
“Why?” said the children throughout the day! Children have an intrinsic desire to understand the world. Piaget’s theory suggests children make sense of their world through interactions and involvement in meaningful activities. As children’s natural curiosity pushes them to explore, first through their senses and then through physical and social interactions with their environment they begin to make inquiries about their surroundings. In their efforts to understand the world, their schemas often contain errors or misinformation. Through continued exploration and interactions, children gain understanding and knowledge of how the world works. As teachers, we play a vital role in supporting these inquiries. Showing enthusiasm for their inquiries, utilizing high-level questions and providing resources and materials to promote their ideas.

Developing strong positive collaborative relationships with children is a key component to strengthening their scientific thinking. Teachers who show enthusiasm and curiosity about the inquiries children have, inspire them to think more deeply.

Teachers can participate in children’s inquiries by providing resources and materials to heighten the experiences for children. Children’s interest is often inspired by their interactions with the physical world.

Let’s visit a classroom:

One day, the children were using squirt bottles filled with colored water to spray a mound of snow on the playground. They noticed as the snow melted it created a trail of colored water leading to the drainage culvert. On a walk later that day, the children noticed a trail of colored water was seeping into a nearby retention pond changing the color of the water as it entered the pond. They wondered what had created the color changes in the pond. How did the water get from the snow bank into the pond? What made the water change colors? The teacher wrote down all the ideas the children voiced. She invited the Director of Facilities to come and visit the class. He brought diagrams of the drainage system. The children were able to see the route the water took from the playground to the lake. They asked where the water went when it left our lake. The teacher was able to provide maps for the children to look at depicting the waterways in the area.

A long-term project developed as they explored creeks, streams, bayous, and rivers. Children participated in many activities throughout the classroom space and outdoors. The teacher provided experiences to extend the children’s knowledge and inquiries. They explored mixing colors in the sensory table, drew maps in the writing center and created rivers and streams in the sand area outside. Children read many books about water and its flow. As you might expect the questions continued as new interests and inquiries arose from the knowledge they had gained.

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*Quote for today: Children are miracles. Believing that every child is a miracle can transform the way we design for children’s care. We make it our job to create, with reverence and gratitude, a space that is worthy of a miracle.* - Anita Rui Olds
Additional Professional Resources:


Upcoming Project Construct Training

Foundations of Project Construct for Early Childhood Educators:
July 9-11 and July 16-17, followed by Teaching Letters and Sounds workshop on July 18 (1/2 price for the workshop!)

Site: West Middle School 401 Clinkscales Rd Columbia, MO 65203

Judy Harris Helm at UMKC School of Education & Berkley CFDC on October 12—register now

At our website: www.projectconstruct.org

Check our website for additional training opportunities: www.projectconstruct.org