

[Slides from the presentation](#)

The Philosophy & "How-To" of Material Exploration

These sites explain why we use alternative materials and how to set up the environment—directly supporting the "investigating materials" theme from the training.

- [Community Playthings](#)
 - excellent articles on setting up "Treasure Baskets" and the role of the adult in facilitating—rather than directing—material exploration.
- [Play Scotland](#)
 - Focus: Loose Parts Toolkit.
 - Why it's interesting: They provide a comprehensive "Loose Parts Play Toolkit" available for download. It's a practical, high-level guide that covers risk management, storage, and facilitating play with recycled and natural materials. This is a fantastic resource to share with administrators or hesitant parents.
- [Reggio Children](#)
 - Focus: Deep Investigation & The "Atelier".
 - Why it's interesting: As the official site for the Reggio Emilia approach, it offers a deep look at how materials (such as clay, wire, and digital tools) are "languages" for children. Their "Atelier" section demonstrates how materials can be arranged to foster deep inquiry and connection, aligning with the "engaging environments" topic in your previous file.

Practical Activities & Learning space set up

These websites offer concrete examples, photos, and activity guides that you can use immediately.

- [Fantastic Fun and Learning](#)
 - Focus: Art & Loose Parts.
 - Why it's interesting: This site bridges the gap between "crafts" and "process art." It offers specific ideas for using recycled materials (like bottle caps and cardboard) to teach math, literacy, and art skills without requiring expensive supplies.
- [My Teaching Cupboard](#)
 - Focus: Teacher Guides & Budget-Friendly Ideas.
 - Why it's interesting: Targeted specifically at educators on a budget, this site offers a "Free Educators Guide to Loose Parts Play." It focuses on how to organize and display materials to make them inviting—a key component of the "engaging environments" you are studying.

- [The Education Hub](#)
- [The Education Hub 2](#)
 - Focus: Infant & Toddler Research.
 - Why it's interesting: This New Zealand-based resource provides research-backed articles on "Materials for play." It explains the neuroscience behind why handling real objects (weight, texture, temperature) builds better neural connections than plastic toys.

Sourcing & Specialized Materials

Where to find the materials themselves.

- [Kodo Kids](#)
 - Focus: STEM & Investigation Tools.
 - Why it's interesting: While they sell products, their blog and "Inspiration" sections are excellent for seeing how materials can teach physics and engineering concepts (wind tunnels, water runs, etc.). This aligns well with your interest in science education.
- [Creative Reuse Centers \(Directory\)](#)
 - [The WasteShed](#) (Chicago/Evanston): Sadie Seasongoods
 - [Stock & Pile](#) (Rock Island): Sadie Seasongoods
 - [Greener Good](#) (Arlington Heights): Sadie Seasongoods
 - [Cats Eye Creative Reuse](#) (Boise, Idaho): Sadie Seasongoods
 - [ReCreateICT \(Wichita, Kansas\): Sadie Seasongoods](#)
 - [The Create/Exchange](#) (Cedar Rapids, Iowa): Sadie Seasongoods

1. Creating Engaging Environments

This session focuses on designing spaces that respect the "image of the child" and their unique perspectives. Participants reflect on what makes a space truly engaging by considering:

- Physical & Social Elements: How space and social interactions combine to offer opportunities for exploration.
- Inclusivity: Designing environments that actively invite and respond to children's diverse points of view.
- Intentionality: Moving beyond decoration to create spaces that facilitate genuine engagement and overcome common design challenges.

2. Investigating Materials

The training emphasizes that materials are not just "things" but tools for curiosity. The group explores natural items, loose parts, and recycled materials.

- Sparking Curiosity: Identifying which qualities in materials trigger investigation.
- Diverse Interactions: Understanding that different children will engage with the same material in unique ways based on their interests.
- Active Participation: Moving beyond simply providing toys to actively investigating them alongside the children to deepen learning.

Professional Development & Self-Reflection

- Career Paths: Reflecting on whether one wants to become a Center Director or owner, and the skills required for those roles.
- Self-Management: Identifying personal strengths, values, and how to manage time effectively.
- Work-Life Balance: Asking big questions like "How can I be happy in my career?" and "How can I ensure family relationships are an enduring source of happiness?".

Preparation & Action Items

- Pre-Session Prep: Review sessions 5 & 6 in the workbook ("Engaging Environments" and "Investigating Materials").
- Post-Session Reflection: Participants are encouraged to note key actions to take before the next meeting and reflect on what they learned from their group members.

Extra videos to check out:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ME8KjqyqthM>

<https://hbr.org/2005/01/managing-oneself>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9eDntumN5o>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iDbdXTMnOmE>