

Spring 2021



**TOWSLEY  
CHILDREN'S HOUSE**  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



## Become the Student

Children are fascinated by the ordinary  
and can spend timeless moments  
watching sunlight play with dust.  
Their restlessness they learn from you.  
It is you who are thinking of there  
when you are here.  
It is you who thinks of then  
instead of now.  
Stop.  
Let your children become the teachers,  
and you become the student.

\*

Your children may frequently change the focus  
of their attention.  
But it is not restlessness.  
It is curiosity.  
When they are doing something  
they are doing only that  
until they move on the next thing.  
Watch them.  
Let them set the pace.  
See what you can learn.

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### IMPORTANT DATES:

- **Center Closed**
- Memorial Day—Monday,  
May 31
- Independence Day—  
Monday, July 5

# STEM Education in Early Childhood

## What is STEM?

STEM is an acronym representing the four academic disciplines of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. This approach to teaching is interdisciplinary—the four subject areas are integrated through systematic investigation and real-life application. Learners are encouraged to participate in discussing and working on relevant lessons, doing field studies, and consulting with experts outside the classroom (Chard, 2016).

STEM is a way of thinking about how educators at all levels—including parents—should be helping students *integrate knowledge across disciplines, encouraging them to think in a more connected and holistic way* (Sneideman, 2013). Children need to be at the center of the learning experience. STEM calls on parents and educators to give children chances to investigate an idea in a variety of settings, for what educators call cross-contextual learning. Lilian G. Katz, in *STEM in the Early Years*, lays out a case that the best practice for early education is to allow students to be active, engaged, and take initiative in their own learning. Children show clear readiness to engage in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) learning early in life.

## STEM Learning...

- ◆ Focuses on the whole child
- ◆ Is an integrated approach across many learning domains
- ◆ Follows children’s interests at the core
- ◆ Hands-on learning is the focus
- ◆ Children gain long-term habits of learning
- ◆ Is about the process not product
- ◆ Fosters deep learning

## “What” Questions to ask Children

- What happened there?
- What did you try?
- What have you changed about what you are making?
- What are some of the ideas you have talked about that you haven’t tried yet?
- What have you seen other people trying?
- What do you notice about \_\_\_\_\_?
- What do you think will happen if we \_\_\_\_\_? “

### Sources:

Chard, Sylvia. (2016, February). [The Project Approach and STEM: A Powerful Combination](http://www.communityplaythings.com/resources/articles/2016/the-project-approach-and-stem). <http://www.communityplaythings.com/resources/articles/2016/the-project-approach-and-stem>

Sneideman, Joshua. (2013, December). *Engaging Children in STEM Education EARLY!* <http://naturalstart.org/feature-stories/engaging-children-stem-education-early>

<http://www.bostonchildrensmuseum.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/STEMGuide.pdf>

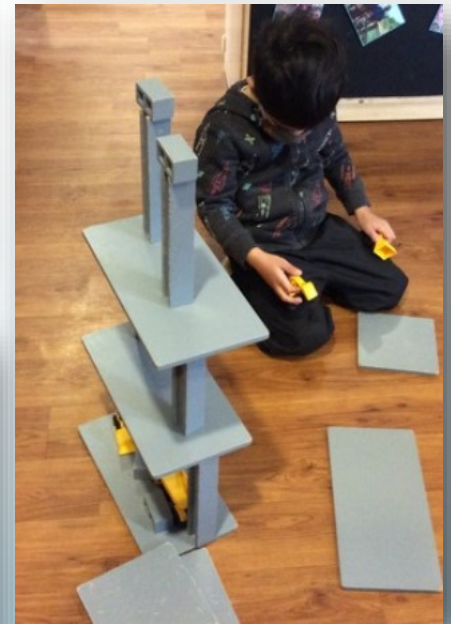
**Science** is observing and experimenting, making predictions, sharing discoveries, asking questions, and wondering how things work.



