The benefits of building with blocks are well known. But what if the block play in your classroom is lackluster? This was the problem Lena Marie Pankratz confronted in her kindergarten. The block play of her 29 kindergartners was unfocused, and the block area was surprisingly unpopular. Seeking solutions, Pankratz sensibly asked the children about blocks and discovered that they had had little experience with the material, either at home or in preschool. She also learned that one girl had received the message that blocks are only for boys.

Pankratz decided to leverage her children’s love of stories to engage them in block play. She read picture books and modeled how the stories can inspire construction. The popularity of the block area soared, and it was not long before boys and girls were using blocks in more complex ways (though Pankratz observes it was dramatic play that drove children’s interest in using blocks).

Pankratz’s study is a strong example of how the observation and reflection embedded in teacher research can expand teachers’ understandings of their practice and improve the learning environment for children.

—Benjamin Mardell
Countless early childhood education experts have expounded on the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional benefits that occur when young children play with blocks. While it may be surprising that an activity as seemingly simple as block play can allow for such instrumental development to take place, it becomes clear after even a brief period of observation that block play can affect and foster each domain of development.

Yet block play is disappearing from many early childhood programs to the detriment of children. My decision to conduct a teacher research project centered around block play was motivated by years of observing unenthusiastic patterns of behavior within the block center in my kindergarten classroom. In my previous five years of teaching, I have witnessed children either ignoring the block center altogether or engaging in brief and unfocused play. When children did play there, they often built a structure only to knock it down, lose interest, and move on to a different play center. Also, I rarely saw girls playing with blocks. I knew that the patterns had to exist for a reason, and I decided to develop my role as a facilitator to see what I could do to reverse those patterns.

My main goal for this project was to foster more collaborative, imaginative, and sustained play within the block center. I first hoped to motivate my young learners to engage in block play so that they could take advantage of the proven developmental benefits. I also wanted my kindergartners to enjoy building with blocks and to feel proud of what they had accomplished. I hoped to see boys and girls building together, using block play to further their developing peer relationships, solidifying the sense of community we had been working to build since the first day of
class. I wanted children to want to use the blocks and to use their grand imaginations. But, how? What could I do to change the unfocused play patterns and disinterested, dismissive attitudes toward the blocks that I’d noticed, class after class?

Fred Rogers said it poignantly: “Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children, play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood.” Knowing that blocks are such a proven, powerful tool for aiding children’s development, I had to figure out how to create an opportunity for block play to become part of the “work of childhood” in my classroom.

It seems hard to believe that blocks—one activity, one tool—could do so much to facilitate children’s growth within each domain of development. Yet for my kindergartners to be able to maximize those benefits, I had to figure out how to encourage them to use the blocks to their full potential. Ultimately, I decided to accomplish this by introducing another tool. Inspired by the children’s excitement toward books, something I had observed daily during story time, I decided to incorporate some of the children’s favorite picture books into the block center, to encourage the development of both play and literacy skills. I hoped that the children’s love of stories would translate to the block center and that they would realize the possibilities for play were endless. As I began my research, my primary question was this: How can picture books act as a tool to foster imaginative, collaborative, and sustained play within the block center?

**Review the literature**

In his approach to learning and cognition, Vygotsky emphasizes the difference between what a child can do by himself and what he can do with the guidance or help of an adult. His concept of the “zone of proximal development” explicitly refers to the gap between a child’s current performance and potential performance (DeHart, Sroufe, & Cooper 2004). I knew that my kindergartners were able to physically use the blocks during playtime; however, they seemed to be at a loss as to how to use the blocks beyond building a structure and promptly knocking it down. I saw their current block-building performance as limiting and became interested in supporting the development of their potential performance.

As I tried to define my role as facilitator and guide by discovering how I could encourage my kindergartners to reach their full potential, I read and reread research describing the multiple benefits that building with blocks provides to young children. Church and Miller’s “Learning Through Block Play” (1990) describes many physical and cognitive benefits. Block play promotes the continued development of fine motor skills and sensory perception, oral language skills, problem solving, and mathematical concepts such as numbers, spatial relationships, ordering and comparing, and classifying and sorting, just to name a few.
Block play has also been shown to foster social and emotional competencies such as self-reliance, self-esteem, and relationship skills (Brown & Briggs 1988). As teachers, we hope that our approach to instruction lays the foundation for learning to take place, but the formation of peer relationships can be just as vital and, to some children, more important than what we as adults can do for them. Peer relationships greatly affect children’s school performance, particularly how they view themselves in relation to others (DeHart, Sroufe, & Cooper 2004). Through block play, children learn the art of cooperation, sharing, and negotiation; in short, children acquire skills that teach them how to interact with one another and navigate those peer relationships (Church & Miller 1990). Social relationships are vital in the life of any child, but they become even more important in preschool and kindergarten when children begin to form true friendships.

