memory of growth during your own youth.

At Open Connections, we focus on process over product, and put the learner at the heart of the experience. We value trust, freedom with responsibility, and community. With the strong belief that people are natural learners, we provide an environment and community that allows for individuals to learn in a way that works best for them, at a pace that is comfortable for the learner. With this magazine, we aim to share some of the enchantment that occurs on campus. In these pages, look at how happy, how focused, and how intentional people of all ages are. Open Connections has been and will continue to be a place of great growth and exceptional warmth.

Through this magazine we invite you to connect with us, and explore what a life full of purpose and fulfillment can look like.

Additionally we welcome artwork by adults and youth who are striving to find a voice in photography (or in other forms of artwork that can be photographed clearly for publication).

Staff

EDITOR: Sarah Becker

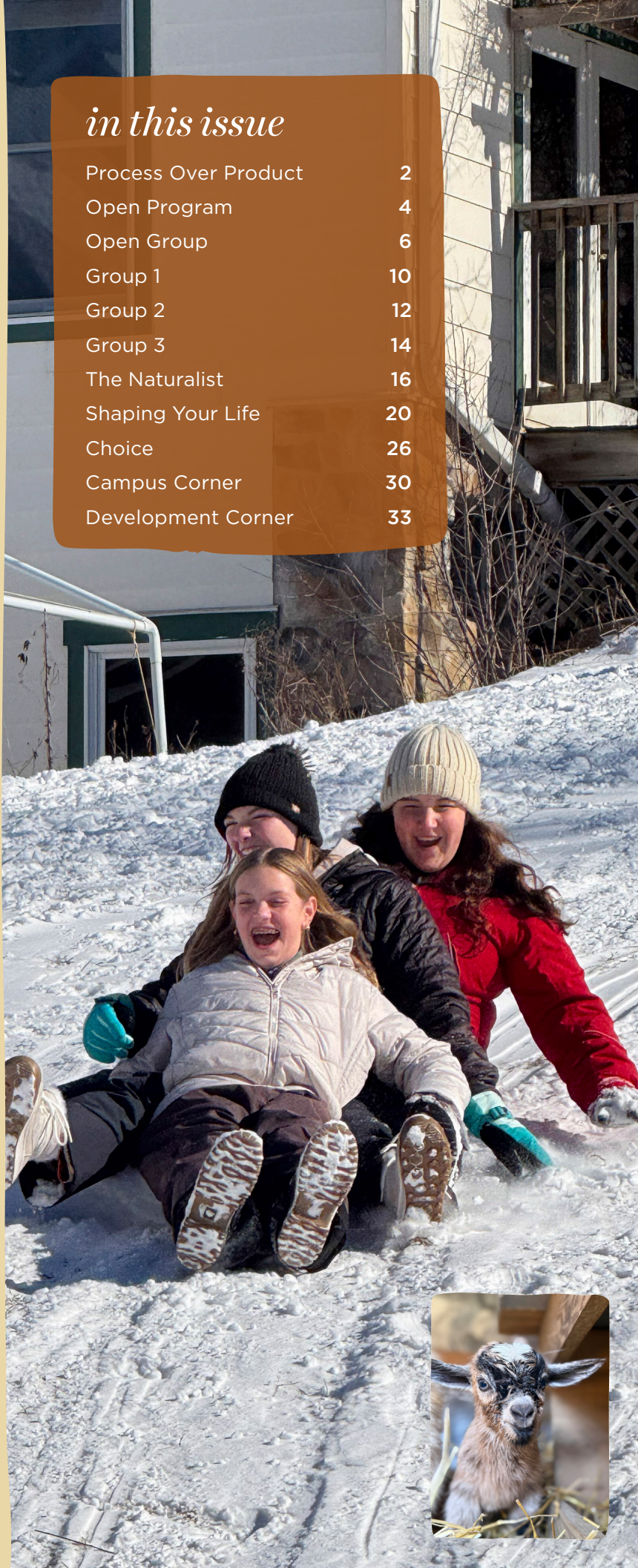
LAYOUT AND GRAPHIC DESIGN: Rick Sleutaris

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FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR

Sarah Becker



Dear Open Connections Community,

Over the last few months and years here at Open Connections, we've learned to notice the way ideas, like dough, start loose and shapeless, and only take form through kneading, folding, and a little (or a lot) of messy experimentation. We know that the real beauty is not in the finished loaf or the perfectly shaped noodle, it's in the hands-on work of figuring it out as a team.

This issue is about celebrating that “in-between” space: the curious, sometimes chaotic, always fascinating middle of learning. It's the moment when a “simple” question sparks ten more, when a “mistake” turns into a new discovery, and when young people (or adults!) realize they are capable of so much more than they imagined. Process over product is a reminder that the acts of trying, testing, and collaborating are themselves the achievements.

Through the pages ahead, you are going to find stories of exploration, improvisation, and delight. These moments didn't start as perfect plans, but became something meaningful because we showed up for it. These stories remind us that the work of learning is not neat and tidy, but it is so worth it.

Here's to the messes, the experiments, the small victories, and the laughs that we have along the way. The results can be delicious, yes. But if you ask us—the process is where the real magic lives.

With immense gratitude and joy,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah".



Open Group youth had a wonderful time exploring Lafferty's Farm—catching toads, spotting snakes, discovering snail shells, and stumbling on other small wonders tucked around the farm.

over

P|R|O|D|U|C|T

By Sarah Becker, Co-director

There's a phenomenon that happens pretty frequently at Open Connections, though you are likely to miss it if you are only looking for polished, finished, and refined products. It's the moment when something doesn't quite work.

A moment when a tower of blocks wobbles, when an experiment stalls out, or a moment when an entire group hits that awkward pause where no one is quite sure what to do next. Those moments when you can almost feel the tension in the air. As staff, we consistently have to fight the urge to fix it quickly, jump to an answer, or to make it "turn out right." We know that some of the most lasting and valuable learning experiences are in those (sometimes painful) moments. Soon, someone will suggest a new approach, or offer a new idea that changes the direction entirely. The grip of the original plan will loosen and in its place forms something

better, more collaborative, creative, and sometimes wildly unexpected.

If you were only measuring the outcome, the product, you might not even see the significance of those moments at all. At Open Connections, however, those moments are pivotal. What unfolds in those moments isn't just the project at hand, it's always a work in progress, just like all of us as individuals. It's young folks learning how to navigate uncertainty, how to stay with something when the going gets tough, how to listen to one another, and how to trust that an answer can be arrived at without it being handed to them.

This is what process over product looks like in action at Open Connections. It looks like the rough drafts that never make it to the final versions. It looks like ideas that evolve so far from where they started that they might be barely recognizable at all. It can also simply be the time spent exploring

something that may not ever "result" in anything concrete, and yet it still matters deeply.

The quiet confidence of "I stuck with that" can never be replaced. Nor could a shared memory of "remember when that wasn't working, and then..." These realizations that the doing, trying, creating, adjusting, breaking down, trying again, proves that the journey was the point all along.

Sometimes, the final products may come: shiny, beautiful, surprising, or even nearly perfect! Other times, the final product never comes, or it's a pile of mush. Frequently, the final product is actually entirely beside the point.

Open Connections philosophy speaks to the real magic, which truly lives in the process. We love living in the messy, collaborative, fully alive space where the real, lasting learning is.





Juniper and Serafina team up to program a series of commands, challenging the Lego robot to perform the actions they identified.



Peter and Kaspien use Kapla Blocks to create a marble rollway. The two take turns testing different marbles to see which will roll the fastest.



