

The Value of Free Exploration

Free Exploration allows the child to...

- ⇒ do his or her own thing so later it will be possible to focus on the material as learning material. For example, if a teachers wants to use unifix cubes for a graph, they will be able to focus on the graph rather than on the particular qualities of the unifix cubes...how do they snap together? What do they feel like? Can you look through the hole? How many would it take to stretch to the wall?, etc.
- ⇒ Satisfy curiosity.
- ⇒ learn from other children.
- ⇒ discover a variety of possibilities with various materials.
- ⇒ have an opportunity to spontaneously discover sorting, counting, pattern, geometry, measurement, balance, comparisons of color, shape, size, weight, sound, etc.
- ⇒ work at his or her own ability level and feel successful.
- ⇒ experience the idea that there are no right or wrong answers.
- ⇒ verbalize ideas.
- ⇒ learn to share space and materials.
- ⇒ awaken his or her senses.
- ⇒ discover likenesses and differences in the world around them.
- ⇒ prepare the children for directed work with materials.

Free exploration allows the teacher to ...

- ⇒ observe the complexity of the task various children set for themselves and to observe how they react to difficulties in completing their task.
- ⇒ observe how the children interact with one another and the different materials.
- ⇒ observe what the children do spontaneously with different materials. (To observe children working with a material without the children trying to “please” the teacher.)
- ⇒ observe how a child learns through play.
- ⇒ observe which children are self-directed.
- ⇒ observe language patterns of children as they discuss with their peers.
- ⇒ have time to informally assess children’s skills.