



“Take a Loupe at That!”: The Private Eye® Jeweler’s Loupes in Afterschool Programming

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Beginnings

The Private Eye loupes are standard equipment at Eastside Center for Success. I had been introduced to them a few years earlier by a third grade teacher and immediately ordered ten to use with adult GED students I was working with at the time. I ordered more for Christmas gifts and kept some in my home office to give to anyone who showed the least bit of interest.

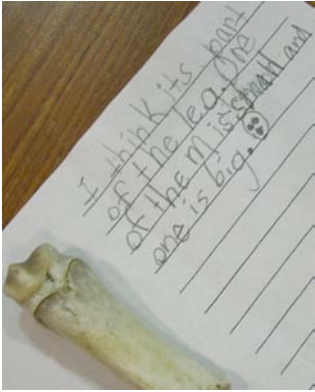
When I came to ECFS in the middle of last year, I showed the loupes and accompanying book to the executive director of ECFS. He visited the website and enthusiastically ordered two classroom kits along with extra loupes and microscopes.

I introduced the loupes slowly, carrying one in my pocket and taking it out to examine rocks, flowers, and little treasures students brought to show me. After taking a close look myself, I offered the child a chance to look closely, too. “Wow,” they said, “I didn’t know it looked like that!” Then their attention would turn to the loupe. “Where did you get it?” they wanted to know. I told them we had more and would use them later.

Loupes and Bones

An archaeologist visited our center for a week that spring. She brought bones and we brought loupes. The combination was irresistible. By the time the children began dissecting owl pellets, they were familiar with how to use the loupes. We introduced drawing with loupes at this time. They looked and drew, looked and drew, surprising themselves with some of the detail they were able to capture.





Writing was simple: Students labeled the bones, measured and described them, wrote a bit about their experience with the archaeologist, and of course, wrote thank you letters.

Summer Programming:Rocks

After the school year ended, ECFS ran a four week summer program offering students the opportunity to attend one or more sessions. We began with a week of becoming “rock hounds.” We supplied numerous specimens, and as the week unfolded, children and their parents brought their own collections to share. We tested for hardness, calcium carbonate, and streak color. We classified, made “fossils.” Loupes and microscopes were used for specific assignments in student “field notebooks” as well as being available for student use at anytime.





Students' drawings were becoming more detailed than usual as they became more aware of details. They could locate fossils embedded in limestone and wonder at the sparkly quartz in sandstone. Throughout the next three weeks, students continued to bring in rocks, plants, anything of interest. Loupes and microscopes had become so popular we decided to leave them out for the remaining summer sessions: "Medieval Madness," "Kites and Flight," and finally, one dedicated to loupes.

"Going Loopy with Loupes"

Our last session was dedicated to observing patterns and shapes in nature and featured the use of loupes. Taking a suggestion from "[The Private Eye - \(5X\) Looking / Thinking by Analogy](#)," we started by having students examine patterns on the tips of their fingers. They did loupe drawing and thought of three to five analogies for the designs they saw. Analogical thinking is not cultivated in most standard classrooms, and the students found it to be quite a challenge. (Their ability to do this has increased as they have more experience with it.)

Three groups of students used their analogies to write poems. The poems were a success, and the children signed them with a fingerprint as well as their names.



Students took walks outside and filled baggies with leaves, plants, nuts, and tree bark, anything they could find. The tutors took photographs of shapes in the environment that students would later use for writing. When they all returned to the center, students took out loupes to examine their finds. I am not sure when I heard the comment, but once, while walking around to different centers, I heard one boy say to another, “Take a loupe at that!” I turned to see them looking through their baggies, sharing interesting things to examine. I knew loupes had become a permanent part of students’ tools for exploring their world.

We partnered with a local business, Art & Clay on Main that came to our site and helped students make mobiles and “memory tiles” incorporating shapes and patterns students had observed. Throughout the week, students used their field notebooks and made drawings and wrote analogies and descriptions of what they had seen.



