

Molly

“I love sticking”

or Becoming an Expert

The Creative Thinking in Action project began with a dedicated space and bags of junk materials. The children stopped in their tracks when they entered the empty, white- painted room for the first time. Their usual pre-school room was full of things and cluttered.

The children were curious about this new environment. They emptied the bags, there was a lot of activity and energy – unwrapping, unfolding, tipping and spilling. They began to select materials, making their own collections, or joining together with friends in shared examination and construction. The first session was characterised by this exploratory play. Some of the materials were new to the children, masking tape for fixing, lengths of willow and bamboo, balls of string for tying and wrapping.



Molly joined in this general exploration, she enjoyed gathering together reels, tubes and blocks of wood, sitting amongst the cellophane and crepe paper, attempting to make parcels. Wrapping and loosely covering her chosen objects.

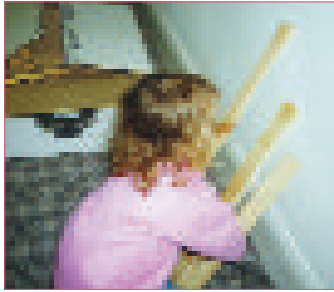


The next week Molly resumes these activities. She is very interested in wrapping lengths of wood with masking tape. Molly finds an adult to supply her with tape as she is not yet able to dispense it herself. She partly covers the wood with tape, leaning the lengths upright against the wall.

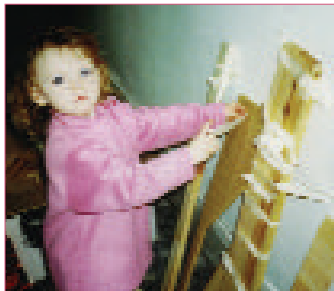
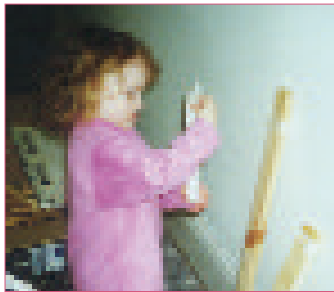
Molly wants to stick the house to the wall, but she has yet to discover that the tape must be stuck to the wall as well as the wood. Some of the wood falls down.

She adds a crepe paper flag to her house, then moves away to a pile of boxes.

Molly covers her gate with tape, but leans it against the garden, unable to make it stick.



"I'm doing a house. It's a brick house."



"I'm making a garden and I'm going to put a gate on it Oh, it's falling over, I just move it over a little bit. I move the box"

She extends the structure with more card, and decorates it with cellophane, sticking it down securely this time, methodically attaching tape to each side.

She has developed the skill of sticking!

Session Four

Molly continues to focus all her attention on sticking. She asks for tape straight away "I want to do some sticking" She is becoming interested in the mechanics of managing the tape. She wants to learn how to dispense the tape herself, but lacks the skills in pulling and tearing. She solves this problem by enlisting the help of an adult, asking that pre-torn strips can be attached to an empty roll.

Molly develops a new role for herself, she becomes a dispenser of tape , a powerful figure in the group.



"This is going to be the doorstep. There, you go up there and you can stand on it, but not really cos it might broke. I used some sticky tape."
Molly is keen to explain how she managed to stick the materials together.
"I put a little bit there and you know what happened? You put it on side, and put it over there, then it won't move".



"I need to put some on so it's the same as yours don't I? You know what? I can't stick this on and I need to stick it onto it properly. Marilyn, can you help me cos I need some more on. There, I did it, now it's the same as Marilyn's, now everybody can have some of this now."

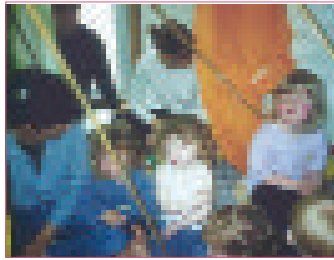
At the end of the session when the children gather to discuss the morning's activities Molly is unwilling to talk about her experiences. Could circle time be a tiresome ritual for Molly? Looking at this picture, the adults wondered how interesting a thing 'circle time' actually was – however, Molly does want to share her new passion.

Session Six

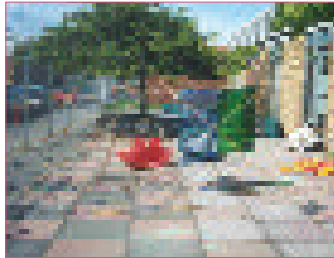
The dedicated space can no longer contain all of the children's ideas , so the project is moved into the outside play area to allow them more scope to develop their work. A fence of bamboo divides the area into two distinct spaces.

