



Answer Key for Investigating Living Creatures (2–3 years)

This handout provides sample responses to support discussions following video observations on how children explore living things and how educators use the M5 Early STEAM Approach to support children's investigations.



Video:

[Investigating Living Creatures \(2–3 years\)](#)

[Investigating Living Creatures \(2–3 years\) – Audio Descriptive Version](#)

Slide 22: Discuss: Investigating Living Things

In what ways are children investigating living things?

Possible Responses

- Children investigate living things by looking for bugs and insects in the garden.
- Children observe insects by holding them, looking at them, and noticing the different places they live.

What concepts and phenomena might children be learning about?

Possible Responses

- Children learn about the characteristics of living things (for example, they observe the earthworm and discuss how it moves).
- Children learn about the needs of living things (for example, the children understand that the earthworm and butterfly need to eat).
- Children learn about the habitats of different living things (for example, the earthworm requires a shady, cool place to live; the spider lives on the spider web).



What inquiry skills (for example, predicting, observing, testing ideas) do children use when investigating these concepts?

Possible Responses

- Children make observations of the creatures they find—noticing their different body parts, how they move, and where they live.
- Children also ask questions (for example, the child asks about what worms eat).

Slide 30: Discuss: Supporting Children to Investigate Living Things

In what ways did the educator use the M⁵ practices to support children to investigate and learn about living things?

Mutual Learning

In what ways is the educator responsive to children’s abilities, interests, or lived experiences?

Possible Responses

- The exploration of living creatures in the garden is directly motivated by children’s interest in bugs and insects and what they find near their learning setting—directly reflecting their lived experience in their school garden.
- Educators can learn more about the ways children explore living things by connecting with families. For example, educators might ask families to share about the different living things they find in or near their homes (such as a family pet, birds in a tree outside, or ants they notice on the sidewalk).



Meaningful Investigations

In what ways does the educator offer meaningful investigations?

Possible Responses

- The educator encourages children to find different creatures (bugs and insects) in the garden and notice their characteristics and where they live. Children's investigations are motivated by their own interest and curiosity about the different creatures they find.
- The educator supports children to build an understanding of living things through direct interactions with the creatures in the garden.
- The educator supports children to learn about what earthworms eat by exploring informational books about worms. This is part of a meaningful investigation because it is directly related to a child's inquiry.



Materials and Learning Environment

In what ways does the educator provide materials and a learning environment that support children to explore living things?

Possible Responses

- The educator provides children access to a school garden as a way to support them to investigate and learn about living things first-hand.
- Children are also provided with tools to encourage them to learn about living things. For example:
 - ◇ Children use magnifying glasses to observe the living creatures they find more closely.
 - ◇ Children use tools like a rake and a shovel to move the soil as they look for worms and other creatures.
 - ◇ Children use small containers that help them contain different creatures they find safely and securely. Children are able to observe their creatures through the containers because they are clear and small enough for children to hold.
- The educator provides books that are related to the living things they are investigating. Books can expand what children understand about living things and provide new vocabulary to support children to communicate and develop deeper understandings.



Mindful Vocabulary and Discourse

In what ways does the educator support children's science vocabulary and engagement in discourse about living things?

Possible Responses

- The educator provides children with specific vocabulary that is directly related to the creatures they have found and are investigating (for example, the educator introduces the word "slither," while observing a worm and wondering how it moves).
- The educator uses open-ended questions to encourage children to engage in discourse related to the living creatures they find. For example,
 - ◇ "What is that?"
 - ◇ "What do you see?"
 - ◇ "How does it move?""What do you think it eats?"



Multiple Representations

In what ways does the educator provide different ways for children to explore and express their ideas about living things?

Possible Responses

- The educator provides children with the autonomy to find their own creatures and observe their different habitats and different features.
- Other ways educators might support children to explore and express their ideas about living things include:
 - ◇ Exploring models of living creatures to be able to look at larger specimens, compare different types of creatures, and notice smaller body parts that are difficult to observe on a moving animal.
 - ◇ Creating representations of the different creatures they find. For example, children might draw pictures of the creature they find or create a sculpture of the creature with clay. Creating representations of living things encourages children to consider the body parts and different characteristics.