Furthermore, the social skills fostered by block play also enhance children’s cognitive development (Brown & Briggs 1988). In the field of early childhood, we often talk in terms of domains—physical, cognitive, social, and emotional—but the reality is that these domains often overlap, and should. As an educator of young children, I am continually trying to further learning and growth overall, within all facets of development. Play is crucial to development in early childhood, but sadly, kindergarten in the United States has become increasingly focused on academics, and play is slowly being replaced with more formal education. Academic success and play are often viewed as different entities (just as learning domains are often viewed as being independent), but one propels the other, and in kindergarten, they need to work in tandem for a child to be successful.

Literacy, of course, is one domain that takes center stage in kindergarten learning, and it was a domain that was central to my teacher research as I began introducing picture books into block play. In the United States, it is expected that kindergarteners should be able to read and write independently by the end of the school year. Block play could act as a bridge to connect play and what is considered formal literacy education. The ability to understand that an object can stand for something else (using a block as a telephone, for example) is an important concept that leads to the development of literacy skills (DeHart, Sroufe, & Cooper 2004). The development of symbolic representation begins in toddlerhood but continues to develop as the child grows. Research shows that children from households and communities with low socioeconomic status develop academic skills more slowly compared to children from groups with a higher socioeconomic status (Morgan et al. 2009), which is all the more reason to advocate for and encourage block play. As NAEYC says in its position statement on Learning to Read and Write,

In home and child care situations, children encounter many different resources and types and degrees of support for early reading and writing (McGill-Franzen & Lanford 1994). Some children may have ready access to a range of writing and reading materials, while others may not; some children will observe their parents writing and reading frequently, others
only occasionally; some children receive direct instruction, while others receive much more casual, informal assistance. What this means is that no one teaching method or approach is likely to be the most effective for all children. (IRA & NAEYC 1998, 3)

Finally, I wanted to research the gender divide I had noticed in previous years to offer an explanation for why so few girls had been choosing to play in the block center. Black and Hazen (1990) find that girls lean toward more cohesive play and use collaborative speech, while boys are more likely to change topics frequently and use more controlling speech. Could it be that girls were staying away from the blocks in an effort to avoid confrontation or feeling frustrated? I hoped that my modeling the use of picture books as a tool within the block center would motivate the girls to play with the blocks just as much as the boys.

**Methods**

**Setting and participants**

The study took place in my full-day, transitional bilingual (English–Spanish) kindergarten classroom in a Title I elementary school located in Chicago, Illinois. This urban school serves many children, ranging from Head Start (3- and 4-year-olds) to eighth grade (13- and 14-year-olds). The overall student population is predominantly Hispanic (58 percent) and African American (37 percent), and 97 percent of the total families are considered low-income. There is a transitional bilingual program available for the Spanish-dominant students, which begins in my classroom, at the kindergarten level. There is one teacher for each classroom; teachers are all highly qualified, holding at least a bachelor’s degree, and most have completed a graduate degree.

This year in my classroom, there were 29 children—15 girls and 14 boys. Eighty-seven percent of my kindergartners had attended a preschool or Head Start program prior to entering kindergarten. The majority come from families with low-incomes, many of whom have emigrated from Mexico. These factors likely had affected the children’s initial experience with blocks and with play in general. The children’s initial attitudes toward and experiences with block play were greatly influenced by their home environment, which I had to recognize and value before I could begin the project and expect progress to be made. My study focused on the children who chose to play in the block center, and the specific children changed daily. I stocked the block center with blocks I purchased my first year of teaching—blocks of various sizes, made of cardboard and foam, stored in large plastic containers. Due to a limited school budget, we did not have the wooden blocks that are most typically found in early childhood classrooms.
Design of the study

Phase 1: Collecting baseline data

For six weeks I collected baseline data that would guide my implementation of the picture book lessons I would create in the second phase. I needed to observe my kindergartners as they played in order to discern what guidance they needed.

