



Learning Through Conflict

Simply put, physically in the brain, all learning happens at the point of limit finding.

Our neurons chemically activate and stimulate their dendrites. Dendrites are neural appendages that are designed to receive communications from others at their points of connection. These synapses are where the dendrites meet, at their own limits. It can be fun, not to mention profound, to consider all the metaphorical ways this is true on various levels in our lives. We can zoom out to physical and social/emotional levels and see so many examples of how pushing our limits, even as adults, are growing opportunities. Whether it be pushing our bodies to their limits or finding true, trusting connectivity with one another, it is the moments at our limits that define us as individuals.

In terms of early childhood, limit finding (and of course pushing) is at the crux of some of the most important (and of course frustrating) learning that children naturally achieve, as well as that which we encourage in our program. It can be very helpful for adults to make the connection between what's happening on the micro level in children's brains and the motor or social levels. When our dendrites activate and grow, so does our brain connectivity, awareness and skills. This is often easier to visualize on the physical level: a child stands holding onto an edge, releases their hand for a quick moment, the next time their hand stays floating a bit longer, the next thing we know they are walking, then running, then climbing, etc. This process is the same for the development of fine motor skills, self awareness, empathy and everything else of which humanity is capable.

When conflict (within oneself, with the environment, or with another human) occurs, it stimulates new dendrite connectivity and is then, by definition, our brain learning. While these circumstances can be particularly daunting with young children, they are some of the most important moments to lay the groundwork for future self control, social skills, academic learning and much more.

Conflict within oneself: this can manifest itself in a variety of ways. The most obvious with young children being when they are tired, hungry, or need to potty. Over time and with experience, when these situations arise, the brain will connect with and remember helpful solutions i.e: going to sleep, eating, using the bathroom. When difficulties surrounding these situations arise at school, we make a point to verbalize to all of our students no matter how young or experienced, what is happening, what they already know about the situation, and what they can do to help alleviate it (including getting help). We make a point to thank our students for helping to take care of their own bodies.

Conflict with the environment: this can refer to many different scenarios. Some that occur often in the school setting include using particular items in inappropriate ways or places, or wanting to do something the child cannot successfully complete independently. We hold our students to the standard of making safe choices and set limits within the environment to ensure that they are able to practice new skills in appropriate ways. We scaffold activities so that they are able to practice the skills necessary to continue progressing toward their goals.

Conflict with another: These are often the most complex and difficult conflicts to resolve. We offer our students simple phrases (please stop, can I have a turn when you're all done, help please, etc) to help navigate these situations. Interpersonal conflicts are typically resolved when both parties have expressed themselves and the offender has assured the other that they will not repeat the upsetting behavior. Every time we resolve interpersonal conflicts, we are building self awareness and empathy. This takes time and patience, but is a natural process when consistently reinforced.

As often as possible, adults with the aim of helping young children become happy, productive humans should take the time to see why a conflict is occurring and consider the learning opportunity for what it is. This is obviously easier said than done. Sometimes, this may mean providing comfort and assistance, but very often it can mean allowing the time and space for the child to move through their frustration, while reminding them that we are here to help and what next steps are required. We are thrilled to offer a safe space for our students, from under 2 to over 6, to practice and refine these skills. One of the primary goals of our program is to help our students recognize and appreciate the positive feelings that come along with resolving the inevitable and various conflicts in their lives.

Field Day Planning Committee

It is time for us to really get serious about preparing and planning for our field day event on Saturday, April 23.

We will be having a preliminary planning meeting before our March 19 service day from 10-11 a.m. Limited childcare will be available for those attending the meeting (children are also welcome to attend the meeting with their parents).

Even if you are not able to volunteer during the actual event, there is plenty of planning and prep that will be helpful. We look forward to seeing you there!



This week we have been fully embracing the signs of Spring being just around the corner! We have been prepping the garden and greenhouse, getting ready for planting, enjoying mindfulness and movement class, and getting to know our new class visitors, frog eggs!



We are excited to announce that we have been awarded a **farm to school grant to fund the Pisgah Collective Pickling Project!** This funding will allow us to expand our class garden by starting a new garden bed, acquire pickling equipment and other resources that we will need, and pickle some of our garden bounty with our students this year! We are very grateful for this opportunity! Stay tuned.



Important Dates

- RootED Launch Event:
March 19 @ the barn! 11-2
- Women's Month Market
Saturday, March 26
We will be at Oskar Blues from 2-6!
- CLOSED: Spring Break
April 11-18 (re-open Tuesday)
- Field Day & Music Fest!
Saturday, April 23
- Summer Paperwork/Deposits
DUE: April 29
- Appalachian Heritage Day
Saturday, May 14
Save the date for an event at the barn!
- Last Day of Spring Semester
Afternoons: Thursday, May 12
Mornings: Friday, May 20

Spring Payment #3 Due:
Wednesday, March 9

Spring Payment #4 Due:
Wednesday, April 6

(morning sprouts & afternoon seedlings)