



Artsy Thursday

Playdough Power

When children use playdough, they explore ideas and try different approaches until they find one that works. They compare and contrast objects, actions, and experiences. In their experimenting, children come up with their own ideas, satisfy their curiosity, and analyze and solve problems. These are all skills that help children learn and succeed in school.

Social and emotional development

Creating with playdough lets children feel competent and proud of their accomplishments. Pounding, flattening, and squeezing are healthy and safe outlets for extra energy. They can also help children cope with strong feelings. When children seem stressed or angry, get out the playdough and props!

Creativity and imagination

With playdough, young children express their ideas through art and make-believe play. At the same time, they learn symbolic thinking by pretending that the playdough is something else. For example, *"That thing with the antlers is a moose."*

Language and literacy

Through playdough play at home, children practice listening to and talking with friends, siblings, and adults (you!). Materials like playdough help children build their vocabulary as they explain what they are doing. For example, when a child exclaims, *"Chop!"* as she brings down the plastic knife, she uses just the right word to describe her action.

Science

Young children learn about science through hands-on experiences. They learn by observing, thinking, and talking about how materials feel and how they change. You can encourage scientific thinking. Provide sawdust or sand to add to the playdough and then talk about how this new kind of dough looks and feels. Introduce words like texture, grainy, smooth, and lumpy.

Math

Measure and count while you make a batch of playdough together. Your child can learn about measurement and numbers by filling the cup and comparing the size of teaspoons and tablespoons, and about counting as he adds the ingredients.

Physical development

While poking, rolling, and squishing playdough, children develop the small muscles in their fingers and hands. They use hands, fingers, and tools to pound, push, poke, shape, flatten, roll, cut, and scrape. Through these manipulations, children develop eye-hand coordination, the ability to match hand movement with eye movement. They also gain strength and improve dexterity in their hands and fingers, critical areas of physical development for writing, drawing, and other purposes.