Molly is once more engaged in sticking. She sits by the fence, wearing the roll of tape as a bangle so that she can reach it easily. She has found a tin and removes the lid. She is alone, absorbed, talking to herself. "What can I put in here? Can I put something in this? Look, you put cat's whiskers in. "

Molly begins to fill the tin with lengths of willow which she has snapped to size. Once full, she begins to attach the sticks to the fence, meticulously arranging and rearranging them until she is satisfied with their position.



Marilyn: "What were you doing this morning Molly?"
Molly: "Nothing." A long pause. "I love sticking."



This is a very difficult task, requiring skill and concentration. All around her there is tumultuous activity, but Molly is absorbed and purposeful.

Molly completes the construction with the addition of a bicycle chain which she carefully drapes amongst the sticks and fixes with tape.



“These are cat’s whiskers.”

Molly snaps more willow lengths and places them into the tin.
“I’m taking these home so I can stick them on my bedroom wall.”

Molly’s interest has been supported at home, where she is given opportunities to develop her skill. She has become so skilful that she can stick together amazing combinations of objects.

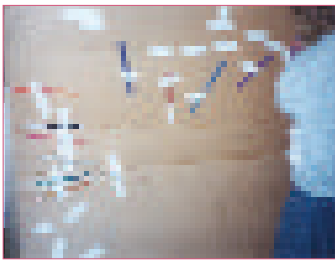
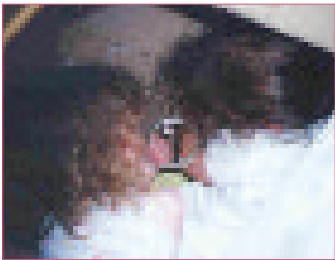
Her Mam describes her projects at home:
“I gave her some micropore, micropore was the first thing she got. She found a ball of wool right, and she stuck a full ball of wool onto a radiator with micropore. I mean a full radiator in a bay window. It took her ages, it gave me a full hour to do the ironing. It really brought out the creative side in her.”

“She has her own independent ideas as far as the sticking is concerned – a lot of her babies don’t have nappies on them and she’ll make them nappies out of tissues and micropore. You wouldn’t believe the things she makes at home. She came to me and said “Can I have some tissues to make a nappy for my baby?” And whenever she has her face wiped with a baby wipe, she’ll hide it in her pushchair, she knows it’ll dry out, and uses it to make a nappy for her baby.”

“She’ll stick like huge items together now - she’ll get the remote control from the t.v. and she’ll get a baby then she’ll get things you get lying round the house like a coaster and she’ll stick them all together. But things that are bigger she can’t stick, and she’ll have the patience to keep them together... she’s got immense patience.”

Molly takes every opportunity to practice her sticking. The work is very important to her.

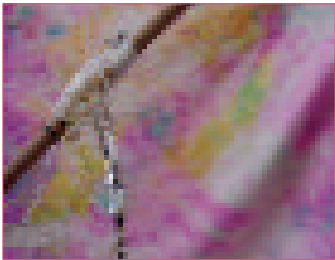
Whilst she is a gregarious child and has lots of friends in nursery, she usually chooses to undertake this special work alone. It is important for Molly to have the time and space to develop her particular interest in her own way.



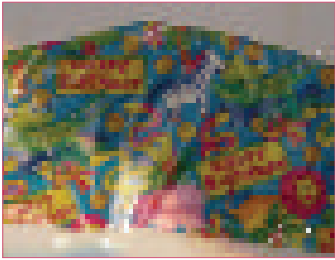
Molly is curious about sticking. She conducts her own research, photographing her work, and studying the results.

All of these pictures are Molly’s. She sometimes sticks them on the ‘ideas wall’ where images of the children’s work in progress are kept.

Sometimes she shares these images with other interested children.



“Rianne, that’s where you put the cellotape on.”



“Once children are helped to perceive of themselves as authors or inventors, once they are helped to discover the pleasure of inquiry, their motivation and interest explode.”
The Hundred Languages of Children

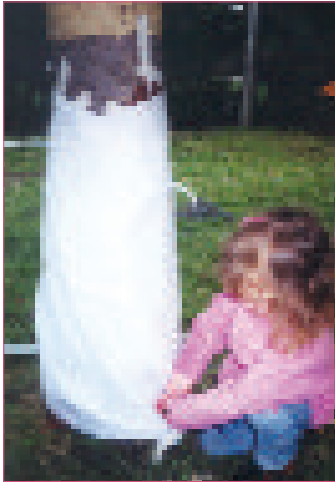
Session Ten

As Molly's expertise develops she is able to take on more elaborate and complex tasks. During this session Molly takes on her biggest sticking challenge.

