UNIVERSITY of VIRGINIA
SCHOOL of EDUCATION and HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
CASTL

Promoting Active Exploration During 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 mud play and identify ways to collaborate with families to keep infants and toddlers safe during mud play experiences.
- Discuss effective strategies for facilitating children's mud play experiences at home and within the learning environment.
- Plan to partner with families to provide infants and toddlers 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 infants' and toddlers' active exploration during mud play.
- Implement your plan and adjust as needed to support infants' and toddlers' active exploration.

The open-ended nature of mud allows children to play with it in ways that support their developmental levels and their unique interests.

STARNET: Early Childhood

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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

- The video shares many benefits of exploration during mud play including supporting children's confidence and developing positive approaches to learning, such as curiosity and persistence. But some families may have concerns about their young children engaging in mud play.
  - How do you think infants and toddlers may benefit from mud play? How would you share and explain those benefits to families?
  - What concerns do you have about mud play with infants and toddlers? What concerns might families have about mud play for their infants and toddler? How can you address families' concerns about mud play in a sensitive and respectful manner?

- The video mentions that younger children may enjoy mud through sensory experiences like running their fingers through it as they explore. Other children may prefer to scoop mud with shovels or use a paint brush to create art with it. And there will be other children who are very hesitant or not interested in playing with mud at all.
  - How can you be intentional about meeting infants' and toddlers' individual needs and preferences as they actively explore during mud play experiences in their own way? What might you say as children explore? What strategies might you use as you join in mud play with children?
  - What strategies would you employ, or alternative activities could you offer to support children who may not enjoy the sensory experience of putting their hands in mud?
  - Consider ways to collaborate with families to learn more about their children's interests and preferences. How can you partner with families to include materials of interest in children's mud play or provide alternative activities they may enjoy instead?

- Partner with families to engage infants and toddlers in active exploration through mud play.
  - What specific steps you may take to partner with families to provide individualized opportunities for infants and toddlers to actively explore mud play?
    - Share ideas about the importance of exploring mud in unique and safe ways.
    - Consider discussing careful supervision during mud play as well as materials that are safe for infants and toddlers to explore.
    - Encourage the use of smocks and plan to maintain communication with families about designated mud play days, which allows families to plan accordingly.
  - Implement the steps identified, monitor children's progress, and adjust the plan as needed to meet children's individual needs.