

## Early Childhood Education: Current realities and future possibilities, ed Cathy Nutbrown

### Chapter 5: A grassroots approach to developing early years outdoor experiences: building a community of practice

Elizabeth Henderson, Emma Gordon, Helen McKinnon, Jacqueline Bremner and Maggie MacDonald

#### Case Study: Ruby

Ruby is 14 months old. During this observations Ruby was in the nursery garden on a rainy day. Her intrigue fascinated me and caught my attention while I was outside with the children carrying out some research observations. I did not intervene during the observation, merely took photographs. Ruby cannot yet walk at the time of this observation. She is wearing an all in one waterproof suit and waterproof outer booties. The area Ruby is exploring is concrete slabs.

*Ruby is placed on the ground next to a puddle by a member of staff. Ruby sits for a moment looking around her as other children move about interacting with various affordances within the garden area. The member of staff next to Ruby splashes her hand in the puddle. Ruby watches this intently then places her own hand in the puddle. While doing so Ruby remains balance on one knee with the other leg propped up on her foot. Ruby moves her hand in and out of the puddle making contact with the water. She appears to observe the movement of the water rippling away from her hand when placed on the ground. Ruby repeats this motion several times before lifting her hand up and turning it over. She looks intently at the palm of her hand that had made contact with the ground and the water. Ruby touches her palm with her other hand. Ruby then returns her hand to the puddle splashing a few more times. After several splashes she lifts her hand again and turns it palm side up. This time she moves her hand to her mouth, sticks out her tongue and licks the palm of her hand. She then moves her hand away from her face having tasted the water it had gathered and returns it to the ground and the puddle.*

I would love to know Ruby's thoughts throughout this observation. To know what she is thinking, what connections she is making, and what new learning is evolving. Could it be that Ruby is making a connection between the water she is interacting with on the ground and the water she receives in a cup to drink? If so what learning is she taking away from this? What I do know is that Ruby is using her hands to explore the world around her, she demonstrates such care and dexterity in her movements with on point coordination. She was also utilising a lot of her established skills in balance and muscle memory to remain upright in the position she was while reaching out her hand to the ground. Ruby is also using her senses to gain a more holistic understanding of what she is experiencing.