Molly attaches the bells to the gnarled tree trunk, fixing them firmly by completely covering the bells in masking tape.

It is a sunny day, but quite chilly, and Molly decides to make a coat for the tree. Molly has chosen a large thick piece of calico to fix to the tree. It requires all her expertise and ingenuity to successfully fix it to the tree. Once it is covered to her satisfaction, she begins to stroke the tree.

Molly understands completely the methods needed to succeed. She is an expert.



"I need some tape Marilyn, I'm going to do something with the tree. I'm going to stick bells on the tree."

"There, he's getting warm because he's got his coat on because it's cold."

*She decides to improve upon this model, fixing a second length of calico to the first:
"Look I've made another coat, he's got two coats on now. Oh, I need to stick it hard cos it's falling off. I need a long piece."*

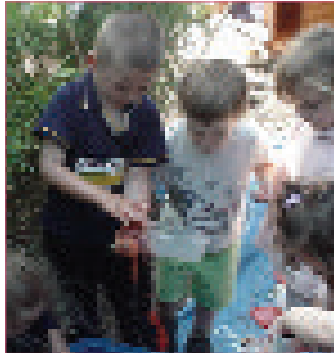
By the time the project begins again next Spring, Molly's expertise is a commonly understood resource available to the pre-school group.

When the work moves outdoors Molly contributes to the construction of an elaborate plumbing system, using her understanding of sticking and fixing.



The children in the group routinely use Molly's expertise. When there is a problem with an overflowing trough of water Molly is called upon for an opinion.

She brings together her knowledge of sticking and emptying to suggest a solution "Can we sellotape it? (a tube) I want to sellotape it there (to the outside of the trough) and get the water in." Molly's suggestion is accepted. She sticks the tube to the trough – a difficult task because it is wet. Luc uses a container to scoop the water out and into the tube, allowing the water to drain away from their work area.



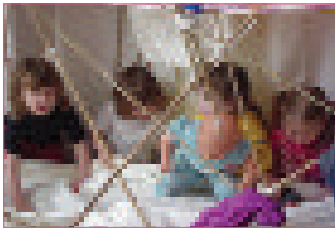
Louise is sticking together guttering in the willow sculpture, but she is finding it hard to tear the tape off the roll. She asks an adult for help. Molly intervenes. "You do this" demonstrating a tearing action "You have to bite it, yeah." Molly stands face to face with Louise who mirrors her actions and successfully tears off a strip to her great satisfaction. Louise "Look what I did!" Molly is pleased by Louise's success. Louise tears off a second piece of tape. "Look what I did!" Now she can continue with her task. Louise: "I'm helping you now cos that's all done." Molly: "Ok, no, you need some more down there, more bits." indicating the bottom of the gutter.



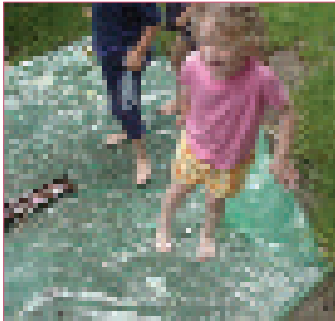
Molly helps other children to develop sticking skills.

When the children decide they need a space for mother and baby role play, Molly cannibalises an existing structure and makes a lean-to house for the group.

Learning is not only about cognition. There is an emotional aspect that we can clearly see in Molly's love of sticking. She is fascinated by the process, develops an affinity with the material and pursues her interest with single-mindedness. Her emotions as well as her understanding are engaged by this process of becoming an expert in sticking.



*Louise: "We're playing Mums and Dads and I'm the baby."
Molly: "I need some biscuits and sweeties. Put them down at once and get up them stairs. Get to bed. Yes. I'm going to get the biscuits."*



A child in Reggio once described how "when you are passionate about something, then you become an expert."

Molly's experience confirms his understanding of the nature of learning.

WHERE DOES THIS TEXT GO?
Each instance of enjoyable learning adds to the complexity of the child's developing self.

Flow The Psychology of Optimal Experience

Molly understands completely the methods needed to successfully complete this task.

She is an expert.

Children are viewed as "resources" to each other's learning. An awareness of each other's profile of strengths, weaknesses, interests and dislikes is important public knowledge for the community. Individual children are appreciated for being able to make different kinds of special contributions, as "experts" of different sorts."
The Hundred Languages of Children
1998

For young children to engage in this sense of mastery, to feel themselves as experts, and for other children to treat them as such, is a very powerful and motivating experience.
Mary Fawcett
Early Education sept 2002