I collected five sources of data during this phase:
- Interviews with the children
- Staff surveys (a fellow kindergarten teacher, our school’s speech therapist, and a classroom volunteer)
- Biweekly anecdotal records
- Biweekly event recordings to track the number of boys and girls playing in the block center each time I wrote anecdotal notes
- Photographs of children playing in the block center

[Note: Interview questions and a sample of the staff survey are provided in the Appendix.]

To kick-start the project I conducted interviews with the children that aimed to gauge their attitudes toward play (and toward blocks in particular) and to assess their prior experience with block play, factors which naturally were intertwined. Before I conducted the interviews, pulling children aside to speak with them one by one, I had taken the children’s experience with blocks for granted and assumed that block play had been a familiar activity. Through these interviews, however, I discovered that, of my 29 kindergartners, only 7 (24 percent) reported having blocks at home. This low percentage can be attributed to many factors, including but not limited to socioeconomic, cultural, or personal factors. When asked whether she had blocks at home, one child responded with, “Yes, but they are my brother’s.” Although it was the response of only one child, I paused to think about the fact that the children visiting the block center up until that point had been predominantly boys.
The photograph on the previous page (taken during the baseline data collection phase), documents one of many instances when the block center was inhabited primarily by boys and also shows one of many times they were unfocused in their play.

To conduct the staff surveys, each staff member came to my classroom on a different day during our regular play time, once at the beginning and once at the end of my project. The speech therapist and classroom volunteer were both there while I was in the classroom. In order for my fellow kindergarten teacher to come and record her observations, however, we switched classrooms.

**Phase 2: Incorporating picture books**

I incorporated picture books into the children’s block play for eight weeks. Using my interviews with the children, staff surveys, and biweekly anecdotal records, I began to develop and implement weekly lessons with the goal of modeling for children how to incorporate familiar picture books into the block center. These lessons took place once a week during the first five weeks of this phase. I also had a different objective for each week related to the children’s block play. (See the Appendix for a list of the books we read each week and my accompanying objectives.) I introduced a “block book bin” into the block center, where after each week’s lesson I added the book we had read so that children could have access to the books as they played, if they so desired.

During each lesson I either read or reviewed the story and followed that with an informal discussion that allowed children to review the story’s characters, the setting, their favorite part of the story, and so on. With the story fresh in our minds, we sat in a circle on the carpet and brought the blocks over. After reading or reviewing the book, I would flip through the story, thinking aloud about which part of the story I most liked and wanted to recreate. Sometimes I would come up with a plan; sometimes I asked the children for suggestions. Using the blocks to build and recreate the setting of a story or a particular scene was how I generally began, as I believed it was the easiest tactic for children to attempt on their own. I emphasized the freedom I had to move the blocks at any point—when I changed the setting or storyline—and focused on how I could continue to use the blocks to accompany my new ideas by changing my physical surroundings as I went. The first week, something as seemingly obvious as removing the lids to the containers and setting them aside had to be taught.

Through my biweekly observations and anecdotal records, I let the children’s block play guide me in what I needed to model for the following week. For example, I made a note of the fact that the children were using the story without being open to the idea that they could change or add to what happened in their play. Then the following Monday, when I modeled my next lesson, I asked the children to suggest other characters or a setting that wasn’t included in the text to illustrate that we could use our imaginations to
introduce new ideas into our play. Adding
a new story every week built on the
momentum I was seeing to further excite
the young learners.

For the last three weeks of this phase,
I no longer modeled weekly lessons.
Instead, I allowed the class to vote for
the book they wanted to add to the
block book bin each week, in hopes that
their momentum and motivation would
continue to grow.

Throughout this phase, I continued
to record biweekly anecdotal records
and to track the number of boys and girls
using the blocks with the event recording
method of data collection. I also took a
few photographs each week to visually
record changes in children’s play.

**Phase 3: Collecting final data**

To complete my research project, I again interviewed the children and
administered staff surveys (using the same questions as when I began) so
that I could compare their changes in responses, attitudes, and behavior.
By noting the differences in the responses provided by the kindergartners
(the ones directly affected by this project), the responses provided by
other colleagues (who offered another adult perspective), and my personal
observations (changes I had noted and the reasons I thought those changes
were taking place), I was able to create a more comprehensive view of my
project outcomes. As I concluded the formal data collection phase, I created
graphs to demonstrate the undeniable positive outcomes I had helped to
facilitate within the block center.

