Exploration in Kindergarten: A Moment in Time in Melissa Klosterman’s Classroom

Melissa Klosterman treasures exploration because it gives children choice in and ownership of the curriculum while giving teachers the chance to get to know their students’ personal passions and areas of expertise. She described her kindergarten exploration time this way in a parent newsletter.

As soon as each child has taken care of his/her early morning responsibilities, he/she may choose an activity . . . to explore the classroom as a reader, writer, mathematician, scientist, builder, problem solver with games or puzzles, or artist. It amazes me how independent and creative their learning can be. This is a wonderful time for the teachers to engage in conversation and to join in learning from our young learner’s perspective! I love to listen to the children while they are thinking and learning. During Explorations the children have an opportunity to:

Stretch their imaginations
Interact with peers
Clean up after themselves
Be physically active
Have fun
Take turns
Develop storylines
Design and make architectural structures
Create masterpieces
Express feelings
Form identities
Form collaborative groups
Problem solve
Sustain interest
Develop social skills
Bond with friends
Monitor own activities
Direct plays
Share
Engage in fantasy
Practice life skills in a safe place
Work toward a goal
Just PLAY
One of the best ways to appreciate the power of the structure is to take a close look at the teaching and learning occurring at one moment in time. The photo collage below depicts a typical exploration period in Melissa’s kindergarten classroom. Melissa and her teaching assistant, Jaretta Belcher, support the children as they work as artists, builders, entomologists, authors, mathematicians, and geologists.