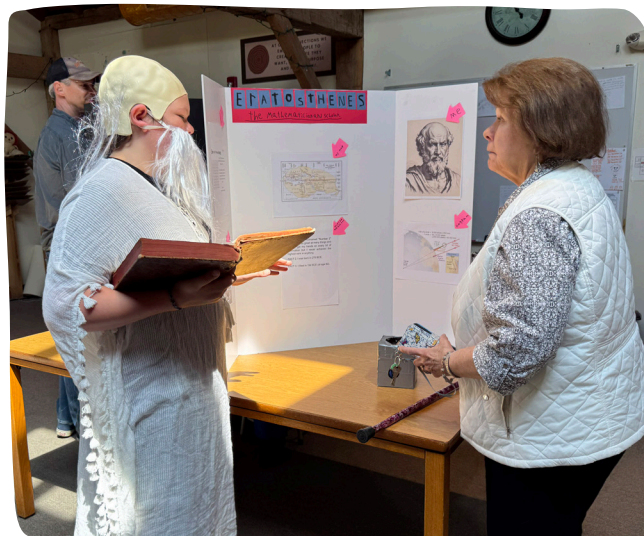
After a bit of problem solving and maneuvering pieces into place, Leo snaps together the final component. With the press of a button, he successfully creates a spinning circuit.



Enzo carefully snuggles a baby chick after After weeks of anxiously awaiting for the eggs to hatch.



Zeke, Ben and Levi work on their independent projects during Choice B: Woodshop.



Eratosthenes, Ancient Greek scholar, came to the last Community Day of the year to share his knowledge and significant scientific and mathematical discoveries. As part of the Group 1 Living Wax Museum, Wally studied and then embodied this famous thinker, much to the delight of a well attended audience.



Adelaide gleefully paints over the wax design of her batiked journal cover.



The Open Program is designed to give young people a voice in shaping the direction of their day. When a youth arrived on a Thursday morning and requested a fishing trip, a group eagerly joined in and headed to the upper pond to try their luck. Luca's excitement shines through as he celebrates catching his very first fish using a homemade stick rod!

MAKING SPACE FOR LEARNING TO BE HUMAN

By Makayla Brockway Facilitator

In the Open Program, we invite young people to choose their own paths and engage with learning in ways that feel meaningful, self-directed, and responsive to who they are as individuals. Our approach centers on process over product, valuing how learning unfolds just as much, if not more, than what is created at the end.

A natural learning environment recognizes that learning is not linear and cannot be standardized. Growth does not happen in neat steps or uniform sequences, and no two learners move through the world in the same way. Every young person arrives with a unique combination of interests, lived experiences, energy

levels, and learning rhythms. In Open Program, we believe that any person can learn anything at any point in their life, and that there is always time to learn new skills. This belief shapes how we spend our days and how we support youth. Rather than pushing toward predetermined outcomes, we create space for exploration, experimentation, and curiosity to lead the way.

Focusing on process means honoring the messy, nonlinear, and often invisible aspects of learning. It means recognizing the value in repetition, trial and error, observation, frustration, rest, and reflection. When a young person spends hours working with take-aparts¹, learning how to work a sewing machine, mixing paint colors, building something in the workshop, or even setting a project aside halfway through—learning is happening, skills are

Kaspien spent the program year creating his own comic series, Maspiens, a name inspired by a combination of his own name and that of his close friend and facilitator, Maggie. Each week, he eagerly shared his latest installment with Maggie, delighting in reading his stories aloud, laughing together, and taking notice of his growth in drawing, writing, and creating over the year.:

During Monday Open Program, youth collaborated to construct a human pyramid, experimenting with strength distribution, placement, and balance in order to safely maintain the structure.





Zak and Leo, all smiles, pass materials for their game down the hole in the fort to a friend. These big tubes make great construction materials for fun fort play during time in the sand-pit.



Keira intentionally chooses materials from the Open Program recycling center as she sets up to create art during her time in program each day. Here she uses a blow dryer to speed up the drying process of her paint so she can quickly move onto the next step in her creation.



The fun never stops in the OP, even during lunch time. Enzo demonstrates how his chocolate morsels stick to the inside lid of his lunch box while creating a design before he enjoys their sweetness.

OPEN PROGRAM

4 to 10 Year-olds

developing, problem-solving abilities are strengthening. Confidence grows quietly and does not require a polished final product to be valid or meaningful.

In Open Program, youth are given the freedom to learn at their own comfort level. This includes the option to move slowly, to pause, to watch before joining in, or to dive deeply into a single interest for extended periods of time. Self-directed learning encourages young people to tune into their own readiness and capacity rather than relying on external pressure, rewards, or comparison. Over time, this nurtures self-awareness and intrinsic motivation skills that support learning beyond academics: developing emotional regulation, decision-making, and lifelong curiosity.

In Open Program, success is not measured by identical projects on display, but by engagement, persistence, creativity, adaptability, and a growing sense of ownership over one's learning journey.

We believe that cultivating a healthy, sustainable relationship with learning is far more valuable than enforcing a one-size-fits-all educational experience. A process-centered environment invites young people to see learning as something they actively participate in, rather than something imposed upon them. Mistakes become sources of information rather than evidence of failure. Changing direction becomes a thoughtful response, not a lack of commitment. Taking time is reframed as deepening understanding rather than falling behind. In Open Program, success is not measured by identical projects on display, but by engagement, persistence, creativity, adaptability, and a growing sense of ownership over one's learning journey.

Process over product also supports meaningful relationships between youth and facilitators, among peers, and within the learners themselves. Without the pressure to perform or produce, young people are more likely to collaborate, ask for help, share ideas, and support one another. Learning becomes relational and communal rather than competitive, creating an environment where curiosity and cooperation can thrive.

Ultimately, Open Program is about honoring the natural ways learning unfolds. When we prioritize process over product, we are not lowering expectations, we are expanding them. We make room for deeper thinking, authentic engagement, and learning that lasts. We support young people in becoming capable, curious, and confident learners who understand that growth is ongoing, adaptable, and available at any stage of life.

¹ At Open Connections, take-aparts are typically some type of device or machine donated by the community that no longer works or serves a purpose. These pieces are taken apart by OP youth to discover the inner workings and explore possibilities in a number of novel ways.

The Project Is the Process: The Learning That Happens Along the Way

By Jane Sleutaris, Open Group Lead Facilitator



Fiona presents the slideshow she created to share her discoveries about spider plants, the topic she chose for her Partnership Project.

What if a project was about the journey of learning as much as the final product? The Partnership Project, a core component of Open Group, is intended to help young people experience learning as a process rather than a product. The name Partnership Project reflects the shared effort between the young people and the adults who support their learning.

Through these projects, young people are invited to follow their curiosity, share their discoveries, and experience learning as something meaningful and engaging rather than something to check off.

Each young person chooses a topic that genuinely interests them: anything from electromagnetism to Greek mythology. The purpose is not only to gather facts, but to give youth space to explore something that sparks their curiosity.

The young people organize what they learn and create a visual aid: either a trifold board or slideshow. They have several weeks to work on their project, giving them time to explore their topic, follow their curiosity, and prepare both their talk and accompanying activity that they will share with the whole group.

The oral sharing portion of the project is designed to feel more

like a show-and-tell conversation than a formally polished presentation, giving young people the opportunity to speak freely about something they enjoy in a safe, supportive environment.

