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My Friend Little Caterpillar

MUSIC: Sing about caterpillars and how they change into moths or butterflies

CHILDREN WILL:

- Sing a song using the appropriate terminology for the metamorphosis of a butterfly and a moth
- Closely examine a butterfly and a moth
- Discuss differences and similarities between butterflies and moths

You'll need:

- Animal cards: butterfly and moth
- Living, dead, or plastic butterfly and moth
- Hand lenses
- Science notebooks
- Colored pencils

Notes from Sherri:

One year, as we observed a polyphemus caterpillar, we saw it wrap a leaf around itself and make the cocoon. After the moth emerged, the children wanted to see what was inside. We cut the cocoon open and discovered the chrysalis-like skin inside. They decided that moths just were shy and didn't like to change in front of everyone—that's why they made the cocoon!

Did you know?

To become adult insects, butterflies and moths undergo a four-stage process called complete metamorphosis. First, they begin as eggs. Second, they hatch into caterpillars, also known as larvae. After a period of feeding, they form coverings to protect themselves during the third stage, called pupation. At last, they emerge as fully formed adults. This song will introduce children to the process of metamorphosis.

Teacher preparation:

- Attractively arrange the moth and butterfly models and animal cards and equipment in the science area for use during self-selected activity time.
- Practice the song and motions.

What to do:

1. During group time, teach children the following song to the tune of *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*:

*My friend little caterpillar (Pet thumb.)
eats green leaves until they fill her.
Then she grows a chrysalis. (Make fist with thumb in middle.)
There she sleeps unseen by us.
Spring will come and by and by
she'll become a butterfly. (Put thumbs together and flap hands.)*

*My friend little caterpillar (Pet thumb.)
eats green leaves until they fill her.
Then she spins a small cocoon. (Make fist with thumb in middle.)
There she sleeps and very soon
spring will come and she'll fly off. (Put thumbs together and flap hands.)
She'll become a fuzzy moth.*

2. Encourage interested children to examine both the butterfly and the moth during self-selected activity time. Challenge them to record their observations in their science notebooks.
3. As children work in the area, facilitate their observations by asking open-ended questions:
 - How do the moth and the butterfly look the same? Different?
 - How do they act alike? Different?
 - How much do you think a caterpillar needs to eat before it forms a chrysalis or cocoon?
 - How does the butterfly or moth know when to come out of the chrysalis or cocoon?
 - How does the caterpillar know whether to grow a chrysalis or spin a cocoon?
 - Why do you think butterflies and moths are so many different colors?

Related children's literature:

Aston, D. H., & Long, S. (2011). *A butterfly is patient*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books. ISBN-10: 0811864790. This beautifully illustrated book is full of butterfly facts.

Additional learning experiences:

ART: Provide materials for children to do folded-paper painting during self-selected activity time. Make a crease down the center of a sheet of paper, paint on one side of the crease and fold the paper. Squeeze and rub the paint around, and then open the paper so a symmetrical design appears. Compare their work to the symmetry of a butterfly or moth's wings.

ART: During self-selected activity time, provide clipboards, colored pencils, watercolors, crayons, and markers for children to make sketches of butterflies and moths they see or capture on the playground.

ART: Provide egg cartons, toilet paper rolls, pipe cleaners, tissue paper, clothespins, etc., for children to create caterpillars, butterflies, and moths during self-selected activity time. Be sure to let them create the designs for themselves rather than providing a model.

LARGE MOTOR: Pantomime the stages of metamorphosis of the butterfly or moth.

OUTSIDE: Look for butterflies and moths on the play yard during self-selected time.

OUTSIDE: Make butterfly nets from wire coat hangers and old panty hose. Place these outside for children to try to catch butterflies and moths during self-selected activity time. Study and sketch the caught specimens, but be sure to release them at the end of the day.

PRETEND PLAY: During self-selected activity time, provide party blowers for children to pretend to eat like a butterfly or moth. Add headband antennae and wings made from coat hangers and panty hose.

SCIENCE: Bring in a caterpillar for children to observe. Encourage children to write about their observations and sketch the caterpillar in their science notebooks. Be sure to have the children set the caterpillar free at the end of the day.

READING: As you read books about the metamorphosis of butterflies and moths, talk about the author's accurate or inaccurate language used for describing the chrysalis/cocoon.

WRITING: Provide pencils, stiff paper, and crayons for children to write butterfly or moth stories during self-selected activity time. This should be a free-choice experience, allowing children to spend as much time or as little time with it as they feel is necessary. Take their dictation as they finish their work. Bind the pictures, stories, and transcriptions together to create a class book about butterflies and moths.