

Supporting Concept Development: *Extending Exploration*

BUILDING BLOCKS

From the following vignette, underline examples of materials used and of the teacher supporting the children’s investigations.

While on a weekly walk, preschool children become interested in a large, historic building. Their teacher, Yanira, takes a picture of the building to bring back to the classroom.

The next morning, Yanira places the picture in the block area with the usual wooden blocks. Because the historic building has a dome in the middle, she makes sure to include blocks with rounded edges and arches. She also adds some pieces of cardboard to the block area. Many children go to the block area and create their own buildings.

Yanira observes and extends the children’s thinking by asking questions that require the children to analyze materials, “Which blocks would work for making this rounded dome on the top?” or “How can you build a strong roof?” After the children build their structures, she engages them in evaluating their work, “Tell me about your structure.” or “How did you figure out how to balance those blocks like that?”

Pair up with a partner and think about the materials.

How did the materials promote exploration and investigation? In what ways were the materials open-ended, varied, and relevant?

If you were to continue this learning experience, what materials would you add to this space?

Next, think about how Yanira scaffolds the children’s thinking as they create their structures.

Give examples of when Yanira encouraged children to think, modeled new vocabulary, and invited them to communicate their own ideas.

What other questions or comments would you use to extend the children’s thinking?
