

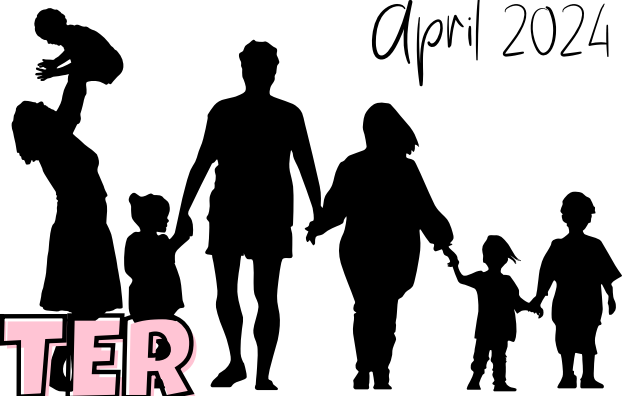
Child Care Connections

April 2024



FAMILY TIME

NEWSLETTER



It's all about Family

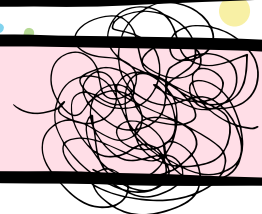


Here at *Child Care Connections*, we value the Families in our Community and always strive to provide you with the best support services and resources to help you on your parenting journey. This monthly newsletter will include parenting resources and information on important community services, as well as fun at home activities for the whole family!

Have a suggestion or request for an upcoming newsletter?

Contact us at: amurray@fowinc.org

Embrace The Mess!



April showers bring May flowers... and also lots of MUD! Spring is a beautiful and messy time of the year. After being couped up inside all winter, we all just want to get outside! But what can we do when the ground is covered in mud? EMBRACE THE MESS!

Messy play builds foundational skills that are crucial for children's later development. It is one of the most important kinds of early learning experiences we can offer to our children. Maybe you're not ready for a full-on mud pit in your yard- that's okay! Keep reading for some great messy play ideas.

EMBRACING MESSY PLAY!

Adapted from "Designing Messy Play for Infants and Toddlers"

by: Early Childhood National Centers, 2024



What is Messy Play?

Messy play is the open-ended exploration of materials and their properties. Activities like squishing clay, pouring sand, and sorting stones allow children to repeat and experiment as they like. Children are naturally curious, and messy play engages their senses at a developmental level that is appropriate for them. They learn foundational cognitive principles as they exercise motor, language, and social skills. Messy play offers one of the best integrated learning experiences young children can have.



Research Says...

- Children who explore with their senses learn physical principles more quickly. This is especially important for infants and toddlers, who must learn foundational skills upon which more complex learning is built.
- Early visual and motor skills are related to later math and language skills. Simple activities, like playing with playdough or shredding paper, build fine and gross motor skills. But they also support learning related to cause and effect, number sense, and other important cognitive skills.

- Open-ended activities like pouring sand or water, smearing foam, and making patterns with loose parts provide children with opportunities to experiment at their own developmental level and pace. Allowing children to direct their own exploration this way leads to superior learning. Research also shows that responsive adults improve children's learning through exploration.
- Messy play harnesses children's spontaneous exploration to help them learn. Children develop curiosity, initiative, focus and persistence through messy play. These are foundational skills in the 'Approaches to Learning' domain of ELOF, which identifies learning strategies. Messy play activities develop children's autonomy and provide safe environments in which to practice these crucial learning skills.



Organized Chaos?

Messy play is best done in an organized space. The activity may be messy, but the environment should not be. This requires preparation. Materials should be clean and ready to be explored, tools should be laid out and orderly. An organized environment is not only safe, but it also helps children feel welcome and helps them understand what to do.



Space for Messy Play

Messy play works best in a defined space

We want to give children cues that will help them understand what behaviors are appropriate, and defining the space is one way to do this

For example; Spread out a tarp before playing with sand indoors. This lets even very young children know that this is a contained activity. A space was prepared for it. When you enter this space, you are welcome to engage with this material in a way that isn't always allowed. You can step in the sand, sit in it, or pour it on your legs.

When we clean up and the tarp goes away, that's a cue that the messy play is over.

Having a defined space that communicates where and how to play can support children who are dual language learners in understanding the expectations for messy play. Of course when you're working with older infants and toddlers, you'll need to be more flexible in your definition of space as they like to carry their materials from one area to another – a quintessential and important toddler task – so within your defined space be sure to allow for some traveling about too!



Messy Play Environments

Children engage more when they are in an inviting, comfortable environment. This means thinking about the amount of space, the lights and sounds, the colors, and the decorations. It means creating a space that will be comforting. Too many tools or too many different materials might be overwhelming to children, so consider starting simple. Material exploration is often a slow process. Be sure to plan enough time to allow individual children to engage at their own pace.



