Reflections for the Teacher/Guide

- In what ways are you guiding rather than directing activity?
- In what ways have you shown trust in the activity of the children?
- If you have found it difficult to trust at times, what can you do to help yourself grow in your trust of the children?
- How are you recognizing the educational value in spontaneously chosen activities?
- Can you find value even in the seemingly random?
- How are you creating the space for the children to “become themselves” and how is the environment inspiring the children? What has inspired you?
- In what ways could you create more moments of inspiration, opening the door to possibility for children?

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*Some of the questions in these reflections are inspired by a reflective guide called The Golden Threads that is published by the Xavier University Montessori Institute © 2014

Laura Opfer and Adam Diamond, 2018
Let’s Be Spontaneous!
A Guide for the Teacher to Encourage Spontaneous Activity

Preparation of the Environment
Students will need a variety of available print resources in the classroom to allow for the research process that so often comes hand in hand with a child’s spontaneous inspiration for learning. The local public library is an invaluable resource for classrooms if your classroom or school does not have a full library. Computers and tablets can also be helpful tools (when used in moderation and with clear guidelines). Project planners and graphic organizers are very helpful in guiding children to focus the scope of their research or project and to aid in the writing process for research paragraphs or essays.

Creating the space for spontaneous activity and projects

- Paper in various sizes (white, color, graph, thicker weight for water color or paint, tissue paper) *make a scrap paper bin available
- Colored pencils, charcoal pencils, oil pastels, markers
- Paint (watercolor, tempera/poster, acrylic or oil if appropriate)
- Brushes (various types and sizes for paint and ink)
- Magazines
- Glue: liquid, stick, Mod Podge (or other water base glue and sealer), glue gun
- Clay (traditional, homemade, modeling clay or plasticene)
- Tissue and shoe boxes (or other small boxes), pieces of cardboard
- Yarn, string, embroidery floss, thread
- Fabric and felt
- Needles with larger eyes (thin for thread and thick for embroidery floss)
- Embroidery hoops
- Beads, sequins, glitter, buttons, other embellishments
- Shredded paper, packing peanuts or other packing materials
- Popsicle or craft sticks (or small, thin sticks from tree branches that children collect)
- Chenille stems/pipe cleaners
- Small wooden rolling pins, skewers or other utensils for work with clay
- Trays and drying rack for projects

*This is not intended to be a comprehensive list, but a place to start for classroom project supplies. Let the children’s creativity and your own guide you!
If you are on a budget that doesn’t allow for a lot of extra purchased supplies (as many of us are), consider the following ideas:

- Materials can be kept in inexpensive plastic shoe boxes or organizers on a shelf or you could consider art supply carts with labeled drawers (be sure to label supplies)
- Ask for some art/project supplies from each grade level at the beginning of the year and possibly mid-year
- Ask families and friends to donate fabric from old (laundered) clothing, curtains, etc. Recruit a volunteer base of parents that will also help with cutting fabric for projects
- Ask your local craft, sewing/fabric or yarn store if they have any scraps, remainders, thread or yarn they would be willing to donate for a classroom
- Ask families and friends for donations of old magazines
- Families will also often be ready to donate extra buttons or beads and parents/grandparents sometimes have embroidery hoops or other sewing supplies that they are willing to share (garage sales and second-hand stores also sometimes have these)
- Sponge paint paper in warm and cool color gradations to cut up for collage or mosaic work