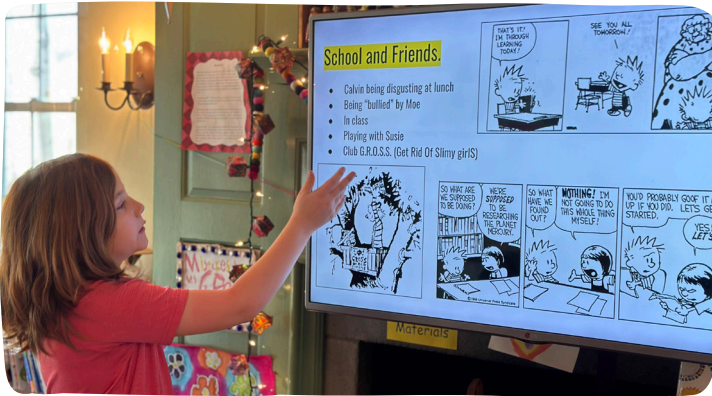
When we emphasize process over product, we shift the focus from “How polished is the final result?” to “How fully did the young person engage in the learning journey?”

Following their talk, they facilitate a hands-on activity connected to their topic.

While there are clear outcomes: an oral and visual sharing of learning, and a hands-on activity, the heart of the project is the learning process itself.

OPEN GROUP

7 to 9 Year-olds



Theo presents what he learned about Calvin & Hobbes through a slideshow he designed for his Partnership Project.



Ari presents the trifold board he created, sharing what he discovered about sloths for his Partnership Project.



Fiona facilitates her peers through the process of planting baby spider plants, the activity she chose for her Partnership Project presentation.



Juniper presents her trifold board sharing what she discovered through her research on Greek Mythology, the subject she chose for her Partnership Project.

When we emphasize process over product, we shift the focus from “How polished is the final result?” to “How fully did the young person engage in the learning journey?”

If a young person learning about the Titanic suddenly wants to test which household objects float or sink in the bathtub, that’s not off task—that’s curiosity at work, engagement, ownership—it’s learning in action.

Of course, emphasizing process over product can feel easier in theory than in practice. Time is finite, and parents are busy. If a project begins just a week before sharing day, there is less room for wandering curiosity and more pressure to “just get it done.” That is why we intentionally build time into the process. Time is a friend of learning, it creates space for ideas to wander, shift, and deepen.

Learning becomes something to be experienced, not something to be completed.

Another possible challenge is our own schooling history. With the best intentions, many of us were taught to attach value to timely work and polished results. Because of that, we have come to believe that a polished product is a reliable measure of learning—but is it, really?

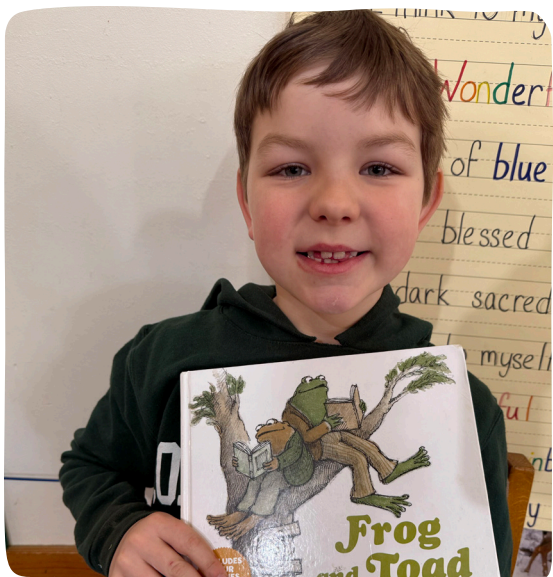
The young people in Open Group are seven, eight, and nine—still discovering, experimenting, and enjoying the process. These are prime years to prioritize curiosity, exploration, and playful engagement over trying to make everything just right.

There will be time—plenty of time—for worrying about mistakes and rushing to finish. These early years are precious, they are for exploration, experimentation, and delight. Learning in these years should feel expansive rather than hurried.

When we focus on process, young folks learn to take risks, tolerate frustration, and revise their thinking. Mistakes are not failures, but invitations to pause, reflect, and discover something new. Learning becomes something to be experienced, not something to be completed.

Partnership Projects invite children to slow down, follow their curiosity, and engage fully in the process. These early years are for experimenting, making mistakes, and finding delight in discovery. The skills, confidence, and wonder cultivated along the way are the most meaningful takeaways, lasting long after the projects are finished.

In the end, trifold boards will be recycled, and slideshows archived. But the habits of curiosity, persistence, and joy in learning? Those will endure.



The Open Program group gathers at the end of each day to share stories, games, projects, connections, and conversations. On this day, Jax eagerly chose to share a story from Frog and Toad, a beloved favorite among the group.



Arthur proudly displays Shade, a Hollow Knight character, that he created during Choice A: Sewing.



Trey is a walking display of his study of Medieval England. He used the Glowforge, Woodshop, and sewing machines to complete this look.



Open Group youth, Owen and Michael, hold their breath as they inspect their egg to see if it survived the drop from the tree platform in the white pines during the group's Egg Drop Challenge..



Leo shows grit and focus as he works to drive a screw into his creation in the Open Program workshop. Using hand tools helps youth build hand strength, coordination, and problem solving skills.



Rhea and Eleanor curiously watch our newly hatched chicks explore their new perch which Eleanor worked to create with natural materials in the OP workshop earlier in the day.



At just a few days old our sweet baby goats share smiles, snuggles, and a bit of goat yoga with our friends on campus. Vincent patiently and calmly waits in the grass for the babies to come over and greet him.



Participants of Choice B: Woodshop display their carefully crafted masterpieces.



The Choice B: Theater cast of "Beauty and the Balland" poses in costume after a sucessful performance.



Keira uses an electric typewriter to write a letter, carefully searching for the letters she needs to spell each word.



Eleanor carefully lines up her nail, making sure to strike it in the right direction so it will secure the dowel holding her project together. In the OP workshop, youth are given the time and space to work through challenges, test ideas, and problem solve their next steps as they bring their creations to life.



Enzo and Kaspien experiment with sound and create music and rhythm with the use of the handpan. This captivating percussive instrument creates meditative sounds and tones, the perfect background music for peers to enjoy while working on creative projects throughout the OP space.



Annie and Olivia continue to work on the mosaic started earlier in the year by the Choice B: Mosaics group.



Alethea shares a cup of tea with her parents, Amber and Derek, at a special Tea Time event hosted by the young people of Open Group. From writing and mailing invitations to decorating aprons, making welcome signs, creating café decorations, and baking fresh scones that morning, the young people took great care in preparing for their guests.



Ari, Bodhi, and Michael lean in, waiting with anticipation, to see if the robot will execute Arlo's commands.

GROUP 1

9 to 11 Year-olds

Flour on the Floor and Other Signs of Learning

By Heather Hurley, Group 1 Lead Facilitator



Working through a stubborn, sticky mass of dough, Jett keeps with it until it starts to smooth out under his hands. Patience seems to be a key to pasta making.



Fork in hand, Nova breaks the yolk and begins pulling flour into the egg — the quiet, careful first step before the hands-on kneading takes over.



Gracie lines up scored, folded, and twisted pieces across her workspace, each one a small experiment in what might happen when it hits the boiling water.



Flour, water, and sticky fingers everywhere — Annie is right in the thick of that early stage where the dough hasn't come together yet but is starting to. The delight on her face tells us she is happy with her work so far.



A neat row of hand-cut fettuccine stretches across Wally's workspace after he rolled and sliced his dough into long, thin ribbons.



Maks splits his kneaded dough in half to begin rolling it out, moving from the messy work of mixing into the more deliberate work of shaping.

When we talk about process over product, we're really talking about the how of learning—not just the what. It's what happens when we stop worrying about the polished outcome and start paying attention to the mess in the middle: the trying, the guessing, the trying again, the figuring-it-out-together part. On a recent Thursday in Group 1, that mess happened to involve a lot of flour.

