

# We built a Fort!



K-2 (SN)

# Context:

During a discussion about celebrating Diwali during the Art class, children were asked how they celebrate diwali at home and how they would like to celebrate diwali at school. In the same context, the teacher spoke about her own childhood memories of Diwali celebration in Mumbai (Maharashtra). She mentioned that they used to make miniature Fort models which was a traditional activity of kids in that region. This was an activity for the kids to collaborate and work in team. They could also learn of a bit of history doing it.

Children showed great excitement and started talking about forts!

**Rishaan Milanta:** I know, I saw it at Goa. It had tall stone walls and a soldier was standing in front of it and protecting it.

**Mukund:** It is where Narendra Modi gives his speech on Independence Day. It is Red fort and It is a big building

**Teacher:** Oh did you go there on Independence Day?

**Mukund:** No, I saw it on T.V.

**Children:** Miss why did you make forts?

**Teacher:** We used to make forts to know about the history.

Maratha king Shivaji had built many forts in mountain areas.

**Mukund:** Oh I know Shivaji, I saw his statue near Sankey tank

# Zooming in...

Seeing their understanding and interest regarding Forts, the teacher thought of taking the idea of “Forts” forward, to see what the children might come up with.

The next day, children were read out some information about the tradition of making forts in the Maratha region of India.

Fort making is a peculiar tradition in Maharashtra state. Children make small mud forts during Diwali, place small figurines on them and light oil lamps. Maharashtra has more than 350 forts and they are a glorious heritage of the Maratha Empire. Many of these forts are associated with Shivaji Maharaj, the great Maratha king.

It is said that when Shivaji Maharaj was young, he used to make mud forts with his playmates and recreate a war scene. As a memory of that, kids build the forts during Diwali. This in a way also helps kids to enrich their Knowledge of history in a fun way. The forts of Maratha kingdom played very important role in the safety of the kingdom. They still serve as an example of excellent architecture. They were built so tactfully that they're still going strong. To inculcate this value, the mud forts are built in Diwali.

Pictures of King Shivaji and Forts were put up as provocations...



... Also some forts built by children traditionally using clay

Children noticed the main characteristics of the fort:

Fort has tall strong wall and water body (trench) around the fort for the protection, huge gate at the entrance, lots of steps...

**Khushi:** Miss not only elephants, the camels and horses also had to walk through the gate. Like they have camel, horse and elephant in the game of chess with soldiers to protect the king and the queen!

Observing the forts made by children, they were curious...

**Bhumi:** How did they make it?

**Aria:** They have used bricks and clay.

**Ishaan:** They have used stones and wood.

Teacher's observations: Children were displaying curiosity and eagerness to investigate further. So catching on to this spontaneous teaching moment, the children could be encouraged to delve deeper into the study of forts.

How can we build a fort? What materials do you think we can use?

**Khushi:** We can use clay

**Navika:** We can use paper

**Aarnav:** I think we can make it with wood blocks

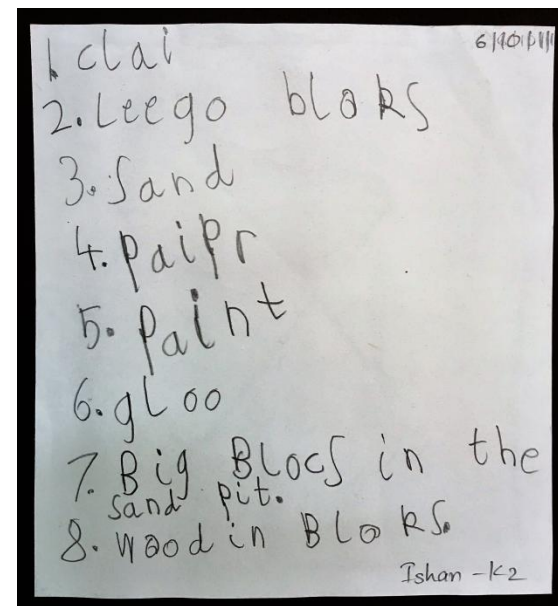
**Shrinayana:** I can use sand from sand pit

**Anika and Niheera:** We can use cotton

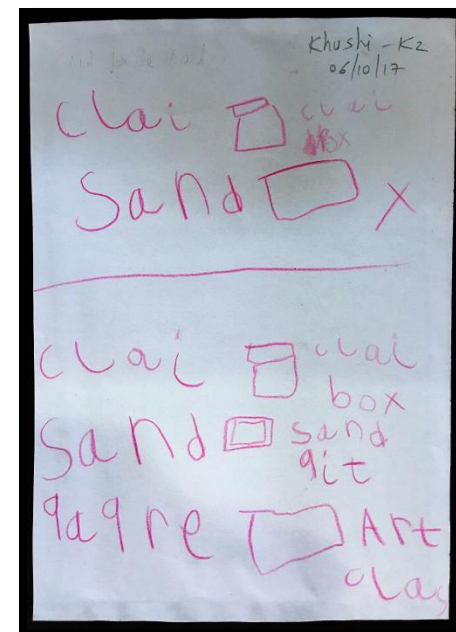
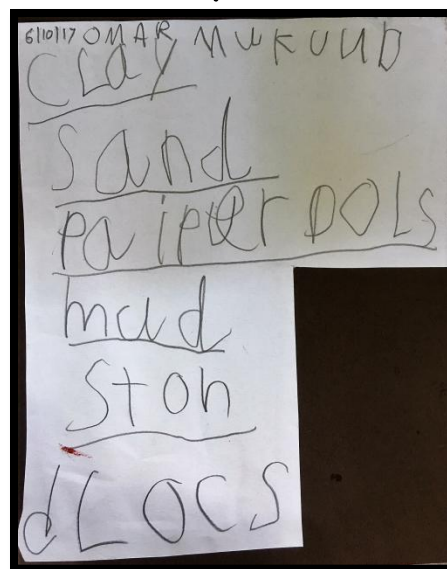
**Ishaan:** Miss we can use Lego blocks

**Samaira:** We can use boxes to make it

Children came up with the list of materials they thought they could use to make the fort.