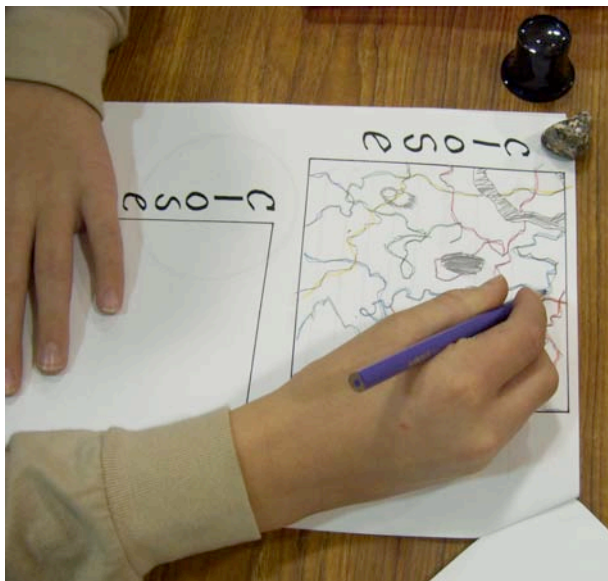
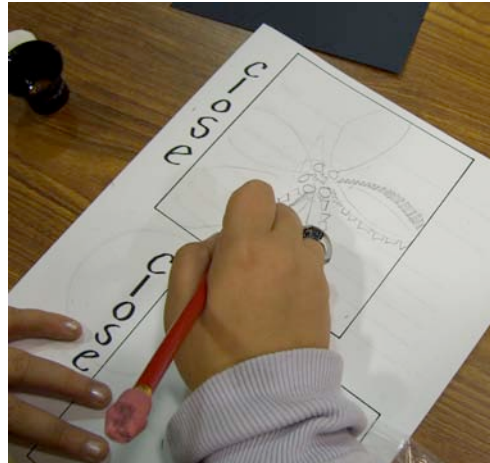
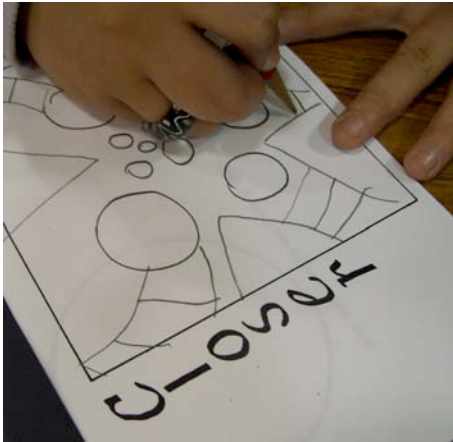
In our experience, working with students with limited language skills makes developing analogical thinking a challenge, even a lengthy experience. Steps made are incremental, and teachers and tutors should not become discouraged. All their effort is worth the time they give to it. Patience and persistence pays off as I discovered during a “loupe week” at ECFS during late autumn the following year.

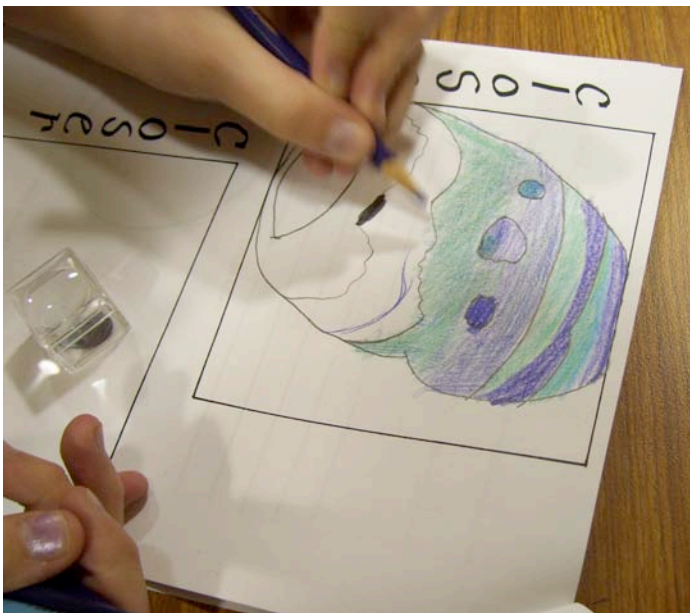
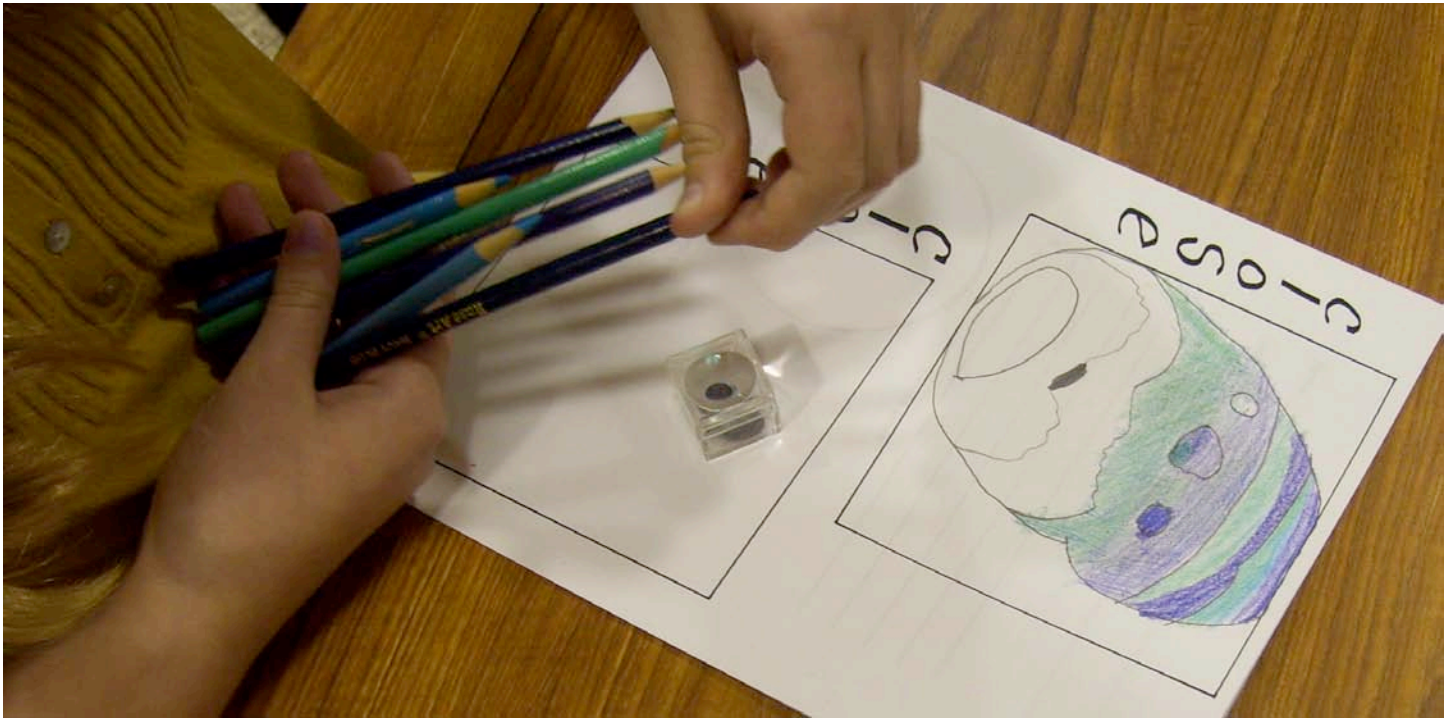
Close, Closer, Closest