Young people walked into our room to find strips of paper waiting for them. Each strip named an object, no instructions, no hints, simply: go find it. They took off running! Back and forth to the Barn kitchen, returning with rolling pins and measuring cups and butter knives and forks. Every trip sparked a new theory—are we baking, making pies? By the time everything sat on the table, they landed on it—we're making pasta! Nobody had been told a thing, but they'd pieced it together themselves, building excitement with each trip across campus.

Before we got our hands in the dough, we watched a video about how kneading activates gluten (the stretchy quality that gives pasta its pull). Then came the twist: How do you take something flat, like a lasagna noodle and make it three-dimensional? Think IKEA furniture—flat-packed, shipped easily, unfolded and put together into something new. Inspired by engineers at Carnegie Mellon who scored flat pasta with tiny grooves that caused it to curl into spirals and tubes when it hit boiling water, young people practiced the process with scrap paper. The shape doesn't exist yet when the pasta goes in—it emerges through the process. That idea carried us into our own making.

The Gathering Space transformed into a pasta workshop. Young people mixed and kneaded, learning the feel of dough shifting from loose and shaggy to smooth and pliable. By the time SYL and Group 3 needed the space for lunch, we had mixed, kneaded, and cleaned up the entire room. The dough rested while we ate, and we came back ready for the fun part.

After lunch, the experimentation really opened up. Young people scored flat pieces to see what would happen in the water. They braided dough. They made short noodles, fat noodles, twisted noodles, bowties. Creations hit the boiling water and landed on plates alongside tomato sauce or olive oil and “shakey”¹ cheese. Some pasta was thick and chewy. Some fell apart. All of it got eaten.

Then they cleaned up—again. Twice in one day, scrubbing down a shared space so it was ready for the next gathering. They took extra dough home, and some came back later that week saying they'd made pasta for dinner for their families.

The learning becomes less about arriving at a polished outcome and more about engaging fully in the work of becoming: valuing effort over efficiency, presence over performance, and all the messy iterations.

The process didn't end when the activity did.

When we focus on process over product, we create the space and opportunity for curiosity, experimentation, and joy to lead the way. The learning becomes less about arriving at a polished outcome and more about engaging fully in the work of becoming: valuing effort over efficiency, presence over performance, and all the messy iterations. The trying and trying and trying again? That is quietly where the real learning lives.

¹ Parmesan in the container with the shaker top



Leo's scored pasta pieces sit ready on the table beside a flattened sheet of dough, waiting for their turn in the boiling water.



Bows, braids, pinched edges — Violet holds up a handful of shapes she designed herself during our pasta exploration.



Among Olivia's experiments: an entire family of pasta cats, each one carefully shaped by hand.

GROUP 2

11 to 13 Year-olds

Learning to See:

By Kelly Dillon, Group 2 Lead Facilitator



With curiosity as his guide, Jack dives into the world of the American Goldfinch, his selected species for a year-long exploration of the backyard birds found on the Open Connections campus.



A cheerful gathering of finches and friends enjoys the birdseed lovingly provided by Group 2 as part of their participation in Project FeederWatch, a community-powered citizen science initiative.



Preparing for a season of bird observations, Henry, Lincoln, Luna, and Kelly freshen up the bird feeder station before working with the Naturalist in contributing to Project FeederWatch, a citizen science project that helps monitor bird populations.



A rare Kellybird sighting captivates a wrapt audience of Group 2 members.



Sometimes the greatest discoveries come from slowing down. Watching the feeder's frequent flyers up close gave Group 2 a chance to appreciate the beauty and behaviors of wild birds in a way that isn't always possible.



Josh, Calliope, and Annabelle watch the feeder station on a cold and snowy morning to look out for any new or unfamiliar feathered friends.

Process Over Product in Project FeederWatch

Over the past several months, Group 2 has been participating in a Citizen Science program: Project FeederWatch¹. Throughout their participation, the most meaningful learning has come not from final results, but from the steady, layered process of paying attention. At first, the task seemed simple enough: maintain a bird feeding station and record what visits. But very quickly, folks realized that this work depends on consistency, patience, and care. Refilling feeders, checking for cleanliness, and making sure the space remains inviting are all activities that have become shared responsibilities. These routines can ground the group, creating a sense that their small, repeated actions matter.

Observation is the heart of the experience. Instead of rushing to identify birds immediately, people have learned to slow down and notice. They watch how birds approach the feeder: some boldly, some cautiously. Some may notice patterns: which species arrive reliably in the early morning, which prefer the edges of the space, which prefer foraging for fallen seed on the ground, which scatter at the slightest movement. The act of observing shifted from “looking for answers” to “learning how to see.”

Identification seems to grow naturally out of this careful attention. With guidance from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology Inside Birding Series videos, young people have begun using size and shape as their first clues, then layering in color and pattern, and finally behavior and habitat. A bird is no longer just “brown” or “small,” but something with a curved beak, a streaked chest, a habit of hopping rather than walking. Misidentifications are naturally a common part of the process, and provide opportunities to hone our observation skills, develop our reasoning and refine our thinking.

Counting the birds introduced a new kind of challenge. Small, fast-moving creatures do not wait to be neatly tallied. It was essential to develop strategies: counting in clusters, tracking movement, double-checking one another’s observations. We’re

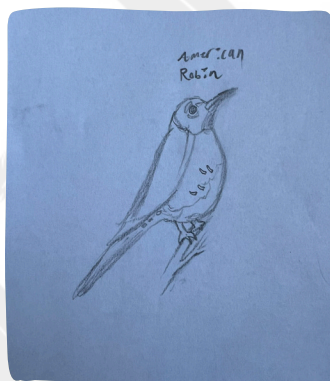
learning that data collection is not about perfection, but about careful approximation supported by clear methods. This has led to a deeper understanding of the Project FeederWatch protocol. Why count within a specific time window? Why record the highest number of individuals seen at once? Why not count both the female and male Cardinals that are seen separately at different times? These guidelines feel less like arbitrary rules and more like tools that allow many observers, in many places, to contribute meaningful data.

Selecting a single bird species to study more deeply has helped the process become even more personal. Through repeated observation, research, and sketching, Group 2 citizen scientists are building familiarity. Sketching, in particular, can slow the observers down further. To draw a bird requires noticing proportions, posture, and subtle markings that might otherwise be overlooked. Research can fill in gaps like their diet, migration patterns, vocalizations—but it’s often connected to what they have seen themselves.

Sharing their knowledge with each other brings the process full circle. They are not just presenting facts, they are telling the story of how they came to know something. They might explain how their ideas changed over time, what they got right, what they may have had wrong, what surprised them, and what questions remain. In doing so, they may see that learning is not a straight line toward a correct answer, but an ongoing cycle of observation, reflection, and revision.

Throughout the experience, the emphasis on process over product has allowed us all to value curiosity, persistence, and attention to detail. The birds may have been the focus, but the real growth lies in the development of mindsets that extend far beyond the feeder.

¹ FeederWatch engages people in observing birds and mammals that visit backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales anywhere in the U.S. and Canada. (feederwatch.org, 2026)



GROUP 3

13 to 15 Year-olds

Science Expo: More Than the Results

By Michelle West, Group 3 Lead Facilitator

Process over product is a guiding principle for facilitators at Open Connections. When we find ourselves worrying about polish and pomp, we gently remind ourselves that the sweet spot for learning is in the messy middle. No project in Group 3 illustrates this truth more aptly than the Science Expo.

