

# Kindergarten: Beautiful Stuff Project

## What we have been working on in the classroom....

Young children have a natural desire to collect and study materials. We decided to use this natural desire to begin an investigation called The Beautiful Stuff Project. Inspired by educational practices in Reggio Emilia, this project focuses on process rather than product. The purpose was to collaborate together in discovering, collecting, sorting, arranging, experimenting, creating, constructing and thinking with materials. We wondered: Does connecting with materials like this help children to use prior information and construct new understanding of materials in the world around them? Does this project approach facilitate and extend learning and engagement? Will it teach the children to think more deeply about materials as well as become more thoughtful and careful in their use and handling of materials?

We invited the Kindergarten children to collect found materials at home and bring them in a concealed bag to school. It was interesting to see excitement and curiosity build as the bags slowly came in to the classroom and we awaited new discoveries. We began by having small groups of children open their bags and display them on trays. The collections of materials naturally invited exploration. The children began to talk about the properties of materials and what the purposes of different objects were. The oral language used to describe their collections of found materials showed some complex thinking and immediately gave us a sense of the expressive language abilities of the students.

We asked **“What do you notice about the materials in your collection?”**  
**“What is one object that is particularly appealing to you and why?”** and  
**“How did you collect your materials?”**

We documented their responses and descriptions. We took a photo of each child's collection for future reference, as the plan was to combine all of the materials for eventual sorting and classifying activities. The next step is to have the children draw their collection of materials and begin to write a list of the objects. Once we have had the opportunity to conference with small groups of students, we will work in larger groups to amalgamate all of the collected materials and begin an investigation into how the materials can be sorted, classified, and organized. This investigation will hopefully lead us to further discoveries and questions about the physical properties of the collected materials and allow children to begin to make connections to the properties of objects and materials in the world around them.

### **Big Idea: Materials Are Everywhere!**

**Concepts:** Materials are physical substances from which objects are made (paper, plastic, stone, glass, wood, metal, rubber, fabric, foam etc.) Objects and their parts can be classified into the kind of material they are made from. Materials can also be classified according to their properties or whether they are natural materials or man-made materials.

### **Essential Questions:**

1. What are objects made of?
2. What materials are used most?
3. How can we compare and classify materials?

4. How can we describe materials?
5. How can we use our senses to describe materials?
6. What do we notice about the properties of materials?
7. How can we tell if material is natural or man-made?

**Explorations:** Size, colour, shape, texture, mass, magnetism, transparency, etc.