

## Seeds of Partnership Website Video Descriptive Text Transcription High Quality Early Learning Environment, HQELE

Key Element: Materials

Materials Overview

[http://www.seedsofpartnership.org/hqele/video/materials\\_overview.html](http://www.seedsofpartnership.org/hqele/video/materials_overview.html)

**(Description: Teacher Laura sitting on couch in classroom)**

The real-life materials. One of the most exciting things about it for me is that it's something that all programs can do. Because you don't have to buy it. You can find it, you can get parents and children to bring it in from home and it's something that they recognize and they had in their home and that's really an exciting aspect of what we do here and what I see other programs doing is that no matter where you are find those types of materials. They're found things.

**(Description: Bins filled with household containers and packages and label stating "Reusable Rubbish Art Area")**

Even in our area, our children this year, and in past years, have been very interested in using containers and things,

**(Description: Shelving containing natural, real-life and open-ended materials)**

just from packaging, yogurt tubs, whatever, and making things with it, and creating with it. And so it's things that they just see in their world

**(Description: Framed sign stating "Three-Dimensional Artwork" and shelf showing children's artwork)**

and they're able to create with it. We bring in the art area and the science. I think are the two areas, I think, you'd see it a lot

**(Description: Teacher Laura sitting on couch in classroom)**

where you have things that you can find outdoors that we bring in for them to play with and to understand and to feel the textures and to create with them. But in other areas too and as far as real tools, and real things that they're going to need to use. We've done projects with wood-working where they use real little hammers and things like that. It's really important for them to have the experience with tools because that's what they're going to next and to be successful with it. Because those types of materials challenge them in different ways as well. And one of the things I think is really important about the materials is with having natural things and real-life things is a lot of the times they're more open-ended.

And when you're looking at children who have a variety of different developmental levels. This classroom is 3.5 through 5 years of age

**(Description: Teacher Laura sitting on couch in classroom)**

at the beginning of the year. It's a pretty wide range. And I know a lot of programs have that in their classrooms, and even if you don't, there's a lot of range still. If you have all four-year-olds there's quite a bit of variation. If you have things that are more open-ended it can engage them in different ways and challenge them in different ways

**(Description: Child at table holding two pinecones)**

for longer periods of time. And I think that's really critical. so no matter where you're at you can be successful using these materials and enjoy using the materials and be next to your friend who's using the same things

**(Description: Children at science table interacting with various materials)**

even if you're not doing the same thing you can have that social piece. Whereas sometimes if it's really closed that's all I can do with it and I can't do that yet. And they might not feel comfortable being a part of it. And some closed things are okay and important too like puzzles or what have you but

**(Description: Teacher Laura sitting on couch in classroom)**

having a lot of the natural materials is really conducive to those types of learning experiences and social experience in children. The thing is that here a lot of what you see

**(Description: Program Specialist Katie sitting on couch in classroom)**

is not purchased from a catalogue. It's not. I mean a lot of this is parent donations. It's well at my house, we're done with this rug and getting a new one so we bring it in or this lamp doesn't go in my house anymore so we'll bring it here and everybody contributes a lot of the things that we have are given or donated or we're Craigslist crazy people around here when we're looking and they're giving this stuff away for free. And it's all this PVC pipe. Can you imagine what we can build with this or how we could use this? So a lot of times we are repurposing and reusing materials just that we have found, given. I mean, they used to laugh at us because we would be driving down the street and I'd go, "Stop! Stop! Stop! There's something in that trash can I could use that!" "I know what I could use that for!" And it was because I can repurpose this. I can use it and it doesn't cost us a fortune. And a lot of times, the things that we want

**(Description: Repurposed materials sorted by textures, labeled, and hung on back of shelving))**

or the things we have in our environments, we can't go purchase just from a catalogue. We go collect them or we ask parents to bring them in or the children collect rocks outside

**(Description: Child painting a rock)**

and we bring them in and they use them in the block area to enhance their play. So there are a lot of those things, those natural materials that we have come from just what we find around and what parents can donate, and what the children bring

**(Description: Program Specialist Katie sitting on couch in classroom)**

so it doesn't have to cost a lot of money. We use a lot of natural materials in the classroom just because, first of all, it's aesthetically pleasing for the eyes

**(Description: Teacher Yi-Cheng standing in children's dramatic play area)**

and for the children to see things that are familiar to them in their household, so if we have in the home area. We have things, or instruments or tools or food

**(Description: Child in home area playing with utensils, jars, and bowls)**

that they might have at their home to make them feel like they're comfortable. And we also choose materials that are open-ended, which means there's no beginning, no middle and no end to the materials. They can play as long as they want or as short as they want to interact with the materials. And one way that open-ended materials