Every other year the young people of Group 3 participate in a months-long exploration of the scientific method. They ask questions, design experiments, consider procedures, create endless data tables, graph their data, analyze graphs, and attempt to draw conclusions from their results. They engage with these separate pieces of the process through carefully designed group learning experiences at the start of the year, and eventually they put them all together in their individual or paired Science Expo projects. These projects are presented in their final form during a spring Community Day. Although the tri-fold boards speak to the results, the youth talk to community members about their experiences, attempting to give a window into the fascinating process.

Strikingly, the youth will often talk about their failures during these presentations! We encourage them to do so, of course, grounded in our belief that the path to growth is not a simple victory lap. The challenges that the youth face in creating these projects provide so many opportunities for problem-solving and flexible thinking.



Jack and Lee discovered that their ice froze quite unevenly in the farmhouse freezer. They compensated for this potentially confounding variable by carefully measuring their ice blocks on each corner and averaging the thicknesses.



Isaac and Madhava used an anemometer to measure wind speed at various elevations around campus. They landed on this experiment after being foiled repeatedly by faulty and disappearing equipment. Changing their question and procedure helped them develop more skill in both data collection and graphing.

Ben created a project that tested the velocity of various 3D-printed objects, specifically comparing the rear shapes as they moved through the water. Besides the predictable challenges of building the apparatus to test his hypothesis, Ben discovered that the frame by frame counting of his video recordings was an impossibly time-consuming task. With Sarah Becker's support he put technology to work for him in a way that he did not anticipate. Making the procedure work was the first step. Making the data collection process work was another entirely.



When Everleigh and Maggie decided to test the effect of warming up on their softball swing, they didn't imagine conducting that experiment in the snow and ice. They lost balls to the white landscape, trekked over campus with heavy equipment and sodden shoes, and did their jumping jacks in truly frigid temperatures. Their grit was repeatedly tested by the environmental conditions, as they found themselves in a too-late-to-change position while the clouds rolled in.



Jack focuses on the task at hand during a Group 3 activity.



Gracie's peer facilitation inspired the group to create small reindeer using natural materials. Violet presents her own tiny creature, complete with bow and necklace.



Kayaking was just one of the outdoor activities youth enjoyed on the 3 Life group's overnight trip to Cape Henlopen State Park. Pictured left (chaperone), Locke, Hazel, Francie, Uma, Linda (facilitator), and Søren.



Following Annie's peer facilitation on the immortal jellyfish, Charlie shares up his gluegun-created tentacles before dropping them into a jar to create a jellyfish calming jar.



Zak displays his new gift, a super cute clown created at the Open Program art table by a friend, (and facilitator), Makayla. This artistic gift has been an inspiration to so many youth over the years, working to develop their own artistic creativity.



Madhava, Nate, and Jack recreate a hilarious approximation of the childhood game Hungry, Hungry Hippos on the frozen lower pond.

This year in the OP Lucy has worked to develop her designing and sewing skills, creating quite the wardrobe. Here Lucy makes use of the dressing form while creating a shawl out of delicate fabric, carefully adding a touch of silky ribbon to the edges.

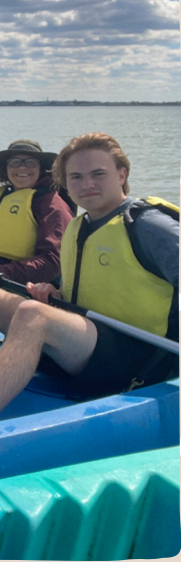


Gabriella, Sage, and Keira collaborate on a game of Guess Who? It takes teamwork to choose just the right character to challenge the opposing team.



Open Program friends Peter, Finch, and Everett take a much-needed break from a game of tag. A favorite resting spot, a giant rock that sits in the middle of the pond, provides a perfect resting space.





Shaping Your Life to right: Rick



Belle works on a one of a kind fabric design using a process called batik. Batik uses hot wax to create designs on fabric by resisting dye, allowing intricate patterns and vibrant colors to emerge. The young people of the Open Program worked through each step of the process to create their own colorful fabric masterpieces.



Shaping Your Life members raided the costume closet and assumed their best voguing pose for a creative group photo. From upper left: Chase, Søren, Brian, Thomas, Locke, Francie, Uma, Hazel.



Open Group youth were challenged to build cars powered by wind, generated by a fan or hairdryer, using plastic caps, wood skewers, paper straws, and materials from the art and recycling area.

ch needed break during an energetic by the sand-pit, offers the perfect

Bundled up and full of anticipation, Jack, Calliope, and Henry share a sled for a joyful jaunt down the Open Connections sledding hill.



Charlotte watches as Keira writes descriptions next to photos from the year in her special OP book. These "year books" are more than a record of activities. They create ongoing opportunities for young people to develop skills throughout the program year, and over time they become a longitudinal lens through which each young person can observe their own growth and development.



NATURALIST GROUP

9 to 13 Year-olds

Where the Wild Things Learn

By Chris McNichol and Julie Smith, Facilitators

In a world that often celebrates finished products, polished presentations, and tidy results, The Naturalists takes a different trail through the woods. Here, the real magic lives in the process: muddy boots, curious questions, half-finished experiments, and the occasional wrong turn are not distractions from learning. They are the learning.

Young explorers spend their days immersed in forests, fields, creeks, and open skies. While there are certainly projects along the way, the heart of the program is not about producing a perfect artifact or reaching a predetermined outcome. Instead, it is about the journey of discovery that unfolds when youth are given time, space, and encouragement to explore the natural world.

A typical day in the Naturalist program might begin with a question rather than an assignment. Why do some leaves stay on trees longer than others? What creatures leave tracks in the mud near the creek? How do deer shed their antlers? How do birds survive the winter? From there, the group might spread out with notebooks, magnifying glasses, or simply their senses. They observe, test ideas, compare notes, and sometimes change their minds entirely when nature offers a surprise.

In many traditional settings, mistakes are something to correct quickly. At Open Connections, they are something to examine closely. If they find no bones in an owl pellet, the group studies why. If they run out of wood for Hot Lava¹ it brings up a conversation on collaboration, team work and communication. Every unexpected outcome becomes another doorway into understanding.

This emphasis on process allows youth to practice important skills that extend far beyond the outdoors. Patience grows while waiting quietly to spot wildlife. Collaboration develops while building boats and collecting supplies for our expedition. Critical thinking takes shape as youth calculate their steps as a method to measure distance in the field. These moments often happen slowly and organically, like the growth rings of a tree.

The Naturalists are currently preparing to reenact the Lewis and Clark Expedition. During the preparation for this project the young folks are

honing the skills they will need for their journey. Lewis, Clark, and their team realized the assigned “product” of reaching the Pacific Ocean was more than just having the Pacific in their sight. They needed to learn how to overcome obstacles, find food, learn from failure, and collect data, all while learning to work together, along the way.

In the end, the goal of The Naturalist program is not just to produce a project or complete an activity. It is to cultivate careful observers, thoughtful problem solvers, and curious explorers. The woods, fields, and streams become more than scenery, they become partners in learning.

¹ Hot Lava is a game that we play in the Gravel Yard at Open Connections that requires youth to cross the entire Gravel Yard as a team by using pieces of wood under their feet to prevent them from touching “hot lava” (aka the ground).



What do you do when its 90 degrees in May? Jump in the pond of course! The Naturalists take a break to jump in the pond to cool off.



The Naturalists have been working on cutting a new trail in the park across the drive. Here the crew uses some creative problem solving to remove a stubborn invasive honeysuckle from the trail.



Exploring in the woods is a favorite Naturalist pastime. Here part of the group investigates the crater left behind from a fallen down tree.



