

Hello Everyone!

We hope you are all staying safe and well during these challenging times. We want to support you in whatever way we can, so for starters we have put together some basic curriculum ideas that are developmentally appropriate and do not require any special materials--just things you are likely to have around your home already. The most important thing to remember is the golden rule of early childhood education: KIDS LEARN THROUGH PLAY! Some of this play can be structured activities, but for the most part you want to set up an environment that is a safe and inviting space for your child (or children) to explore, invent, create, and pretend.

Routine is important to children of all ages, but especially young ones. You do not need a rigid schedule, but mapping out a basic daily schedule will help you and your child tremendously. For example, plan some consistent times throughout the day, in whatever order you feel works best, and space out these predictable times so you and your child have a regular routine that consists of mostly free/unstructured play anchored by a few constants:

- Story time
- FREE PLAY
- Outdoor time
- Snack
- FREE PLAY
- Lunch
- Music/movement (or how about, "Daily Dance Party!")
- FREE PLAY
- Quiet time (books, puzzles, age-appropriate board games)

The ideas that the teachers have compiled will help with those hours of FREE PLAY. Do not feel you need to play along 24/7--stay available and let them know you are nearby, but for long stretches of time your child can (and should) find ways to entertain themselves. Think of yourself as a resource and facilitator, not a playmate (at least not a 24/7 one).

Please remember that young children NEED TO MOVE. They move all the time, and that is a good thing, although sometimes challenging and exhausting for the adults sharing space with them. As much as possible, get outdoors--ride bikes, take walks, dig in the garden, go on scavenger hunts, create an obstacle course that encourages running, jumping, rolling, etc.

Also, please remember that for young children repetition is important. You do not need things to be new and different every day. Revisiting the same play over and over is how young children learn. You may get tired of the same story book over and over, but your child may enjoy reading it again and again.

Good luck! Have fun! We're here for you if you have questions or ideas to share!

Setting up a Writing and Invention Center at home:

Step 1: Clear a space that the kids will be free to draw/create without having to worry they are making a mess. Make clear that the materials can be used freely but should not be used in other locations--no markers, glue, etc. should be carried off to other parts of the home.

Step 2: Collect items from around the home in small bins, tupperware, shoe boxes--anything that won't get broken works, but interesting and colorful containers is a bonus and will draw their attention. Here are some basic supplies to think about. Please do not go out and buy anything!!! Preschoolers are not very particular, so store-bought and new are not important to them.

- Tape--masking or scotch. Probably not duct tape though.
- Glue sticks
- Kid scissors
- Crayons, markers (not sharpies!), colored pencils, golf pencils. (No need for erasers--there should be no erasing in preschool!)
- Stickers of any kind. Address labels, yard sale price stickers, half-used scrapbook supplies--check those junk drawers!
- Old magazines, catalogs, newspaper
- Cardboard tubes and other recyclables
- Paper of any kind (computer paper, notepads, old scrapbook paper--even scraps, construction paper, old letterhead, gift wrap, index cards, post-it notes)
- Envelopes
- Ribbon, bows, string, yarn
- Cotton balls, doilies, old holiday decorations
- Extra plates/cups/napkins from birthday parties
- Pretty much anything that isn't sharp or a choking hazard. Be creative!

Step 3: Follow their lead! Let the kids use the materials however they choose. Try to avoid asking "what are you making?" or "what is it?" Instead use open-ended questions like, "Can you tell me about this?" or make statements like "I see you covered the whole paper with these lines." Focus on process over product--in other words, what do you see them doing, not what are they making. Often preschoolers aren't "making" anything, they are just exploring how materials work.

Step 4: Give a 5 minute warning before calling for clean-up. Clean-up time is an excellent opportunity for more learning--lots of sorting, counting, etc.

Extension ideas:

1. Go on a nature walk to collect natural objects to add to your supplies (pinecones, pebbles, leaves, etc.)
2. Melt old crayons to make new ones! Here's a great resource:
<https://www.thesprucecrafts.com/how-to-repurpose-old-crayons-4174346>

Expanding Block Play

Set up a block area. Start with the basics: a clear area of floor space and a set of wooden blocks, Magna Tiles, or Duplos/Legos.