**(Description: Teacher Yi-Cheng standing in children's dramatic play area)**

are really great for children with different abilities is that they can interact with the material in different ways. For example, if we set out some blocks and sticks and stones

**(Description: A basket filled with sticks and a basket filled with small rocks)**

and a nice picture frame. A child can come in and create a picture. A child who maybe more advanced in an area of classification. They can put all of the rocks in one area

**(Description: Teacher Yi-Cheng standing in children's dramatic play area)**

all the stones in one area, all the sticks in one area Some children might not be there yet cognitively but they can sort by color so they might be putting all the dark rocks in one area all the light rocks. And then it's successful for all the children

**(Description: Two children hugging)**

to have, to participate in this activity and there's no right or wrong answer so that way they can just interact with it and feel some kind of accomplishment.

**(Description: Child painting a rock)**

And sometimes we do as teachers, provoke them a little bit, just kind of bring it up to another to a different level so

**(Description: Teacher Yi-Cheng standing in children's dramatic play area)**

if we do see a child is separating the materials we do ask them questions: I see that you put all the pine cones in this corner, I wonder where this one goes? So we'll show them a pine cone or rock, and then that way they'll be like, "Okay, wait." So we're guiding them towards that direction so they know that they're sorting or classifying. It's very important in our center and our philosophy

**(Description: Teacher Sarah sitting on couch in classroom)**

to give children real-life tools and materials and things that are valuable because we feel that children are valuable. So we want to choose elements that are things that you'd find in your own home that are real tools. When we're in our kitchen area, for example, we use actual measuring spoons and cups

**(Description: Children playing in kitchen area)**

and we use nice wooden bowls that you might have a salad out of or things like that and we try to provide real materials for them to use.

**(Description: Kitchen area table set with plates, bowls, utensils, teapot, and food)**

Foods that look real, not plastic or fake or kind of cheesy but things that are real life experiences.

**(Description: Teacher Sarah sitting on couch in classroom)**

We have an area in our room that is a wood-working area that we're beginning to introduce children to the concept of wood-working and so we have, we're starting with golf tees and clay and small wooden mallets but we're working up to

**(Description: Small wooden mallets in a wooden container with clay and golf tees)**

children-size real hammers and nails and wooden materials so they can actually understand that they're valued and that they can be the master of these materials. 7

**(Description: Children playing with math manipulatives)**

We do not have a specific math area because math is found within all of the intra-centers in our classrooms and with all the materials.

**(Description: Measuring scale with various materials in baskets beside it)**

We have a scale that we use for weight and measuring that's related to math. In our manipulative area, we have a variety of puzzles

**(Description: Puzzle with knobs)**

and tinker toys, those kinds of little small pieces that they can have the hands-on exploration

**(Description: Clay inside a sensory tub)**

with mathematical sorts of elements, I would say. And our sensory tub, a lot of parents are unsure of why their children get messy but the experience is good on so many levels.

**(Description: Children playing in sensory tub)**

They get to work on pouring and weight and comparison of size and those are all elements that are key in math. The point is for them to be able to explore and learn through that hands-on interaction.

**(Description: Teacher Sarah sitting on couch in classroom)**

And that's the same in the art. Is painting and they want to add collage materials to their painting that's completely acceptable.

**(Description: Child gluing collage materials on paper)**

If they want to add some of the pieces used to make structures with playdough they can take those pieces as well. Everything is very open-ended. Children are able to make decisions on

**(Description: Teacher Sarah sitting on couch in classroom)**

how they want to use materials. There are a few, sort of, guidelines. I wouldn't necessarily call them rules, but guidelines. For example, we have tinker toys and we have huge baskets so that they're able to create lots of different structures without running out of materials

**(Description: Children playing with Tinker Toys)**

and it's very close to our jumping mat and so one small guideline is that we ask them to keep the tinker toys at the manipulative table that's right next to the tinker toys. Because if they take them out, we've noticed they've been used on the jumping mat

**(Description: Children playing on jumping mat)**

and then it takes the element of the jumping mat away. Children can't use the mat appropriately so that's just one simple guideline. I think using real-life materials

**(Description: Teacher Sarah sitting on couch in classroom)**

that are not traditional plastic materials

**(Description: Children playing with wooden blocks)**

used in preschools teaches children that they have value and shows them that we believe that they are capable. To me it just shows them that we believe in their intelligence, in their capability and their value. That we can have a preserved bug in a piece of glass

**(Description: Preserved insects, spiders, and bugs in pieces of glass)**

because they can examine it appropriately and they won't break it. They can understand that real wooden blocks

**(Description: Teacher Sarah sitting on couch in classroom)**

don't go in water because then the wood will expand and it'll be broken. It just helps them to learn that they're valued and

**(Description: Children in music area playing with instruments)**

that translates into building their confidence in life.