The group gets cozy in the debris hut shelter they build up on the hill. They had to work together to build it big enough for all to fit inside.

SHAPING YOUR LIFE

15 to 18 Year-olds

How Commitment to the Process Deepens the Product: The SYL Symposium Experience

By Linda Soffer, Sheila Pai, Facilitators and the SYL Youth

For teens in the Shaping Your Life Program, both process and product take on considerably more weight, with increased expectations and greater consequences of one's choices on both sides of the equation. Many of our large projects span the bulk of the program year and demand a substantial investment of energy over time, and require a greater degree of planning & organization, attention span, motivation, and grit. Our "products", like fundraising events and the Teen Research Symposium, are more public and invite greater scrutiny from the broader OC community. However, while the products might receive more attention in SYL, it is still the reflection, understanding, and learning in the process that leads to meaningful growth. In addition, we have found that the repeated experience of a process often yields valuable benefits beyond that held by any individual product.

This year, SYL group members spent 24 weeks engaged in the Symposium process, including brainstorming, topic selection, researching, outlining, writing, and developing presentations. While we shared a collective schedule, youth worked independently outside of program on their individual projects. Program time was devoted to workshoping ideas, sharing progress, and giving & receiving feedback from both peers and facilitators. Five group members presented their work more formally to an audience of teens and adults at the evening Teen Research Symposium, while three group members presented to peers and parents in a more informal program setting. After all presentations were concluded, the group engaged in a multifaceted reflection process, including partner, small group, and whole group discussions, and individual written reflections on both the Symposium process and the product this year.

The following quotes capture some pieces of the insight gained by group members:



Uma presents opening remarks for the "con" team in the debate on the First Amendment held as part of the group study on the art of persuasion and the avoidance of logical fallacies.

Even though sometimes it felt like I didn't need to workshop the same thing twice, once I did it I gained so many more ideas and I found it really valuable. When you take more time with a process you learn more about how to learn, and the product becomes stronger and more refined.

Uma, 1st year SYL



Chase and Francie exchange the research they have done to identify the strongest and most relevant criteria they will use to determine "the best" in each of their chosen subtopics.



Francie and Hazel ensure a balance between evidence and explanation in the drafts of their research papers by highlighting each element in a different color.

Brian prepares his rough outline of points for his peers to provide feedback on clarity, relevance, flow and depth in the context of his working thesis statement.



Finding a balance between process and product strengthens your work. You fully grow along with what you are making and learning.
Francie, 1st year SYL

Initially, the small deadlines felt really small and progress felt slow, however, I gained a better understanding this year that tightening these deadlines would leave less time for the deep thinking that happens in the weeks where it seems not much physical work is getting done, and I think the result was better for this.
Søren, 3rd year SYL



Søren revises his thesis statement after receiving feedback from peers on wording, clarity, strength and specificity, knowing that this working thesis will be held lightly through the writing process as ideas continue to develop.

When the process is lengthened, like with Symposium, you learn how to work with yourself. I'm glad I went back and changed things so many times and I'm glad I got feedback from others.
Chase, 1st year SYL

The process can teach you many lessons that just the product can't. The things learned on the way are more beneficial than just the end product itself.
Brian, 3rd year SYL

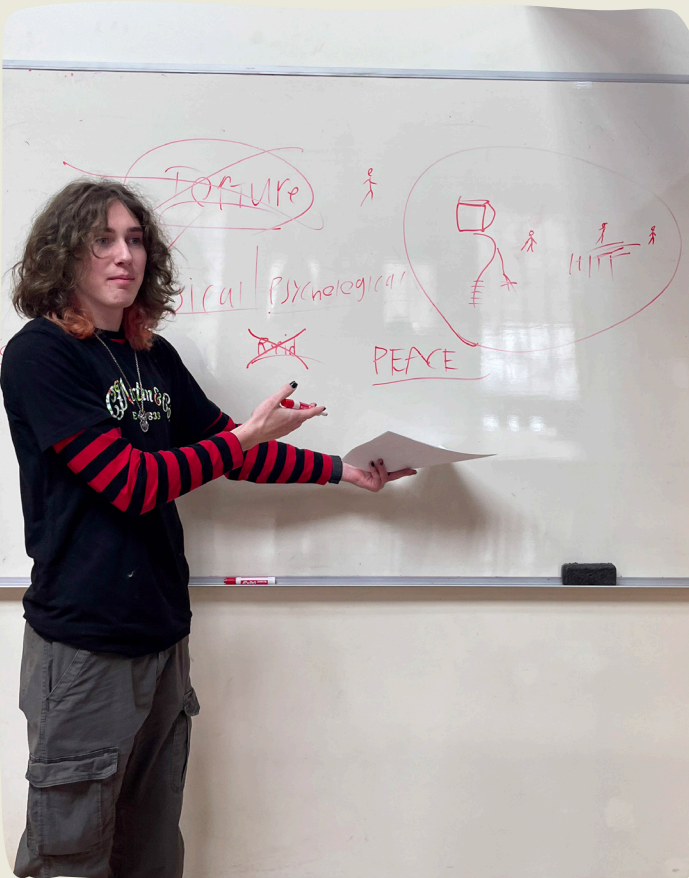


Thomas, Søren, and Hazel scrutinize their final writing and share how they have incorporated the three modes of persuasion: logos, pathos, and ethos in preparation to begin developing their presentations.

A focus on process results in a deeper and more complete understanding of your topic and in a stronger product. It also enables you to learn more about yourself and how you work best.
Hazel, 1st year SYL

Spending more time and energy in a process gives you more time to think of ideas and get feedback. The product becomes more intricate and finalized, and you learn how to be more productive with your time.
Thomas, 2nd year SYL

Over my years at OC, I have done about 10 different research projects. Although the products have all varied, the processes have built upon each other every year.
Locke, 3rd year SYL



Uncertain of how to make a slideshow about his topic "The Best Method of Interrogation" Thomas does a run-through of his draft presentation using the whiteboard, which sparked his imagination and led to a decision to make his own slides.



Locke does a final rehearsal for his presentation in preparation for the SYL Teen Symposium evening event, refining his speaker presence, use of screens, and overall audience engagement.



Open Group youth were challenged to build a wind powered car using plastic caps, wood skewers, paper straws, and materials from the art and recycling area. With Michael cheering him on, Owen puts his creation to the test using a fan.



As part of their self-designed "Day of Relaxation," Group 2 embraced the calming practice of a sound bath. After the session, Jack and Noah joined Rick in experimenting with handpans, discovering new rhythms, tones, and possibilities through music.



Leo and Matteo test their reflexes during the hands-on activity following John's peer facilitation on neurons — turns out, none of us could grab that ruler quite as fast as we thought we could.



Zak, Eleanor, Nora, Everett, and Sage eagerly watch as one of our chicks works to break free of its shell and take its first steps, or rather stumbles in the warm incubator. This was an amazing miracle to witness during Open Program time.



Lila presents her peer facilitation on turtles with a confidence and composure that marked real growth from her first year in the program to her second.

PAUSING FESTIVAL

Our annual end-of-year tradition where we come together one final time before summer begins—to celebrate, reflect on the year behind us, and say “see you soon” to friends old and new.



Open Group took the stage to play a few songs for the community at Pausing Ceremony, using kazoos they made from wood craft sticks, rubber bands, and plastic straws.



Shaping Your Life Graduates Thomas, Brain, Søren, and Locke share words of gratitude and appreciation for the OC Community at the Pausing Festival.



Jack entertains the crowd with his guitar and looper.



Open Program youth sing "I Love My Body" during the second set of Pausing Festival.