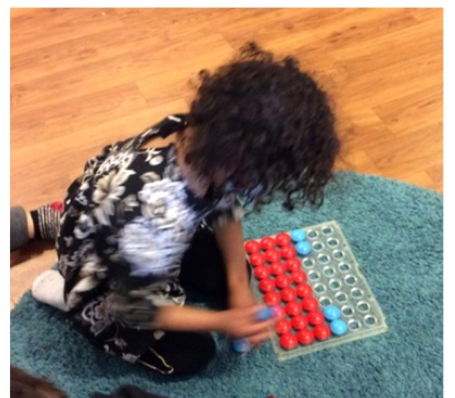
**Technology** is a way of doing. Technology is using tools, being inventive, identifying problems, and making things work.



**Engineering** is a way of doing. Engineering is solving problems, using a variety of materials, designing and creating, and building things that work.



**Math** is a way of measuring. Math is sequencing (1, 2, 3, 4...), patterning (1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2...), and exploring shapes (triangle, square, circle), volume (holds more or less), and size (bigger, less than).



# STEAM

At Towsley we incorporate all the learning domains throughout the day. The A in STEAM stands for the broad spectrum of the arts going well beyond aesthetics; it includes the liberal arts, formally folding in Language Arts, Social Studies, Physical Arts, Fine Arts & Music that each shape developments in STEM fields.





**SCIENTIFIC**

**METHOD**

WITH **TODDLERS**

**Observation**



Child notices crumb laying on the floor.

"Should I put this in my mouth"?



**Question**

"Yes, I think it's food".

**Hypothesis**



Child eats crumb.



**Experiment**

Eww, "it tastes yucky."

**Analysis**



Child spits out crumb.

Child hands you the spit up crumb.



**Conclusion  
& Share Results**

[www.preschoolsteam.com](http://www.preschoolsteam.com)





**Screen-Free Saturdays are an opportunity to take a break from the seemingly endless noise of quarantine life and recharge for the coming week.**

## **55 Nature Related Screen-free Activities**

1. Go for a stroll.
2. Lay in the grass.
3. Find a tree to read under.
4. Jump in a puddle.
5. Venture down a street you've never gone down.
6. Discover a rooftop garden nearby.
7. Plant seeds and help them grow.
8. Bring a basket on your walk. Collect beautiful things from nature.
9. Pull weeds from the sidewalk/yard/garden.
10. Wash the car, bike, or a neighbor's car.
11. Find a building with plants growing on it.
12. Go for a rock hunt. Compare sizes, colors, weights, & shapes.
13. See how many different colors you can find on a walk/out the window.
14. Find a flower. Smell it. Identify it.
15. Build an obstacle course.
16. Dance in the rain.
17. Learn to whistle with an acorn or blade of grass.
18. Paint the sidewalk with water and small brushes or a broom.
19. Cut flowers for a bouquet (with permission).
20. Collect leaves, flowers, and grasses and press them in a book.
21. Create an "observation station" at one of your windows. Document what you see!
22. Place a hula hoop/open circle in the grass. What can you find within the circle?
23. Look at the clouds. What shapes do you see?
24. Go bird watching. How many can you see? How many can you hear?
25. Tape a clear sheet of paper to the window and trace the lines you see.

Getting outside is important for our mental and physical health, and there is so much to learn from nature!  
*How many activities will you try?*

- 
26. Take out a plant guide from the library and identify the plants around your neighborhood/yard/out your window.
  27. Paint with/build with/roll in mud.
  28. Float things in the wind- try leaves, seeds, pine needles, fabrics... etc.
  29. Create a map of your neighborhood by studying it on foot.
  30. Start a nature journal and record your findings.
  31. Go for a bike/scooter/skateboard/roller skate/rollerblade/etc. adventure.
  32. Do some field games: tag, capture the flag, latter ball, 4-square...
  33. Draw with chalk.
  34. Write caring messages to your neighbors using chalk.
  35. Find a bug. Observe, record, then let it go!
  36. Create a scavenger hunt for your siblings around the yard.
  37. Do yoga in the grass.
  38. Play in the sprinkler.
  39. Spend time in the rain/snow/sleet/etc.
  40. Cook a pretend "meal" from nature. Serve it up to your bug friends.
  41. Have a dance party outside.
  42. Have a picnic on the balcony/in the yard/at the park.
  43. Camp out in the yard or in the living room.
  44. Play flashlight tag.
  45. Pick up trash along one of your walks (parent supervision required).
  46. Build a fort.
  47. Find out which indigenous group(s) own the land you're on.
  48. Identify an environmental issue near you! Create a project to make a difference.
  49. Start a compost bin.
  50. Do a leaf or bark rubbing.
  51. Get a plant for your room. Remember to water it!
  52. Paint in the rain using watercolors, oil pastels, and watercolor paper.
  53. Find all of the letters of the alphabet around the neighborhood. Look at signs, homes, and even sticks!
  54. Start a garden! Plant your favorite veggies.
  55. Use a magnifying glass to look up close at the world around you.

