



## An Encounter with Water:

crossing boundaries and exploring unexpected gazes.

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(in collaboration with REAIE)



*Meaning is not discovered but constructed ... meaning does not inhere in the object, merely waiting for someone to come upon it ... meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting.*

Crotty, 1998, p 42-3

### When considering materials for inquiry:

- Consider the material you have chosen.
- What possibilities are there for exploration? Is it open ended, flexible and interesting? Is it accessible? Can it be used in multiple ways?
- Are their ethical considerations to contemplate? (Water may not be suitable for your context).
- Think about other materials that might compliment your chosen subject (for example technology).
- How might these other material/s enhance opportunities for research, documentation, observation and reflection?

**Opportunities to explore water:** (or any chosen material eg: clay, loose parts, plastics, paper, mark making etc)

- Initial experiences and 'tuning in' to water - make time (at least two weeks) for initial explorations and encounters.
- How can you create environments that support children to explore water in playful ways?
- What materials will you use to support your observations?
- What do you notice about how children are engaging with water?
- Don't hesitate to share artifacts and documents back with the children to encourage dialogue and reflection. Take time to talk with children in small 'focus' groups and during morning meetings.

*A first encounter for children, what materials to explore and act on them is a necessary step in the children's process of knowing.*

*Through such encounters and explorations, children build an awareness of what can happen with materials, and adults build the ability to observe and support the significance of each particular experience.*

Gandini, 2005

- Begin to think about how you can enhance explorations or 'sharpen' your focus, based on your observations and reflections with adults and children in your context.
- Be open to new possibilities and new ways of 'seeing' materials.

*Materials offer opening and pathways by and through which children may enter the world of knowledge.*

*Materials become the tools with which children give form to and express their understanding of the world and the meanings they have constructed.*

Cuffaro, 1995, p33

As your inquiry begins to take shape you will begin to 'see' threads of thinking emerge with the children.

- Take time to **listen** and **be open** to new ways of thinking as you project forward with your planning. Ideas are subjective - there are no right answers!

### **Exploring languages:**

Create opportunities to **link** the children's thinking, and **deepen** understanding, by providing **space** and **time** for children to explore other languages; such as drawing or mark making, dancing or moving, exploration of loose parts materials and/or creative arts materials, verbal responses, reflections and so on.

Provide time for children to develop **relationships** with materials and time for them to undertake their **research**. Children and adults require time to understand and make sense of what it is they are exploring and researching. Interactions with any given material are not compartmentalised or separated, but rather, they intersect and converge continuously over long periods of time.

*We have always believed that beauty, joy, humor, and poetry are an integral and important part of knowledge-building, and thus that learning should be experienced in daily life through multiple languages (verbal, written, musical, visual, dance, and so on) and it can and should be narrated by means of many languages.*

Vecchi, 2001, p. 160

Always aim to explore the many possibilities that any given provocation can gift us. If we are willing to take the time to listen deeply to the children we co-research alongside we can discover new and unexpected gazes. Children must be supported to engage with materials with 'sensitivity, as they construct together with other children and their educators deep relationships to matter and knowledge'. (Keyte-Hartland, 2016)

## References and further reading:

Cuffaro, H. K. (1995). *Experimenting with the World: John Dewey and the Early Childhood Classroom*. United Kingdom: Teachers College Press.

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Keyte-Hartland, D. (2016). *Children, Empathy, Ideas and Ecology*. Retrieved 22 March 2021, from <https://debkeytehartland.me/2016/05/02/children-empathy-ideas-and-ecology/>

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