While loupes are, as I said at the beginning, “standard equipment” at ECFS, we occasionally have a “loupe week.” During one such session, I borrowed books from the library on Georgia O’Keefe as well as one by photographer and children’s book author, Tana Hoban, “Look Again.” (Many of Hoban’s books are good companions to using loupes.) I read the books on O’Keefe and her paintings, drawing particular attention to the series of paintings that looked close, closer, and even closer at a jack-in-the-pulpit. We looked at Hoban’s book. She utilized a blank black page with a cutout square in the center through which you view a portion of the photograph on the following page. Students try to guess what the photograph shows. After numerous guesses, we turned the black page to see if we had figured out the whole picture from the small clue we had been given.



The assignment for the students was to pick a specimen from the “World in a Box” that had come with our Private Eye classroom kit. The field notebook contained pages I had made and three large empty squares for drawings labeled “close,” “closer,” “closest.” After using a loupe to draw a part of the specimen, the students were given a sheet of black construction paper with a small cutout square in the center. They placed this over their “close” drawing, and drew a detailed picture of the smaller section, filling the “closer” box. Finally, they covered that drawing with the black paper and drew their “closest” drawing. [Based on the lesson, “Close, Closer, Closest,” pp.128-129 in The Private Eye Teacher Guide.]





After a few days, when the students had completed their drawings, we gathered together and I held up drawings, covering them with the black paper so students could see only what showed through the small opening.

"What do you think this is?" I asked. Hands shot up into the air and analogies and metaphors flew out of the students' minds.

"It looks like veins." "Or lines on a map." "Twisty roads." "Colored wires." Were responses for one drawing of a polished agate rock.

"It reminds me of bars on a cage." "They are teeth in a big smile." "A checkerboard."

I smiled at the students and Robin and Linda who work together with me at the center.

“Listen to yourselves,” I said to the children sitting on the gym floor. “You are talking in analogies! You are full of metaphors!”

They took just a moment to enjoy the compliment before moving on: “It’s the ocean.”

It was all those things, but most of all, it was the result of many hours of looking, drawing, and thinking. The students are only beginning their journey with The Private Eye’s tools: the loupes, the questions. Children who come from backgrounds with fewer experiences and limited language models need lots of time to develop skills encouraged by The Private Eye program. I can’t think of a better way to encourage them along the way.

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