## UNPLUG TO CONNECT TO NATURE

Whatever you do, remember to connect  
to nature as often as you can!  
Get outside and bring the outdoors in!

[www.screenfree.org](http://www.screenfree.org)



# FANTASTIC FORTS FOR SCREEN-FREE FUN!

Making a fort is a fun way to create a cozy space for imaginative play, reading, and emotion management. The possibilities are endless!



## BLANKET FORT

A classic! Use blankets, sheets, or quilts over stable furniture. Pin together with clothes pins or clamps.



## STICK FORT

Take your fort outside! Sticks, branches, and other vegetation are fun to build with. Use string, rubber bands, or clamps to keep sticks together.



## CUSHION FORT

Couch or chair cushions are fun to stack, balance, and create with!



## TABLE FORT

Tables offer an instant fort structure. Drape a blanket or tablecloth to create walls.



## BOX FORT

Take one big or many little boxes and stack, tape, and build a fort out of cardboard. Decorate the cardboard to personalize!



## BED FORT

Whether you're on the bed under the covers with a good book or under a high enough bedframe playing games, a bed is a built in place to snuggle up.



## TENT (FORT)

Have a tent? Set it up inside for an instant fort that stays dry in wet, cold weather.



## BATH FORT

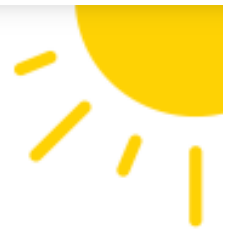
No soap and water needed! Draw the shower curtain and add pillows and blankets to a dry tub for a cozy bath.



## CLOSET FORT

The bottom of a closet can be a fun spot to set up some cozy blankets and pillows. Add twinkle lights or glow in the dark stickers for added fun.





# Touch-Free, Screen-Free Summer Games

These classic summer field games can be played from 6 feet away, with no equipment-sharing required!

- HIDE n' SEEK
- DISC GOLF\*
- HOP SCOTCH\*
- STREET HOCKEY/ SOCCER SHOOTOUT\*
- H.O.R.S.E.\*
- FLASHLIGHT TAG\*
- MARBLES\*
- BUBBLE BLOWING
- HULA HOOP CONTEST\*
- FORT-BUILDING
- JUMP ROPE GAMES\*
- NET/BUCKET CATCH\*
- SPRINKLER PLAY
- BIKE/SCOOTER/ SKATEBOARD/etc.
- DANCE PARTY!

\*use your own ball/stick/rock/etc.

## NOTE

Remember to follow your area's health & safety recommendations for social & outdoor activities, as well as any advice from your healthcare provider regarding you and your children's individual health situations.

1

### WATER LIMBO

How low can you go? Take turns as one person holds the hose and others bend backwards to try to get under without getting sprayed. Wash off the hose before trading roles.

3

### SCAVENGER HUNT

Set up a scavenger hunt for your friends and neighbors! You can hide sanitized items and send them clues, or task them with finding things in nature, like "a cool rock" or a "a leaf with three points." Ask them to draw or take photos of their finds!

5

### RACING

Whether it's a classic foot race or a somersault-while-wearing-a-funny-hat race, races of all sorts can be done 6 ft apart. Sack races, egg & spoon races, crab walk races...the possibilities are endless!

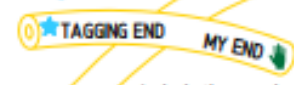
KEEP THE SUMMER VIBES FLOWING WITH THESE FUN, NO-TOUCH GAMES FOR OUTDOOR SUMMER GOODNESS!