**Findings**

Through this project, I was able to meet all three of my initial goals: to foster
more collaborative, imaginative, and sustained play within the block center.
I believe that the overall success of the project can be largely attributed to
the time spent gathering contextual information. As Jones and Reynolds
so aptly note, “In the early years, effective teaching is based on observing”
(2011, 20). I observed my kindergartners as they played in the block center
before I formally began the project, as I began to implement the lessons, and
I continue to observe their play even now. While the project has technically
come to an end, I continue to learn and grow as an educator, partly due
to the time taken to observe the children in my classroom, allowing their
actions to guide my responses and future instruction.
I believe another key to this project’s success was choosing books that I already knew my kindergartners enjoyed. Their familiarity with the books brought a motivation all its own. Knowing the characters’ names and being able to identify the various settings and storylines motivated the children to jump in and use the blocks to guide their recreation of the stories. That recreation often acted as a stepping stone to more imaginative play, as children expanded on and changed what happened next in their play.

Results from the first lesson

As I began my observations and started taking anecdotal records of the children’s behavior in the block center, I paid special attention to how children initiated their play there, as well as who chose to play. I wondered if my personal love of the block center, which I hoped had shone through in my modeling lessons, and the selection of familiar books would influence the girls’ attitudes toward the blocks in any way.

After conducting my first lesson, during which I had read the beloved story ¡Salta, ranita, salta! (Jump, Frog, Jump!) and modeled using the blocks to recreate the setting, I was anxious to see if anything had stuck. Would anyone choose the block center today? Would any girls be interested? Would the children use or reference the story? Was it too soon to expect any kind of change? These questions raced through my mind as I set the timer for 30 minutes, our end-of-the-day playtime allowance. What follows is an excerpt from my records on that first day (names have been changed):

Three boys and two girls selected the block center. All five children brought the blocks over and took off the lids. Samantha yelled, “We have to put the lids over there!” as she pointed behind the boys to a space that was off the carpet. The children discussed and decided to build a city. Julio suddenly yelled, “¡Salta, ranita, salta!” and stated he was the frog that lived in their city. Alex took the book from the bin and flipped through until he found the scene with the fly. The girls were busy using the blue blocks to make the water for the frog to jump into. Julio lost interest and started using the blocks to make a house, but when he noticed everyone gathering blue blocks to make a lake, he abandoned his house and joined in.

Taking into account that this was what I observed after the first lesson, I was excited! The girls, speaking mainly with each other, were still a part of the group dynamic, working toward a common goal of creating a lake for the frog, as they had seen in the story. I also noticed that the children began by building a city—something that was not in the story—which I took as a positive sign that they were taking initiative to make the story their own. For the first time that school year, all the pieces were coming together; on a daily basis the block center was at capacity, boys and girls were playing together, and the children were engaging in focused and sustained play (all five children played in the block center until the timer rang).
Anecdotal records

The analysis of my 25 anecdotal records revealed four findings: there was significant improvement in the block center’s 1) popularity, 2) focused (imaginative) play, 3) sustained play, and 4) gender distribution.

1. **Popularity.** The popularity of the block center (based on the number of times that it was at its capacity with five children) nearly doubled after the implementation of the lessons, moving from 56 percent to 100 percent. When the time came for children to choose a play center each day, there were always at least five hands that shot up, at least five children who chose the block center over another center.

2. **Focused (imaginative) play.** The children’s play had moved from unfocused (making towers out of blocks and immediately tearing them down) to focused (creating complex, imaginative structures). Before the implementation of the first lesson, children were engaging in focused play just 9 percent of the time, compared to 93 percent after the lessons began.

   Three girls and two boys were in the block center, using *La verdadero historia de los tres cerditos* (*The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*) to guide their play. Together they decided there would be four little pigs instead of three, and then they used the blocks to build a police car (which was not in the story), spending time using blocks of various sizes to add details to the car, such as wheels and a steering wheel.

3. **Sustained play.** While children had quickly lost interest in the block center before I began implementing the picture books, after implementing the lessons, children were engaging in increased sustained play, selecting the block center and remaining there for the duration of the 30-minute playtime. Sustained play increased from 27 percent to 93 percent.

   Three boys and two girls were playing in the block center, using *La noche de los muñecos de nieve* (*Snowmen at Night*). The children had finished building a table, stove, and refrigerator when the timer rang, signaling that it was time to clean up. “Noooooooo!” yelled two boys and one girl in unison.

4. **Gender distribution.** The number of days that boys and girls played together increased dramatically after the implementation of the lessons, moving from 9 percent to 79 percent.

