

Mathematical Moments: Shape with two year olds

Choosing a particular shaped item for a purpose

Jayden is a practitioner in a Nursery school where there is a large matted area outdoors in front of a shed with large wooden hollow blocks. Jayden is in this area where a number of children have been playing for a while, although others have come and gone over time. Jayden notices that two and a half year old James and three year old Cara are putting blocks on either side of a space, forming two piles. They are talking as they work and Jayden hears them using words such as “wall” (for the piles) and “door” (for the space between). This suggests to him that they are making a house-type structure.

Jayden decides to offer them a suggestion, modelling choosing a particular shaped item for a specific purpose. Jayden asks James and Cara if they would like to tell him about their building. James continues adding another block but Cara says “is a house”, pointing at the structure which has two blocks on each side and a block across the top which James is repositioning. Jayden says, “I like this one”, pointing to the block across the top and James says “it’s a roof”. Jayden looks quizzical and then says “Oooh, I wonder if a pointy brick might be good for a roof, hmmm, the roofs on the houses over there are pointy (makes a pointy shape with his hands)”. Jayden chooses to offer the children two ramp-shaped blocks, putting the blocks together on the floor to show how they can make a point in the middle. Jayden asked the children if they thought this would be a good shape for a roof. The children agreed and set out to add these blocks to their structure.