


Here is a list of some of the thinking materials that you might want to use as tools to help students develop different languages that they can use to think about, reflect on, and make sense of their thinking.

*“Art and aesthetics are “located in the border zone... between rational and imaginative, between cognitive and expressive. Art can be **a way to be in the world**. In our classrooms, we can take up art as an expression of our participation in life, our participation in the mystery and delight that is this world, our participation in a community of people who ask questions and who marvel, who feel and think deeply, people who dream. When children are speaking the language of art, they are producers, rather than consumers of knowledge, a generativity that allows children their full dignity. Art is a desire for making meaning.” Ann Pelo, The Language of Art*

Setting the Table (see examples here):

1. To set up the space, and make it feel different – this is a thinking space – you can create placemats by using larger pieces of black construction paper, or a tile (if you’re using clay)... You can also set up the area to make it aesthetically pleasing and the thinking tools are arranged on or near the placemat in an inviting way.
2. It is important to first let students PLAY with the materials. As they play you can ask them to think about what that material can ‘do.’ What are the affordances of the material? [See questions you might ask your students as they play.](#)
3. Then you can co-create this list with students. For example, they might tell you that wire can connect things together, can be flexible, can be small or tall...
4. Once they understand the ‘language’ of each material, they will be much better able to reflect and process their own thoughts as they manipulate the material with specific questions in mind.
5. Ideally, your students will reach the point where they know which material they want to use to think about questions they have and how they want to explore them.

Material	Ideas
Paper	<p>Different shapes, sizes, colours, and textures of paper.</p> <p><i>Examples: Tissue paper, writing paper, homemade paper, watercolour paper, poster paper, thick paper, think paper, small paper, large paper...</i></p> <p>Also consider putting out: Scissors (craft scissors with fun blades if you have them), tape...</p> <p>*Note: You can create three dimensional shapes with paper and tape.</p>
Paints Watercolour Paints	<p>Different types of paint: acrylic, tempura, watercolour, finger paints... Consider using many colours of paints, and consider using just black and white paint.</p> <p>Also consider putting out: Different shades of paint in cute little glass jars, a variety of painting tools (paint brushes, cotton balls, sponges, feathers, toothbrushes, bubble wrap, natural materials like a pine needle brush...), painting paper, black trend pens, a painting easel, salt...</p>

<p>Pastels - Oil and Chalk</p>	<p>Put out different colours of pastels (probably in a set of colours). Carefully arrange the colours in a spectrum to highlight the relationships among the colours.</p> <p>Note: you might want to cover the tables with white butcher paper to collect the shavings and residue that get left behind.</p>
<p>Charcoal</p>	<p>Put out different colours of charcoal.</p> <p>Also consider putting out: black construction paper as a place to draw on.</p>
<p>Tools</p>	<p>Different tools: hammers, screwdrivers, other...)</p> <p>Also consider putting out: Wood (all shapes and sizes), nails and screws, wool, scissors...</p> <p>Note: you can use a circular slice of wood as a placemat.</p> 
<p>Clay</p> <p>What can clay do?</p>	<p>Consider using potter's clay (modelling clay), although you can use playdough as well.</p> <p>Also consider putting out: Sculpting tools (you can buy these at Dollarama), and a placemat to play on (we use floor tiles from Dollarama, or clear acrylic tiles), wire...</p> <p>Note: you will want to have a place to collect the clay when you're done with it so it can be stored in an airtight container and then used again later.</p>
<p>Wire</p>	<p>Consider using all types of wire (thick, thin, easy to bend, more difficult to bend, different colours...)</p> <p>Also consider putting out: Wire cutters (scaffold how to use these safely), aluminum foil, aluminum cans and pie plates, clay...</p> <p>Note: you can use a circular slice of wood as a placemat.</p>
<p>Tape</p>	<p>Consider using all types of tape (masking tape, scotch tape, electrical tape, craft tape, double sided tape, duct tape, different colours and thicknesses, different levels of 'sticky'...)</p> <p>Also consider putting out: Scissors, pieces of paper, structures to add tape to (like this one)...</p>
<p>Colour</p>	<p>Consider using different colours of dye and containers for water.</p> <p>Also consider putting out:</p>