Sheila leads a group brainstorming and problem solving activity around the most effective and efficient ways to organize the work for the OC Mudder obstacle course.



Uma, Andi, and Ben test out a buoy/anchor setup that will eventually become one of the challenges in the OC Mudder.



Emma uses a kanban to help her crew organize tasks for the upcoming OC Mudder obstacle course.



Final show stopper round entry during the Choice B Art of the Cookie offering.



Charlotte tries her hand at batik, an art form which uses hot wax to resist ink and create a one-of-a-kind fabric art piece.

A Peek into OC Graduation



OC graduates Brian, Søren, Locke, and Thomas pose with their photo books commemorating their years at Open Connections.



OC graduates Brian, Søren, Locke, and Thomas pose with their photo books commemorating their years at Open Connections.



Facilitators and moms, Jane and Megan, share a special moment as their sons prepare to speak at their graduation.

CHOICE PROGRAMS

9 to 18 Year-olds

Choice A: Preserving Food

By Heather Gosse, Facilitator

In Choice A: Preserving Food, it was, of course, fun to have food we could eat at the end! But there was always a journey to get there. The cheese-making journey was a particular favorite, as the group got the joy of pouring whole gallons of milk into the pot, the magic of watching coagulation happen, the challenge of gently heating and stirring for a long time, and the fun of tasting our own cheese!

In Choice A: Preserving Food, the learning could appear in any part of the process. Here, the group works on a lab that showed how enzyme activity slows down at cooler temperatures, which helps explain why refrigeration and freezing are important forms of preserving food. But today's learning included learning to manipulate a fizzing paper disc with a pair of tweezers, using a stopwatch, recording data in a data table, and calculating averages, as Olivia, Arthur, Leo, and Maggie demonstrate!



Andi sands wooden animals that she created for her baby cousin.

Choice B: Woodshop

By Chris McNichol, Facilitator

In woodshop, the real magic happens long before the final coat of paint or the last screw goes in. Each session is a small adventure in measuring, adjusting, trying again, and learning from the occasional crooked cut. Youth spend time experimenting with tools, sharing ideas, and helping one another solve problems. The focus is on patience, persistence, and curiosity. By the time a project is finished, the real accomplishment isn't just what sits on the bench, but everything learned along the way.



Madhava uses the band saw to cut the remaining pieces of the wooden bench he designed and constructed.

Choice A: Stop Motion

By Megan Marran, Facilitator

In our stop motion offering, youth dove into the full creative process — designing original characters, constructing intricate sets and props, and mapping out stories through storyboards. While not every young filmmaker captured a completed movie in eight weeks, every one of them built something just as meaningful: a rich imaginative world. The care poured into each hand-crafted detail, every sketched scene, and every character brought to life is the real work of storytelling. Here, the journey is the product.



Henry M. proudly holds a pillow he hand-stitched for his mom as he experiences that common elation at the end of a process moving from doubt and overwhelm at such a big project into completion.

Choice A: Sewing Naturally

By Sheila Pai, Facilitator

Sewing Naturally focused on independence in some key, basic skills: threading the needle, selecting and cutting thread, tying the initial and end knots and even ironing. The first half of the sessions were focused on practice with general skills and stitches whereas the second half lent freedom to apply the stitches and skills on simple projects such as a stuffed pocket pet. Moving past pretty and perfection, confidence grew with effort and practice. The group was able to persist and stay flexible through challenges and bring calm focus, generous support, curiosity and competence as they worked over a month or more on the skills to do their projects with more independence than perhaps even they were expecting.



Annie and Mabel use a combination of clay, colored paper, and cotton balls on their collaborative stop-motion video.



Lincoln and Maks tinker with lighting and camera angles as they decide on the best way to record their stop-motion animation.



Annie S. picks out sequins and tiny beads to use her newest stitch skill to add stars and finish up her stitch sampler which includes chain, back, split, running and satin stitch.

Choice B: Screenwriting

By Sarah Becker, Facilitator

Given we only have eight weeks, Screenwriting Choice B did not focus on finishing a product but on the creative writing process. Each week, we explored a different writing exercise, fleshing out character motivation, pushing our plot elements towards complexity and developing both external and internal conflict. Our warm up writing - meant to be unconstrained, freedom to explore ideas - regularly ended up in our pieces as these moments helped us to better understand our ideas and to get out of limitations on creativity and into the realm of possibility. Writing and creativity are both processes that thrive with time, freedom, some constraints, openness, curiosity and willingness to explore. This Choice B group dove into all this with enthusiasm!



After developing main characters with motivations, quirks, challenges and internal as well as external conflict, Ben S., Madhava P., Isaac P. and Nate Q. chose a main character's persona to portray as they met with other characters/youth explaining their basic info, motivations and conflicts while asking each other questions to test out ideas and reveal more nuance and develop their screenplays.

Choice B: History Through Pop Culture

By Kelly Dillon, Facilitator

This collective study invited Choice B youth to explore history through pop culture with a focus on the process of inquiry, discussion, and collaborative learning, rather than on memorizing historical facts or achieving a specific outcome. Each participant researched content of personal interest within a common, agreed upon pair of decades, spanning the 1920's through present day within our eight weeks together. Using their curiosity as a guide, youth tracked trends, fads and cultural movements while researching popular dances, celebrities, unexplained phenomenon, cryptid sightings, politics, aviation and air travel, popular games and the rise of video games,



In support of our 1980s and 90s focus in week 4 of Choice B: History Through Pop Culture, Andi brought in her mother's well-loved Cabbage Patch doll (introduced in 1982), Ginny Lulu.

and professional sports. Questioning, connecting, and reflecting together, allowed ideas to evolve and potential patterns to emerge over time. This approach invited folks to connect with the past in a more relatable and immersive way, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation for historical events and their cultural significance, while also supporting the possibility to make connections between the past and the present day.



Investigating a 1950s fad of phone booth stuffing, with a reproduction of a telephone similar to one from the 1920s, Choice B: History Through Pop Culture folks easily gather themselves into a space measuring the typical dimensions of a phonebooth. The record is 25 people (set in 1959); could we fit 19 more?



After sizing and constructing a cardboard crown that will function as wearable scaffolding for his mask, Wally continues crafting the mask foundation, applying a technique inspired by work he had seen displayed by the Shaping Your Life program in the Gathering Space. The foil and masking tape are light weight, malleable and relatively forgiving materials, well suited for mask-making.

Choice A: Puppets and Masks

By Kelly Dillon, Facilitator

The very first week of Choice A: Puppets and Masks, all makers were invited and encouraged to create a mood board, gathering inspiration without overthinking - a collection of images, color, patterns, textures, words etc. - to collage with the loose intention of cultivating inspiration and ideas for potential projects. Throughout the 8 weeks, folks had the freedom to encounter curiosity and challenges as they pursued their unique ideas, with opportunity to engage and stretch their imagination and creativity while navigating the problem-solving and decision making inherent in nurturing an idea into becoming. The process may have invited using new materials or developing a new skill. Rather than focusing on outcomes, the program emphasized exploration, iteration and discovery, while perhaps gaining some confidence in creative expression.



Choice A: Puppets & Masks kicks off the first week collaging images, colors, textures, patterns, words etc. into unique individual mood boards to generate inspiration and the beginnings of ideas for possible projects in the weeks ahead.

Choice B: Lego Robotics

By Heather Gosse, Facilitator

This year, Choice B: Lego Robotics attempted challenges on a FIRST Lego League competition board. We weren't bound by the rules of the actual competition, so different group members were able to pursue goals of their own choosing within this world of possibilities. It was fun to see the different styles develop, ranging from slow and deliberate to speedy, from focusing on a single area of learning like programming turns to making one robot that could tackle as many tasks as possible.

