Preferences of preschoolers while engaging in designerly spatial play

As part of my graduation project of the master Design for Interaction at the TU Delft I'm looking into the preferences preschoolers can have while they engage in designerly spatial play. With this knowledge I will design spatially challenging activities that appeal to children with different preferences. One of the outcomes of my research is this document that teachers can use to think about and discuss the preferences their students might have. With this knowledge, you can design spatially challenging activities that appeal to your students. For example, a child who likes construction play and realistic outcomes might enjoy an activity in which she is asked to reconstruct her school with blocks and draw a map for new pupils. A child who enjoys pretend play and fantasy outcomes might enjoy an activity in which he is asked to create a cloud castle and give directions to his superhero puppet on how to get there.

So you can use this document in the following ways:
- You can use certain sets of preferences to design an activity that appeals to your student.
- You can use certain sets of preferences as observation targets for your lesson studies.
- You can present a set of pictures to a student so he or she can pick its preference.
- Something that I have not thought of yet! Let me know which applications you see for this tool.

Explanation per preference:
1. Some children enjoy the process of building (construction play) and don't really play with what they have made. Others enjoy playing (pretend play) and don't want to first have to build something before they can start playing.

2. Some children like defined objects that represent something, such as cars, dolls, wooden food, etcetera. Others like open objects that do not represent anything, such as paper, sand, empty toilet paper rolls, etcetera.

3. Some children enjoy to build together with someone else. Others prefer to build on their own.

4. Some children like to keep their environment structured and organized. Others prefer to have a more messy environment where all materials are mixed.

5. Some prefer to build something which is realistic. Others prefer to make fantasy creations.

6. Some children want to have some time to think before they start building. Others immediately want to start.

7. Some children prefer to make choices on their own. Others prefer to have some help and do this together.

8. Some children make what they initially had planned. Others change their plan while building and make something differently.

9. Some children start making something else if they find out that what they're trying to make doesn't work. Others keep trying until what they're trying to make works.

It's important to realize that one combination of preferences is not necessarily more spatial challenging than another. My research showed that for example construction play and pretend play can both challenge the spatial skills. It depends on the kind of activity the child is involved in.

If you use this document I would love to hear what you did with it and which insights you got from it. I will use this knowledge for the rest of my graduation project. Please share your experiences, anecdotes, pictures, insights, feedback and ideas via L.T.Sonneveld@student.tudelft.nl
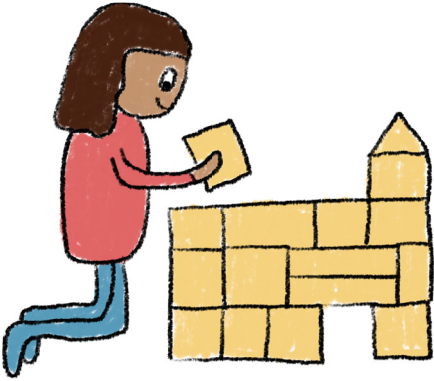
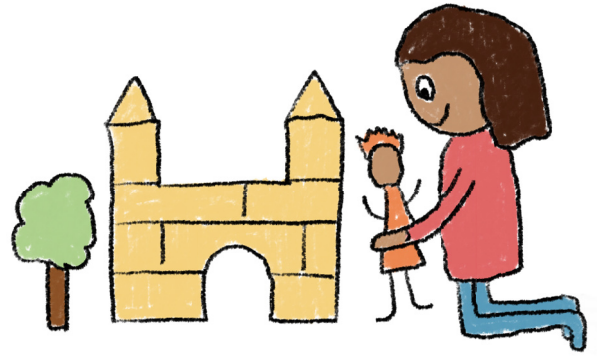I'm looking forward to hearing from you!

Leonie Sonneveld
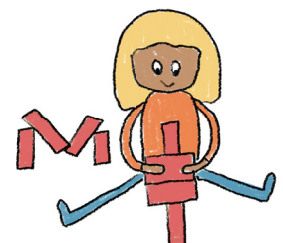
This I like better...
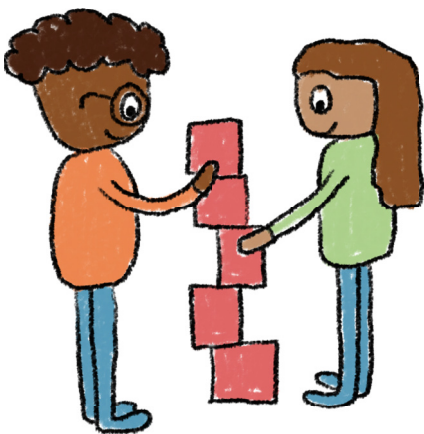
1