   Four boys and one girl had chosen to play in the block center, but the girl was playing by herself initially, stacking blocks on top of one another. One of the boys called out, “Hey, Judith! Come over here. We’re making the Laundromat. Here,” he said, handing the block to Judith.
Interviews with the children

It was clear from comparing my interviews with the children from the baseline data collection phase and the final data collection phase that the children’s attitudes toward the block center and their awareness of how they could use it changed dramatically over the course of the study. Below are responses from three of the children (names have been changed) when I asked them, “What can you do in the block center?”

During the baseline collection phase in November, they had this to say (responses have been translated from Spanish to English):

Diego: You can make a house.
Samantha: You can make a house.
Francisco: You put blocks together, and you can make a house.

During the final data collection phase in March, they had this to say:

Diego: It’s really fun because you can make a lot of things like cars, houses, buildings, people. It’s fun because there are so many blocks, and there are books, too.
Samantha: You can make houses, castles, a kitchen...and lots of other things.
Francisco: We can build things like houses, castles, people. And we can read books and act out the stories with blocks.

Staff surveys

The staff surveys also reflect a significant difference from the baseline collection phase to the final data collection phase. Below is a sample of the answers provided by my fellow kindergarten teacher to the question: “What do children appear to be doing in the block center? Write down whatever behaviors you observe. Be specific.”

In November, she wrote the following:
Five boys built a barn for one of the boys who pretended to be an animal. One of the boys directed the construction while the others followed his instructions. After it was built, the boy (animal) climbed out and knocked it down. After that, the blocks were mostly stacked up, knocked down, abandoned. They boys left the center.
In March, she wrote the following:

Three boys and two girls are working together to build a structure while referencing a book. They built a bed and took turns laying down. One of the girls approached the boys and assigned them characters: police officer, a dog, a dad. They played until it was time to clean up.

**Reflection, implications, and conclusions**

Conducting teacher research is not the same as leading an experiment or formal study. I struggled a bit with the idea that I did not have control of variables and that the data derived from my anecdotal notes were subjective, knowing that my biases could confuse what I was seeing with what I hoped to see. In moments of internal conflict such as these, I had to stop and remember that teacher research isn’t conducted for anyone else besides the person leading it. We share our findings, yes, and hope that others are affected in some positive way, but the reality is we are simply trying to address a struggle that we have observed. Teacher research is for us as practitioners to reflect on and benefit from, intended to positively affect our future teaching practice.

When I began this teacher research project, I knew little of the process and didn’t quite realize all the steps that would have to take place for it to be effective, or in other words, to see change occur. I felt a certain uneasiness knowing there were no guarantees that what I implemented would propel any sort of transformation within the block center. Yet the fear of children remaining stagnant or static in their block play motivated me, and I charged ahead. A great advantage of teacher research is the freedom to change course, to modify already laid plans, to realize that the results you are
observing may not be what you intended and that you have the option to go back to the drawing board. (As teachers we are nothing if not flexible!)

I set out to determine whether I could use picture books as a tool to foster more imaginative, collaborative, and sustained play within the block center. Did the children access the books and use them to motivate their play? Yes. Did I observe a great change in their imaginative, collaborative, and sustained play? Yes. Did I begin to see the gender divide disappear, with boys and girls playing together? Yes. Proud as I was to have seen such positive change in the span of a few short months, something was still bothering me, something I would work to address after the project formally concluded.

During those final days of data collection, children were engaging in focused play, working together and pleased to be doing so. However, the structures they were creating were no longer complex. The children were laying the blocks flat, creating more of an outline for a structure and stacking only a few. They were no longer using blocks in a way that offered them the full advantage of the mathematical and cognitive benefits of block play.

I realized then that the block center had begun to transform into a dramatic play center, with the blocks taking a backseat. Children continued to be motivated by the picture books, but they were less focused on using the blocks. I do not mean to imply that my project had taken a turn for the worse. It was simply an interesting turn of events, something I had not foreseen when I began to implement the picture book lessons. I realized that I had used story retelling and other literacy strategies for story comprehension as I modeled block play, but I was still surprised when I realized that the children seemed to be focusing more on the stories. Thrilled at the children’s collaboration and the excitement they displayed when choosing to play in the block center, I had nearly lost sight of how blocks themselves were being used. I now had to ask myself a different question: What could I do to redirect some of the play within the block center to the blocks themselves?

Expanding the project

During those last few days of the project’s final phase, I created a plan of action to persuade and encourage children to keep the blocks as their main point of focus. On the days when I did observe children creating complex structures, I took their picture and posted each of the photos on the wall, next to the carpet where block play takes place. The children were still engaging in dramatic play, but there was also a focus on the blocks themselves. By displaying the photos, I hoped to motivate the children and provide them with guidance or ideas when choosing the block center.