In Choice B: Lego Robotics, the vast majority of our time was spent experimenting, trying, failing, and trying again. Lee and Isaac demonstrated considerable persistence and perseverance over many weeks as they worked on the Feed the Whale challenge. They experimented with different ways of interacting with the whale construct in addition to different methods to reach their goals. Here, they think through the motion that would be necessary to dump a load of krill into the whale's mouth.



Slow Living and Learning in Huatulco

Unschooling our family of five at La Bocana de Copalita, a small village on the south pacific coast of Mexico.

By Olivia Holdsworth and Carlos López Rosa

We decided, like so many other courageous and creative people here at OC, not to put our kids in school. Despite all the mothers in my breastfeeding support group talking about getting their babies into daycare as though that was making it to the finish line, a small voice inside me said “this is just beginning.” I wanted to be with Luca! I was getting to know him, and myself, and experiencing the world through his new eyes seemed like the best thing I could do—so I quit my full-time job. Eight years and two more boys later, our journey has taken us places we could not have imagined, except for that we did imagine it.

We dreamed about raising our kids somewhere wild: where they could be free to explore the natural world and feel connected to the people, animals, and plants around them. We wanted to live slow somewhere, in a community where neighbors take care of each other and the

land and sea sustain life. We wanted (our kids) to be healthy and content, to trust (them) our-selves and the process. Unschooling has always been rooted in this desire to experience the world together as a family, to be open to the learning that happens naturally when we slow down and pay attention to what’s happening both inside and outside us.

Learning happens in moments that are easy to miss if we aren’t looking, and easy to dismiss if we’re focused on someone else’s metrics of success. Moments like when Baby Rio first plunged down underwater, or Enzo stood up on the surfboard, or Luca held an octopus and squealed with glee as the tiny suckers enveloped his arm. Learning makes us feel alive! In Huatulco, our kids are learning to speak Spanish, fish, climb, make tortillas by hand, and identify wild plants that are used for food and medicine. They are looking forward to learning how to spear

fish and sail. Beyond any life skills that can be listed or measured, the process of relocating here has taught us more subtle lessons en carne propia, (“in one’s own flesh”) like how little we need to be happy, that home is wherever the people you love are, that growth occurs when we move outside our comfort zones, and that plants and animals are also our teachers.

We certainly do not have it figured out, and the learning curve when moving to another country can feel steep, but our hope is to move slowly through each day, paying attention to what life teaches us in all the (big) small moments. Life is sweeter, and learning is deeper when experienced sin prisa, or “without hurry.”





Inspired by Lynda Barry's encouragement to approach art with curiosity and courage, Josh explores the process of creating in a new way. By using a long stick to shift his perspective he can discover what happens when we let go of familiar tools.



Shaping Your Life members Uma, Francie, Hazel, and Chase work together to calculate allele frequencies for their population of (imaginary) Flurberts after a particularly rough winter, which altered the gene pool in favor of long-haired Flurberts.



Madhava shows his perfectly press-fitted Glowforge creation. This totem represents the culmination of his studies of the Mongol Empire for the Museum of the Middle Ages.



The Naturalists pose for a picture near one of the camera traps they set up. This one was in a cluster of trees near where they had a bird feeding station



After brewing their own kombucha, Group 2 took a closer look at the living culture that makes it all possible. Asher is captivated by the SCOBY under the microscope, while Noah seems to find the photographer just as fascinating!



Leontine irons a piece of fabric for her upcoming project in Choice A: Sewing.



Bundled up in their winter gear, Serafina, Fiona, Juniper, Landon, Delilah, and Alethea enjoy time together at the treehouse in the white pines on a crisp January day.



Annabelle crafts decorations for the Group 2 hot drink station for the upcoming Winter Marketplace.

DEVELOPMENT CORNER



Henry and Annabelle carefully divide their kombucha into smaller bottles before beginning the second fermentation, where cherry juice transforms the brew with color, flavor, and fizz.



Jack is so stoked after tasting his batch of fully fermented kombucha.



Luna and Lincoln are feeling accomplished in brewing their batch of kombucha!

Dear Open Connections Community,

Not long ago, I watched a young person take a sip of their homemade kombucha, have a visible visceral reaction, and then they proclaimed to the group, “It tastes... like olives?” It was clearly not the flavor they were hoping for.

There have been other moments, too. Projects that seemed full of promise but slowly unraveled. A presentation that didn’t quite land. A brave attempt at something new that ended in frustration. Of course, there have even been the occasional moments on stage where the words simply...disappear from our heads.

And yet, if you spend any time here, you’ll notice something so remarkable: no one will rush in to fix it. No one calls anything a failure. Instead, moments like this are met with curiosity, reflection, willingness to try again, or to try something entirely different.

This is what it looks like to center process over product.

At Open Connections, the “unfinished,” the unexpected, and even the uncomfortable moments are not detours, they are the actual work. These moments are when confidence is built, where resilience takes hold, and how young folks begin to truly trust themselves. This kind of learning requires space, time, and a supportive community that is willing to believe that the path doesn’t have to be perfect to be meaningful.

Your support makes that possible.

Because of you, young folks here are free to experiment, take risks, and to occasionally create something that...tastes like olives. More importantly, they are learning that those moments are not endings, but rather invitations to reflect, create and adjust, to grow, and to keep on going.

Thank you for trusting this journey with us. While it certainly is not always neat, it is always real and meaningful.

With gratitude,

Sarah Becker

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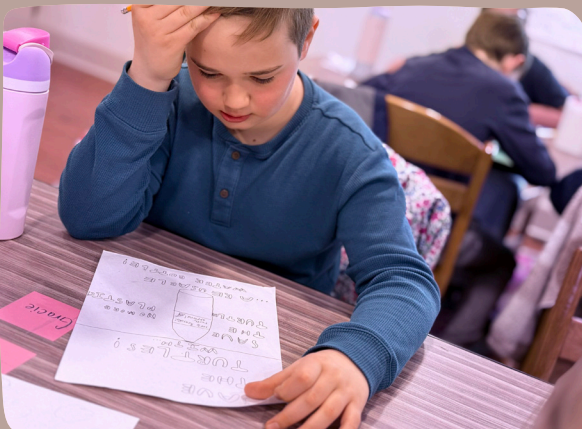
Open Connections, 1616 Delchester Road, Newtown Square, PA 19073



Group 1 members stand triumphant in the human pyramid they created as part of their study on physical Storytelling. This involved several weeks of work on proprioception, interoception, building trust and safety when working with others, and exploring modes of expression and communication. Their self-scripted production of Eros & Psyche was a big hit at this year's Story Fest!



Group 1 spent much time at the newly constructed Gaga Ball arena, thanks to the work of an OC alum. The new space was created last year as part of a Group 3 Independent Project.



After Lila's peer facilitation on sea turtles, John works on a turtle conservation poster, thinking through what else people need to know about protecting them. Young people then posted these around campus to promote conservation.



During a completely candid moment G3 peers closely at the plant pattern they will attempt to replicate from memory in a game of Plant Concentration.



Charlotte just can't take the cuteness of this little newly hatched chick. She shares lots of love and snuggles with this little bundle.



Ash and Ducky process their leaf pack they pulled from the stream on campus. A Leaf Pack Study shows us what critters are in our creek and that tells us how healthy our creek is. (Spoiler: It's really healthy!!)



Nate attempts to win a seat during My Friends and Countrymen.



FREEDOM *to*
LEARN *and*
CREATE