building

playing
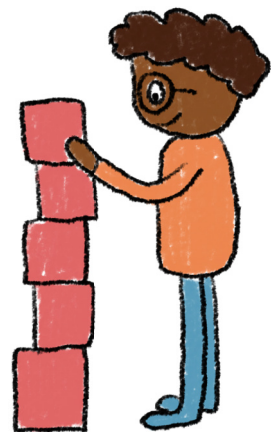
2

materials that look like
something

materials that could look like
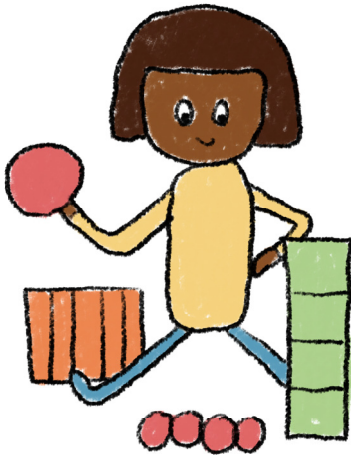anything

3

building together

building on my own
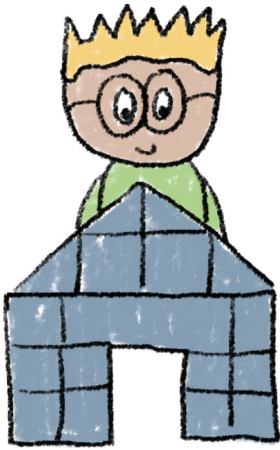
When I build...

4

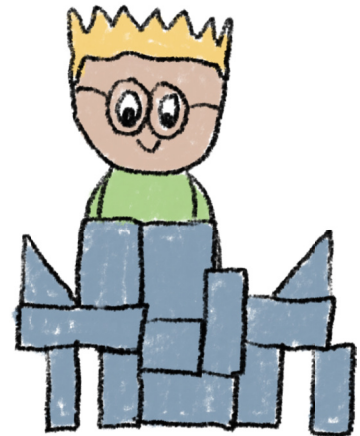I keep everything organized

I mix everything up

5

I make something that looks like something that exists in reality

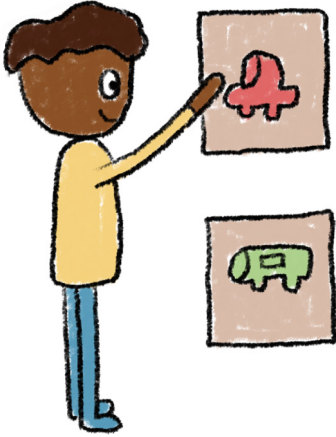I make something that doesn't exist in reality
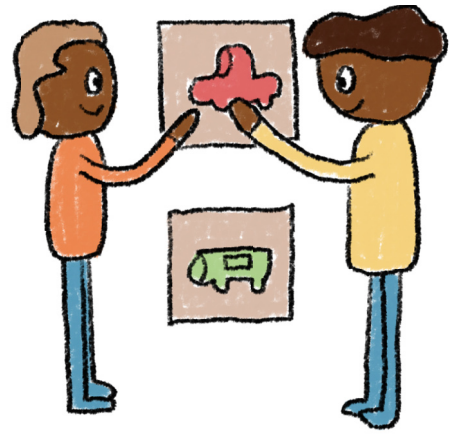
6

I think before I start building

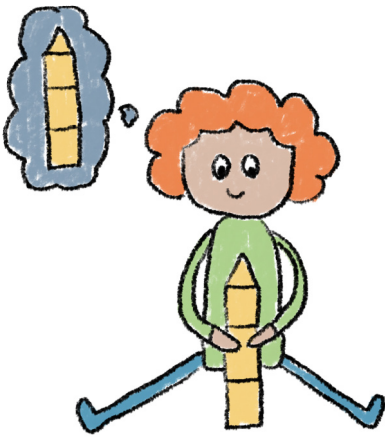I immediately start building

I...

7

like to make decisions on my own

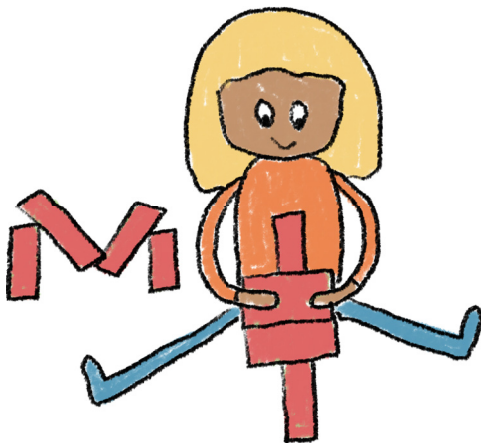like to make decisions together with someone else
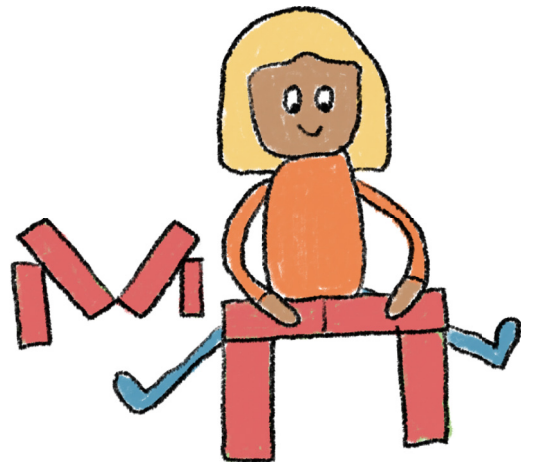
8

make what I had in mind

make something differently than I had in mind

9

make something else if what I want doesn't work

I keep trying until what I want works