
Supporting Preschoolers' Active Exploration Through Mud Play

INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the video, "The Benefits of Mud Play: Why Playing in the Mud is More Than Just Fun!" from STARNET: Early Childhood. The questions and activities in this handout could be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

Goals

- Discuss the benefits of engaging preschoolers in mud play experiences and identify ways to address families' concerns about mud play.
- Discuss effective strategies for engaging preschoolers in mud play experiences at home and within the learning environment.
- Plan to partner with families to provide preschoolers with opportunities for active exploration through mud play at home and within the learning environment.

Activity

- Watch the video.
- Use the questions below to reflect on effective ways to support preschoolers' active exploration during mud play.
- Implement your plan and adjust as needed to support preschoolers' active exploration.

"We can take advantage of children's intrinsic motivation to get their hands dirty as we foster their learning and development in many important ways through mud play."

STARNET: Early Childhood

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What caught your attention from the video? What made that fact, excerpt, or example meaningful to you?

- ◆ The video highlights the limitless possibilities for what children might do with mud. The open-ended nature of mud allows children to play with it in ways that support their active exploration skills and their unique interests. But some families may have concerns about their children engaging in mud play.
 - Have you engaged preschoolers in mud play? If so, how have mud play experiences benefited the preschoolers in your care?
 - If not, what are some barriers to engaging children in mud play experiences? What support may you need to engage preschoolers in mud play?
 - Think about the families you serve. What may be some of their concerns regarding mud play? What might be some reasons families may not be interested in mud play?

- ◆ The narrator also mentioned that children will work with mud in ways that are “just right” for them, allowing educators to support and scaffold their development and learning in many different areas. She also highlighted that educators should use what they know about their group of children and their interests to add materials that will be interesting and meaningful to them.
 - What unique insights might families be able to provide into the kinds of support their child needs during sensory experience like mud play?
 - What specific steps can you take to partner with families to provide individualized opportunities for preschoolers to engage in active exploration through mud play?
 - How could sharing your observations of children playing in mud invite collaboration with families to support children’s active exploration at home?

- ◆ The narrator mentioned there are a variety of ways to explore mud play in an early childhood classroom, such as creating an outdoor mud center, and adding materials including shovels, small animals, vehicles, etc. Plan to collaborate with families to create a mud play center that includes materials that are of interest to children.
 - Identify ways to share the benefits of mud play experiences with families and encourage families to facilitate active exploration during mud play at home.
 - Address families’ concerns about mud play in a sensitive and respectable manner. Consider inviting families to observe mud play at your learning center and notice how their children explore mud in unique ways.
 - Make a list of materials may you need to create an outdoor mud play area. Work with your program and families to compile the materials you need.
 - Implement the steps identified and adjust the plan as needed.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about supporting preschoolers' active exploration:

- ◆ **Source:** NAEYC
 - ◆ **Article:** Creating a Yes! Environment: Supporting Creativity and Exploration
 - ◆ **Link:** <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/tyc/feb2019/supporting-creativity-exploration>
 - ◆ **Description:** This article offers suggestions for creating an environment that promotes exploration and creativity. It also offers practical tips for facilitating preschoolers' exploration and use of imagination during play.
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- ◆ **Source:** NAEYC
 - ◆ **Article:** Nurturing The Scientist in your Child
 - ◆ **Link:** <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/nurturing-scientist-your-child>
 - ◆ **Description:** This article outlines strategies for helping children develop skills needed to understand science concepts. Tips for engaging children in active exploration, simple investigations, making observations, and comparing and contrasting objects are discussed.
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- ◆ **Source:** NAEYC
 - ◆ **Article:** Preschool Play Plans: Mud-Luscious Play
 - ◆ **Link:** <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/tyc/apr2018/preschool-play-plans-mud-luscious-play>
 - ◆ **Description:** This article offers ideas for offering children hands-on sensory experiences through opportunities to explore and play with mud.