Put together a basket (or two) of add ons--toys that can inspire new ways to build and play:

- Small vehicles
- Small stuffed animals
- Dollhouse furniture
- Baby dolls
- Pretend food
- Pretend tools
- Pieces of fabric, scarves
- Small balls of various sizes
- Plastic toys such as dinosaurs
- A clipboard or notepad and pencil (for making signs, drawing plans, etc.)

Put the building materials and a basket of add ons in your building area. Add items as needed to support whatever play your child begins. For example, if you put out stuffed animals and your child starts building beds for the animals, your child may decide they need blankets and you could support that play by adding the fabric/scarves. Try to follow the child's lead. If you thought putting out vehicles would lead to building roads and garages but instead your child decides to build a castle for the cars to live in together just go with that!

After a day or two, try switching things up with different add ons. See how the building play changes when different materials are introduced.

PLAYDOUGH!

While making playdough, there are lots of opportunities to talk about math/measuring, more/less, and science concepts like liquid/solid, heating/cooling etc. Kids love making and playing with playdough, and believe it or not manipulating playdough is one of the best ways to develop the hand dexterity kids will need for writing. If you give them a variety of household items (cookie cutters, melon ballers, marbles, coins, muffin tins, etc.) and a designated play area (away from carpet) they'll be happy and productive!

At school we use the recipe below, but there is a wonderful article about the benefits of playdough that includes other recipes that you should check out:

<http://www.communityplaythings.com/resources/articles/2016/the-potential-of-playdough>

Combine in a mixing bowl:

3 cups of flour

1 cup salt

6 teaspoons of cream of tartar (this is mostly a preservative so don't worry if you don't have enough)

Slowly pour in:

3 cups of water

3 tablespoons of oil

a few drops of food coloring (optional)

Stir until most lumps are gone.

To cook you can use an electric skillet--just spray with cooking spray and set to 300 degrees or medium--or you can use a pan on the stove top (again just cooking spray and medium heat). Stir continuously until it is no longer gooey (about 5 minutes). Remove from pan and let cool 10 minutes and then knead the warm dough until all the lumps are gone.

Signs of Spring Nature Journal

Set aside some time each day to work on a nature journal. Lots of changes are happening outside and this is a wonderful opportunity for making observations and predictions and then recording them in a variety of ways.

Basic supplies:

- Clipboard, notepad, or just a stack of blank paper
- Pencil
- Crayons
- Measuring tape and/or ruler
- Magnifying glass or binoculars if you have them
- Basket, pail, or bag to bring on outdoor walks

Some ideas for your journal:

1. Talk about the animals you sometimes see in your yard or near your home. Make a (short) list (with or without pictures) of the animals. Make predictions about how many of these animals you will see on a walk (or watching from the window for a certain period). Chart your findings. This is a great opportunity for pre-writing/writing (making a line, check, X, or letter each time they spot an animal), number sense (wow, we thought we would see 1 million squirrels but we only saw 5; we saw 8 birds, 3 squirrels, and 1 chipmunk--which did we see the most?), making charts (use post-it notes to graph your findings), talking about opposites or categorizing (living/non-living, fur/feathers, 2 legs/4 legs)

<u>Animal</u>	<u>Prediction</u>	<u>Actual Sighting(s)</u>
Squirrel		
Chipmunk		
Bird		
Deer		

2. Measure the flowers that are beginning to poke through the soil using actual measuring tools or marks on a piece of ribbon or a popsicle stick. Try to return to the same flower each day to track the growth.
3. Pick a tree or shrub (especially one that flowers) and document the changes it is going through this spring. Observe the branches, leaves, and buds carefully. Talk about the colors you see. Invite your child to draw a picture while sitting nearby. Have your child take one picture of this tree/shrub each day to create an album on your phone that documents the growth/change over time.
4. Follow your child's lead--whatever they think is interesting is a learning opportunity!