Cleaning

Children and adults also benefit when messy play is done in an environment that is easily cleaned. Tarps are effective, as are other temporary floor or table coverings. Shower curtains work great too – and they are inexpensive. If you are doing messy exploration that will require water for cleanup, consider doing the activity near a sink, a cleanup area, or outside. Don't forget smocks for the children. And remember we can help children learn cleaning skills, too. For older infants and toddlers, leaving time for cleanup at the end of messy play is a great way to transition to other routines or play opportunities. It helps children learn responsibility and provides a helpful cue that the messy play is finished.



Mess Preferences

Individual children have different levels of interest in and tolerance for messy play, and it is important to observe and respond to those preferences. Some children may be extra sensitive to sensory input and won't like getting their hands or feet messy or wet. Support children's exploration by staying close and offering to clean or dry messy hands right away. Offer messy play materials such as paper, loose parts, or natural materials that do not require hands to get sticky or wet.

Quick and Easy Ideas

Play with Patterns

Children love making patterns, and you can help! Set out some loose materials for your child - tiles, blocks, sticks, stones. Sit back and see what your child does with the materials. Describe what you see. If your child is reluctant to take part, make a pattern of your own and describe it as you do. Children can learn a lot from your example.

Chill Out with Water

Warm water in a bath is great, but so is ice! Ice is easy to use and clean up, and it's so versatile. You can explore a piece in the bath, but you'll have to work fast! For longer ice exploration, let your child play with it on a food tray or draw with it on sun-warmed cement. If you plan ahead and freeze some cubes with a bit of food coloring, color can be a part of the fun.

Bath Play

Bath time is a natural time for messy play. Children naturally explore the water, and you can help by narrating what you see. Sponges and shampoo bottles make fun and interesting tools to explore floating and sinking. If you have shaving cream, spray a bit on the wall and help your child spread it around.

Roll or Flow

Children enjoy making things go, and you can help by setting up a small ramp and some loose materials. Let your child roll or pour different kinds of materials down the ramp and explore how things move. Older children might enjoy bumps, jumps, or tunnels, which can be made with tape and discarded paper towel rolls.



at Home



Check out the attached list of fun Messy Play ideas and visit [this website](#) for more!



In the Community

Sky Hunters in Flight!

Saturday, April 6

11am-12pm

Rhinebeck Center for Performing Arts

661 Route 308, Rhinebeck

MyKingstonKids Kite Building Workshop

Saturday, April 13th

6:30pm-7:30pm

Unfettered Arts Gallery

37 Oneil St., Kingston

Captain Nemo's Adventure Academy

Sunday, April 14th

11am

Rosendale Theatre

408 Main Street, Rosendale

Princess Skating Party

Sunday, April 14th

Kiwanis Ice Arena

6 Small World Ave, Saugerties, NY



MUD KITCHEN

An old table, some used kitchen utensils, and a bunch of mud are all you need to set up your outdoor mud kitchen. This is the perfect setting for imaginative play, allowing your little ones to concoct their own mud pies, soups, and other "recipes". While this messy play activity might require a bath afterward, the fun your children will have is totally worth the mess!



EDIBLE MUD

If you don't want to use real mud for your messy play, then make your own! Using simple things like chocolate pudding and toy pigs, you can create a muddy texture that is safe and edible for your little ones to explore with their hands. Vary the texture from smooth to coarse by crushing up some cookies to add to the pudding mixture. You can also add some whipped topping to make the edible mud light and fluffy.



WATER PISTOL PAINTING

Water pistol painting provides hours of entertainment while allowing kids to express their creativity through art. It also teaches them basic color mixing, encourages problem-solving skills, and develops hand-eye coordination. With just a few items such as washable tempera paint, plastic water pistols, and some paper or cardboard, you can have your little ones having a blast with this unique messy play activity!

SOAP FOAM MESSY PLAY

Soap foam is a fun way to get your hands clean while enjoying messy play at the same time! With liquid soap, water, and food coloring, you can use a food processor or blender to create a fluffy and colorful foam that kids will love playing with. The texture of the foam is great for sensory exploration. If you don't want this mixture on your table or countertops, it's a great activity to take to the bathtub!



SAND FOAM

Sand foam combines the best of both worlds for kids who are obsessed with construction toys and exploring with their hands. With just sand and shaving cream, you can create a fluffy yet gritty texture that's loads of fun to run your fingers and toys through. Kid's won't be able to get enough of this messy play idea!



CAR PAINTING

Using washable paint and toy cars, kids can let their imaginations run wild and create unique designs using their vehicles. Once the painting is done, they can switch gears and give their cars a good scrub in a DIY car wash station. This is such a fun messy play idea for toddlers and preschoolers.

