

Sharing Thoughts About Exploring Sand and Water

Dear Families:

Sand and water play is messy, no doubt about that. Children love it, though, and they learn a lot from it. When an infant splashes water, he learns that slapping it makes the water move (cause and effect). When a toddler pours a cup of sand into a bucket, she begins to learn about size, shape, and quantity. When a 2-year-old makes a birthday cake with sand and puts sticks in for candles, he is pretending with objects.

In our program, the children play with sand and water both indoors and outdoors. Young infants splash water in a tray. Older infants wash dolls and rubber toys, and they dig and pour sand. Toddlers and twos squirt water with basters, blow bubbles into the breeze, and make designs in sand with combs and molds.

What You Can Do at Home

We encourage you to enjoy sand and water with your child. Of course, close supervision is needed to keep your child safe. Here are some suggestions to consider.

- **Fill a tray or plastic tub with an inch or so of water.** A small amount of water is all your child needs to have fun. Place the tub on the floor, on top of some towels, and then let your child splash! If you have an older infant, toddler, or 2-year-old, also offer plastic measuring cups, squeeze bottles, and perhaps a funnel or a sieve.
- **Talk with your child during bath time.** Ask questions to encourage observation and thinking: “What will happen if you drop your rubber frog in the water?”
- **Fill a dishpan halfway with clean sand.** That way, your child can play with sand both indoors and out. The dishpan will keep the sand contained. To vary the experience, add a shovel, funnel, coffee scoop, and small plastic animals.
- **Pretend with your child.** When you add a few simple props, sand and water are wonderful materials to encourage pretend play. You and your child can have a tea party, drive boats through the water, and build sand castles and tunnels.

One wonderful benefit of sand and water play is that they are both soothing materials. They can calm a child who is having a hard time. This helps you as well. We will be happy to suggest more ideas for sand and water experiences that you can offer at home.

Sincerely,