Teacher's observations:  
Children found a purpose and understood that making a "list" would help them plan their project, displaying their literacy skills.



# Where do you think we can make it?

We can make it in the clay centre. Miss, we can make it in the sand pit also.

After an initial discussion of who wants to build in which area, few children decided to make it on the table (clay centre) in art class.

Some children started collecting the stones from the outdoor and some of them ran to the sand pit to prepare for the fort there.





## Building the fort in the Art room-

Some children began arranging them on the table, while some others got busy making "soldiers" with clay.



Once they collected stones , the children arranged the stones and started layering them with clay.



Children: Miss these stones are falling down!

Then few children came up with the idea of making a wall around it with the wooden blocks, So that their stones are secured within

**Devrana:** We can keep them like this (Placing wooden blocks vertically) to make it tall.

They later added lego blocks over the wooden blocks to add height and colour to their fort wall.



During the process of building their fort, some children kept referring to the provocation pictures of fort models.



Teacher's observations: Children worked collaboratively, listening to each other's ideas and discussing the plans. There was very little friction and disagreements.

## Going into finer details...

**Mukund:** I will make Shivaji! I have seen his statue, he is sitting on a horse.

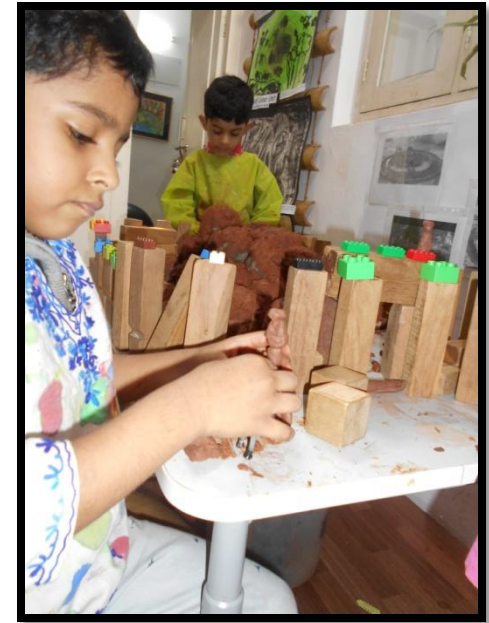
He went and got a toy horse from the sand pit.

"First I will make saddle on the horse. See I made it."

Then he made legs and body, head with the turban.

"Miss, there is a shield on his back and sword in one hand."

Teacher's observations: Mukund displayed a disposition of good observation and memory to make Shivaji's statue on the toy horse using clay. He also displayed good clay modelling skills.





Once he was satisfied with his work, Mukund placed his statue of Shivaji on the top of the mound saying, "The king should be put here."



The final Fort with an entrance and the statue of Shivaji!

# Making of the Fort at the Sand Pit

Children went to the sandpit and started looking for a place to build a fort.

They figured that place under the jungle gym would be safe and protected..



After little provocation, children came up with a plan and started working. They dug up a trench (Khandak) for water body around the fort, a surrounding wall was built and wooden logs were kept for the entrance.



**Ishaan:** We can use these (Big interlocking blocks) blocks for wall. He started digging and placing them vertically





Omar: We need animals.

He and another child ran to get animals from another area and placed them on the mound.



Ishaan got the waterplay channels and placed them around over the ditch, Saying, " We can put water in this."



In the sandpit, children started working on their fort. While they were working, K1, Pre-K and Toddler children were walking and running through. The fort was not coming up.

**Sidhant:** We are working from ages it's not completing only.

**Anika:** Yes these (Toddler, Pre-K and K1) children are coming and breaking we need to build a wall to protect our fort.

Children used the big interlocking blocks to build the wall around their fort, which was not working.

**Khushi:** We can use the wooden logs.

She started getting the logs with the help of Dev Rana. They realised the logs are heavy. They went to the Security person and asked him, " Can you please help us put the logs there? It is very heavy!"

Teacher's observations: Children did not give up when the fort was being destroyed by younger children. They thought of innovative ways to protect their creation. Also finding solutions when they were unable to act upon their ideas.

Under the supervision of the teacher, the Security person helped them place the wooden logs where the children wanted.



**Viren:** We can make a deep ditch so these (Toddlers, Pre-k and K1) children can't get in.

**Ishaan:** Yes that will help



Viren, Ishaan, Srinayna, and Omar started digging ditch around. While digging they said excitedly, " See Miss! We found hidden treasures!!!"

They got digging with increased enthusiasm and found a glass, a toy boat, a ball and a steel vessel !!

Seeing the boat, **Viren:** I think this is a pirate's boat, which has sunk and became small. Let's dig more we will get more treasure.

**Viren:** I found a root

**Ishan:** Don't break it! It's tree root.



# The final Fort built in the sand pit



Children continued making changes and improvements to their "Fort" till it was time to leave for the day. Children requested the house staff in charge of the sand pit, not to disturb it through the weekend as they wanted to work on it on Monday.

Teacher's analysis: Children were engaged and engrossed on the task and continued working on the fort.

Children were acting with increasing independence and perseverance

- Building a confident self-identity.
- Building positive relationships with others
- Showing increasing respect for diversity Building positive dispositions and approaches toward learning
- Increasing confidence and involvement in learning
- Engaging in ways to be imaginative and creative Exploring and expanding ways to use language
- Exploring and engaging with literacy in personally meaningful ways