During the next school year I plan to expand on the block book bin, broadening its contents so that the children have more resources at their disposal. In this way it will evolve into more of an “idea bin.” The bin will
continue to hold books that the children vote on, but I will also introduce photographs of various locations to provide additional ideas for settings and will offer props such as wooden traffic signs, cars, people, and so on. I look forward to the next school year when I can present these materials in stages and, again, use the power of observation to allow my kindergartners to show and tell me what support they require to maximize their block play.

I have been asked: “Why devote so much time to observing and focusing on block play? Why blocks?” I could recite the research detailing the numerous benefits to block play, but the truth is that this project was never just about blocks. It was about children and how to best foster their learning in all domains of development. It was about providing support to my kindergartners, guiding their social interactions with one another, encouraging boys and girls to play together to promote a true sense of community within the classroom, allowing children time and opportunity to work through stress and gain confidence, encouraging children to use their imaginations, and most of all, promoting learning in all domains through the power of play. If all of this can be accomplished by using blocks as a tool, then instead of asking, “Why blocks?” I ask, “Why not?”

References

Child interview questions

1. What can you tell me about the block center? What can you do in the block center?
2. Who plays in the block center?
3. Do you like the block center? Why or why not?
4. Do you have blocks at home?

Staff survey questions

1. What do children appear to be doing in the block center? Be specific. (Write down whatever behaviors you observe. How are they using the blocks? Are they building, and if so, what are they building? Are they throwing the blocks? And so on.)
2. Who is playing in the block center? Write down the number of boys and girls using the blocks.

Weekly picture books and lesson objectives

**Week One**

**Book:** ¡Salta, ranita, salta! (Jump, Frog, Jump!) by Robert Kalan & Byron Barton (illus.)

**Lesson objective:** I identified the main setting of the story (the pond) and used the blocks to recreate a specific scene, using the book as a reference. I used the book as I modeled block play during the lesson, but I made it clear that using the book was not mandatory. It was merely an option if children felt they needed guidance.

**Week Two**

**Book:** Un bolsillo para Corduroy (A Pocket for Corduroy) by Don Freeman

**Lesson objective:** I used the blocks to recreate a specific setting (the Laundromat), using the book as a reference. I then encouraged more imaginative play by suggesting to the children that they could use last week’s book (Jump, Frog, Jump!) in combination with A Pocket for Corduroy. In my modeling, I told the children that a green block was the frog and said that he was going to join Corduroy at the Laundromat so that they could do laundry together. I then asked the children what the frog and Corduroy should build next with the blocks, and the children helped me build washers, dryers, and so on.
**Week Three**

**Book:** *La verdadera historia de los tres cerditos (The True Story of the Three Little Pigs)* by Jon Scieszka & Lane Smith (illus.)

**Lesson objective:** Before we began building, I asked three children to volunteer to play the role of the three little pigs and assigned myself the role of the wolf. Each of the children who had volunteered began to build their own houses, and once the structures were complete, the children and I retold and acted out the story. To encourage them to use their imaginations, I then asked the class to suggest other characters we could include (who weren't listed in the story), and we incorporated them as well.

**Week Four**

**Book:** *Clic, clac, plif, plaf (Click, Clack, Splish, Splash)* by Doreen Cronin & Betsy Lewin (illus.)

**Lesson objective:** I focused on using the blocks to create a particular scene. I was not retelling the story but using the setting as an inspiration for the children to create their own story.

**Week Five**

**Book:** *La noche de los muñecos de nieve (Snowmen at Night)* by Caralyn Buehner & Mark Buehner (illus.)

**Lesson objective:** I focused on using as many blocks as possible to recreate the various scenes and settings from the story and then assigned children to be the characters. I emphasized that the blocks didn't have to stay where they were first placed, but when someone had a new idea, the blocks were there to support them and could be used in a new way.

**Weeks Six Through Eight**

I no longer modeled weekly lessons but led a vote each week for the class to choose the book they would add to the block book bin, in hopes that their momentum and motivation would continue to grow. The children voted to add *Tili y el muro (Tillie and the Wall)* by Leo Lionni, *¡No te comas a la maestra! (Don't Eat the Teacher!)* by Nick Ward, and *Si le das una galletita a un ratón (If You Give a Mouse a Cookie)* by Laura Numeroff.