

## Finding the Connections

One of the most important skills anyone can master is using what you know to find solutions to a new problem or answers to a question. This involves seeing relationships, figuring out what information is available, what is missing and how to find that missing information. Establishing relationships requires several abilities:

- Focused and sustained attention
- Comparison of two or more things to note obvious similarities and subtle differences
- Finding significant clues
- Understanding spatial relations - behind, near, over, alongside, etc.
- Understanding temporal relations - now, soon, later

For children between the ages of 3 and 6, materials provide powerful ways to build relationships. What children do with materials - whether blocks, markers, seeds or dress up clothes - shows teachers how they are thinking and whether they make comparisons, classify information, use symbols, make analogies, or engage other thought processes. Teachers that use a wide variety of materials in their classrooms can use them determine what children are thinking, to hook children's interests, to stimulate conversation, and to engage children in increasingly complex thinking.

## The Importance of Drawing

Observation is the basis for drawing. Reggio educators place great value on drawing because it reveals:

- What children have observed
- Details children find important
- The children's hand skills
- Each child's personal vocabulary of "lines and forms"
- If a child is near a turning point in understanding



*When teachers engage children in discussing, classifying, storing, and drawing materials, the children become masters of the materials in their classrooms.*



*Twelve Best Practices for Early Childhood Education*

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