



Thinking is the Way Your Mind Talks

Based on an article by Lisa Meckel

“A word is a microcosm of human consciousness.”
Vygotsky, 1962

Listen, teachers! Listen to the words of your children as they convey to you their “having of wonderful ideas!” (Duckworth, 1973)

Ideas for using Beautiful Stuff: one process:

- 1 You and families **collect** from everywhere a multitude of beautiful junk. Have the children and their families find it in their houses, in their nature walks. Its highly sensory nature will aid in stimulating the imagination and enriching the oral language of your children.
- 2 **Explore** all the lovely junk, asking questions: How does it feel? Does it make a sound? I wonder if it will float. I wonder how heavy it is. Pretend I can't see it, describe it to me. What does it look and feel like? What does it remind you of? Blindfold children (volunteers): how does it feel without looking at it?
- 3 Children **group, order, sort, classify**. Let them play around with the materials. Organize in clear containers at the child's eye level and within reach.
- 4 Children **create and invent** with the materials. Children make lovely wood and junk collages, sculptures and designs.
- 5 Older children can **draw** their constructions.
- 6 **Listen to their language** as they make their constructions. Interact with them, responding to their talk. Have conversations, NOT INTERROGATIONS. Extend their language and their thinking. Show interest in their ideas.
- 7 **Write down** what they say. Take notes on their self talk and their talk with peers. At some point ask they if they have a story to tell about what they are inventing. Encourage them to describe the process of what they have done.
- 8 **Read back** your notes and/or stories to them. Stories can be acted out. Notes can be used for documentation. Do this with toddlers too—even one word is an expression of what they have been doing.
- 9 **Photograph** their constructions. Use for documentation displays, in books, and throughout the room.
- 10 **Display** their 3-dimensional work with their own words and thoughts as they worked through the process.
- 11 **Share** with parents.
- 12 **Revisit** with children.