Cycle of Inquiry

When educators incorporate the elements of an emergent curriculum into their teaching practices, they motivate and interest children in taking charge of their own learning. They are also able to better understand each child's individual needs through the use of emergent curriculum and project-based learning. The Cycle of Inquiry supports teachers in planning and implementing an emergent curriculum. Check out the steps involved in the Cycle of Inquiry and how to implement them in your classroom.

Step	Explanation	Example
Observe	While playing with children, observe what they are doing, how they are using materials, and what they are talking about.	While observing children playing with sand and water, Ms. Emma notices children making paths in the sand. They pour water into the paths and watch it flow. They put items in the paths to watch how it changes the flow.
Develop Hypotheses	Reflect on what children know and how they are thinking. Tie their knowledge to relevant learning standards. Create hypotheses about what children are trying to figure out.	Ms. Emma sees that children appear to understand that objects impact how others move. She ties this into science standards about the physical properties of objects. She hypothesizes that children are trying to figure out how materials impact each other.
Identify Research Questions	Use your hypotheses to develop questions about what children might be trying to figure out.	She develops the following questions: • How does water move? • Which materials impact the flow of water most?

Plan Experiences	Turn the questions into activities that will build on children's thinking.	Ms. Emma plans 2 experiences. First, she adds pieces of PVC pipe to the water table along with duct tape. Second, she has the children help her collect natural items that they can use to make dams on the sand table.
Facilitate Play	Engage in the experiences alongside the children. Talk with children and ask questions about their thinking.	Ms. Emma talks with the children as they explore the materials. She asks, "What do you notice?"; "Do you think the stones will stop the water?"; "What else could we use to make the water change its path?". Emma writes down children's ideas and supports them in documenting their findings. She notices how they use materials and what they talk about as the cycle starts again.