2

### POOL NOODLE TAG

Bring your own pool noodle for this fun, distanced version of tag, where the person who is "it" has a pool noodle to use for tagging. Pool noodles also work for a distanced group of duck-duck-goose, red light/green light, and sharks n' minnows style games.

#### TIP



Label the ends of your pool noodle with stickers or tape to make sure you're only touching one end!

4

### OBSTACLE COURSES

Summer camps are infamous for their obstacle courses. Make your own this summer and challenge your friends to complete it. For a hands-free version, try jumping over sticks, rolling through hula hoops, going uphill backwards, and balancing on logs.

For more activity ideas:  
[www.screenfree.org](http://www.screenfree.org)

# Warm Weather Gear



## Sunscreen Application

It is the family's responsibility to apply sunscreen to their child before s/he comes to school and provide permission for program staff to reapply sunscreen or sun block with UVB and UVA protection of SPF 15 or higher to exposed skin in the afternoon.

Suggestions for the minimizing of exposure to the sun include wearing hats, visors, shirts with sleeves, and long shorts or pants.

- ◆ Shoes or closed-toe sandals to keep your child's foot comfortable and safe while running, climbing and exploring outdoors.



- ◆ Summer hat for sun protection.



- ◆ Rash guard or sun shirt for added protection.





## **WHO'S WHO AT TOWSLEY**

### **Infant/Toddler Classrooms**

**Sprouts:** Leslie Thompson, Sandra Canalas, and Sheila Hall

**Sassafras:** Sonja Whitehouse, Samantha Huff, and Hollyn Formosa

**Magnolia:** Angelique Rudolph, Darius Cobb, Megan Brown and Kim Hull

### **Preschool Classrooms**

**Willow:** Serena Simmons, Jessica Polonchan, and Asmaa Naser

**Oak:** Heather Cole, Christian Boyer,, Hannah Powers

**Sycamore:** Kellie Chestler-Root, Amanda Matthews, and Amber Bruckner

**Maple:** Kamaria Hayes, Emily White and Marie Gaab

**Evergreen:** Elizabeth Powers, Clara Sommerville and Candace Pankey

**Birch:** Derek Whitten, Karen Ong, Courtney Rouse

### **Support Staff**

**Cathy Hendrix:** Administrative Assistant

**Katie Meyer:** Resource Teacher

**Korinn Kulinski:** Resource Teacher

**Denise Pelky:** Program Teacher

**Mary McCarthy:** Program Associate Teacher

**Sarah Mauck:** Program Associate Teacher

**Jessica Saldana:** Program Associate Teacher

### **Administration**

**Beth Ann Blanchard:** Center Director

**Jasmine Boster:** Program Director and Psych. 307 Instructor



## 2020-2021 Calendar



**First Official Day of School**.....Monday, August 31

**CLOSED – Labor Day Holiday**.....**Monday, September 7**

October.....Parent Teacher Conferences throughout month

**CLOSED - Thanksgiving Holiday** .....Thursday-Friday, November 26-27

Last Day for Children (before Winter break) .....Monday, December 21

**CLOSED Staff Professional Development**.....Monday, January 4

THE CENTER WILL BE **CLOSED** FROM  
**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 22nd THROUGH MONDAY, JANUARY 4th**  
PLEASE ARRANGE ALTERNATE CHILDCARE FOR THIS TIME.



Children Return from Winter break .....Tuesday, January 5

**CLOSED - Martin Luther King Jr. Day (Professional Development)**.....**Monday, January 18**

March.....Parent Teacher Conferences throughout month



**CLOSED TO CHILDREN (Professional Development)** .....**Monday, May 3**

**CLOSED -Memorial Day Holiday**.....**Monday, May 31**

**CLOSED - Independence Day Holiday**.....**Monday, July 5**

**Last day of 2020-2021 school year** .....Friday, August 20



**CENTER CLOSED**.....**August 23-27**

First day of **2021-2022** School year .....**Monday, August 30**

**CLOSED - Labor Day Holiday**.....**Monday, September 6**