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**The Seymour test:
Powerful ideas in early childhood education**

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"When one enters a new domain of knowledge, one initially encounters a crowd of new ideas. Good learners are able to pick out those which are powerful."

Seymour Papert, 1980

I will never forget my first meeting with Seymour Papert. It was in the early 90s' and I had recently arrived to Boston from Argentina. I was nervous. I was about to meet the "great" Seymour Papert. As a child, back in the late seventies, my parents had sent me to learn LOGO through a pilot project run by IBM in my hometown of Buenos Aires. Decades later, I couldn't believe that I was at the MIT Media Lab and that my mentor was going to be the father of LOGO.

I had prepared lots of questions and several sketches of ideas to discuss with Seymour. I am a visual person, so I had a notebook full of diagrams to share with him. However, as soon as I got to his office, he told me that we needed to go to the supermarket to get some groceries he had forgotten. So there we went. While choosing tomatoes and cheeses, we were able to more or less engage in a meaningful conversation.

It wasn't at all the way I had planned it. I could hardly understand Seymour's South African accent, and he probably couldn't understand my thick Argentinean accent either. I couldn't show him my diagrams, since we were constantly walking the aisles of the supermarket. However, the background noise made it less awkward to ask each other to repeat our sentences several times. It forced us to take the time and pause often. Seymour wanted to understand me. Don't get me wrong. I don't think he was interested in getting to know me. He wanted to understand my ideas.

Seymour was a man of ideas. He fell in love with computer programming because of its potential to bring about new ideas. Both at the personal and the societal level. Ideas can change the world. Having grown up with the Apartheid, Seymour wanted to change the world. However, ideas are not easily grasped. They are abstract. They are not tangible. They are difficult to share. They need to be discovered through hard work. Objects facilitate this process. Seymour understood the importance of "objects to think with". These objects can help us make ideas concrete, tangible and sharable. They also empower us to have new ideas or to see old ideas in new ways. Objects can exist on the digital screen or on the physical world. Seymour knew about this early on. The LOGO turtle was both a virtual cursor and a floor-based robot.

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