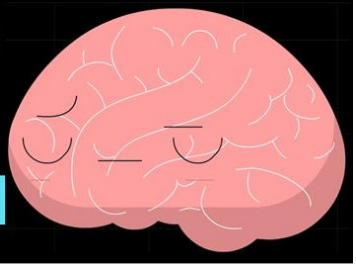
EARLY CHILDHOOD INSTITUTE

///TINY TRAININGS FOR CHARGING POSITIVE PROGRAMMING\\\



Ranking Concepts Rationale

Remember, the goal is to dig deeper into prior knowledge and how we can develop these into long-term investigations wherein children can explore hands-on.

1. **Machines**—this is a concept not often explored in early childhood, but is easily one of the most exciting. With simple machines, children can explore their playground, block area, and other classroom elements in a new and exciting way. This includes pulleys, wedges, ramps, tools, and others—the most basic elements of physics, focusing on how to make work easier. This involves active, physical movement and learning as well as supporting children in becoming critical observers of the world around them.
2. **Plants**—easily explorable through hands-on exploration. This is a common topic as it focuses on living and nonliving things with many related topics, such as life cycles, what living things need to survive, and general observation skills. Be sure to ensure that children can explore with this hands-on, and not just be participant observers as the teacher demonstrates what can be done.
3. **Moon**—this includes planets, the sun, and stars. Children have an interest in this concept and most have a shared experience of looking at the moon/sun/stars on the playground at home. The struggle here is making this an explorable topic for children in which they can manipulate materials in a hands-on way. When approaching this concept, ask: how can I make this somewhat abstract object into a tangible, explorable concept?
4. **Water**—a commonly explored concept in early childhood. This is a vague concept—too vague for our liking. When selecting water as a concept, be more specific. Are you looking at the weather? States of matter? How liquids move? Look deeper into how you can narrow this very broad concept into more specific, and explorable through four related topics.
5. **Oceans**—because we are in the Midwest, not all children have experience with the ocean. This concept is not necessarily relevant to al children in your classroom. Many schools take field trips to aquariums and provide children with the opportunity to see ocean animals (whales, fish, crabs, etc.). But children cannot interact or manipulate the animals or environment in a hands-on experience. Instead, focus on natural bodies of water near where you live, such as rivers, ponds, puddles, or lakes as well as the animals which inhabit them—fish, ducks, geese, etc.
6. **Dinosaurs**—have you seen a dinosaur in real life? Ranked at number 6 despite children's natural interest in dinosaurs, we encourage you to focus instead on animals children can observe that are living and interactive as opposed to plastic representations. We recommend transitioning from an interest in dinosaurs to birds or lizards by comparing dinosaurs to animals children have seen in their backyards or living pets in the classroom.
7. **Letters**—an important element of learning, an important skill. Not as explorable in the same way as the other concepts. We focus on science-based concepts because it involves deeper learning. Letters (including sounds, meaningful print, writing) can be learned and functionalized in all of the above concepts.