	<p>Tall vases (and a variety of vases with different shapes – short, tall, wide, think...) filled with water, jars with diluted food colouring, pipettes to suck up the dye, cameras/iPads to take time lapse, or looped videos...</p>
<p>Cardboard and Glue</p>	<p>Consider using different types of glue, including hot glue guns (which you will scaffold the safe use of).</p> <p>Also consider putting out: Cardboard of different sizes, paper.</p> <p>Note: you might want to use larger pieces of cardboard for placemats and will have to set up near an electrical plug.</p>
<p>Found Materials and Loose Parts</p>	<p>Consider putting out a collection of small things, sorted and organized for children</p> <p>Examples of what you might include: small wooden blocks, feathers, pom poms, jewels, corks, things in different shapes, things that are 2 dimensional and 3 dimensional, things with different textures... anything from the dollar store that could be used to represent something else. Try to avoid things that are already labeled as something specific (like a small collection of animals). Let students decide what the loose parts will become.</p>
<p>Natural Materials</p>	<p>Consider collecting items from nature (both small and large) that can be used to represent other things.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - small things like: rocks, feathers, seeds, sticks, shells, pine cones, etc... - larger freshly collected things from nature like: branches, berries, flowers, reeds, large seed pods from honey locust tree... <p>Also consider putting out: Scissors to take cuttings, mortar and pestle, screens framed in wood that can filter large things from small, ...</p> <p>Note: you might want to use large slices of wood, nature scenes, or papers or placemats to represent nature colours (blue for water, green for grass, brown for dirt, white for snow...) as placemats.</p>
<p>Pens (Writing Tools) and Drawing</p>	<p>Consider using pens of different thicknesses (like a black line pen and a sharpie) and colours.</p> <p>Also consider putting out: Different types of writing paper and postcards, different colours, and other writing tools including feathers, other natural materials they can use to write with (like a magnolia seed pod), India ink (which you might want to scaffold the use of), and mirrors.</p>

Collage	<p>Consider using magazines with images and words in different fonts, and/or printed text and images.</p> <p>Also consider putting out: Glue, scissors, paper to glue onto, empty picture frame</p>
Tools for Dramatic Play	<p>Consider using a box of different scarves, pieces of fabric (different colours, sizes, textures), masks, tickle trunk of costumes...</p> <p>Also consider putting out: A music player, an area of the room where the kids can create a setting for their dramatic play (or you set up a setting) - like things that they could use to create their own nature scene in the classroom with things to represent trees, flowers, grass, mountains, water, animals, campfires...</p>
Light and Shadow	<p>Consider using things that create light, reflection, and shadow.</p> <p>For example: mirrors, a variety of light sources (flashlight, overhead projector, candle, a light table...), transparent objects, transparent plastic filters (in many colours), a white sheet.</p> <p>Note: What shapes can they create with light and shadows that they can trace onto a paper that is taped to the wall?</p>
Fabric/Sewing	<p>Consider using a variety of fabric that includes pieces that are different sizes, colours, and textures.</p> <p>Also consider putting out: Sewing tools like needles, thread, pieces of fabric, wool, buttons, pins, velcro, elastic, cardboard with holes, embroidery hoops, cross stitch plastic canvas, scissors, glue, little people to sew clothes for...</p>
Scents	<p>Consider collecting many different scents and storing them in jars.</p> <p>Examples: different types of loose tea, dried pieces of orange/lemon/lime/grapefruit rinds, dried flowers, spices (cinnamon, anise), essential oils, fresh herbs from the garden...</p> <p>Also consider putting out: Scissors, mortar and pestle, a piece of screen that is framed in wood and can be used to filter big from small things...</p>
Words	<p>Consider putting out a variety of pens and pencils of different sizes and colours. You might want to start with black only.</p> <p>Examples: sharpies, thick felts, thin felt tip pens, gel pens, calligraphy pens, pencils (a variety of sizes), pencil crayons, etc...</p> <p>Also consider putting out: Images that show a variety of fonts, different types, sizes, and colours of paper.</p>

Music	<p>Consider collecting a variety of musical instruments</p> <p>Examples: drums, triangles, xylophones, guitars, ukuleles, keyboards, tambourines, cowbell, bells, maracas, recorders and other wind instruments, handmade musical instruments, etc. (see more musical instruments here).</p> <p>Also consider putting out: Images of notes (how to annotate music), sheet music, blank sheet music, black pens, etc.</p>
Dance	<p>Consider collecting a variety of songs from different genres (#MixTape), dance costumes, and props.</p> <p>Examples: tutus, canes, chairs, umbrellas, fans, shawls, ribbons, etc...</p> <p>Also consider putting out: videos that show choreographed dances, for example: the evolution of dance, evolution of dance, Someone You Loved - see playlist, etc...</p>
Mixed Media	<p>Once the students have developed an understanding of the thinking materials separately, have them think about their thinking with a variety of mediums, either at the same time, or one after the other.</p> <p>What is the value in coming back to an idea with different materials?</p>

The list is endless really. Just tools that our learners can use to explore and process their thinking by using languages that are different from just talking and writing.

If you are interested, you can learn more about the languages of thinking materials in the books:

1. [The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Experience in Transformation](#) by Carolyn Edwards, Lella Gandini, and George Forman.
2. [The Language of Art: Inquiry-based Studio Practices in Early Childhood Settings](#) by Ann Pelo