

big PLANS in print

Connecting Big Plans' Parents to their Communities

Issue 17 November • December 2015

The Power of Playdough

Squishing, rolling, sculpting, molding . . . young children love to play with playdough. Homemade or out of a can, playdough can provide hours of fun and learning at home. Playdough play is also a powerful way to support your child's learning. Besides the playdough, all you need are a clear surface, a few props from around the home, and lots of time for fun.

This simple preschool staple lets children use their imaginations and strengthen the small muscles in their fingers—the same muscles they will one day use to hold a pencil and write. Using playdough with you, a friend, or siblings supports your child's social skills such as sharing, taking turns, and enjoying being with other people. Playdough also encourages children's language and literacy, science, and math skills—all at the same time!

*above excerpt from <http://families.naeyc.org/learning-and-development/music-math-more/playdough-power>

Playdough is a staple play material in the early childhood classroom. Play-dough provides enjoyable and satisfying experiences for young children, but it is not merely a “fun” activity. It provides valuable hands-on, active-learning experiences and supports children's growth and learning in many domains. Through this medium teachers can address early learning standards and observe children's progress in many areas of development. The notion that play is a young child's “work” is widely accepted among researchers and educators in the early childhood field. Young children learn best through manipulation of materials in which they can see the effects they have on the world around them. Many of these experiences come through play. Creative experiences with materials like playdough offer children many valuable learning opportunities. For example, children may cooperate with peers, communicate their ideas through spoken language, express themselves through creativity and dramatic play, learn about the effects they can have on their environment, and experiment with scientific concepts . . . all while playing with playdough.

Experiences with playdough also allow children to explore and experiment in varied ways. Learning occurs in social, emotional, language, physical, and cognitive domains, helping to provide children a solid foundation for future schooling.

*above excerpt from http://www.naeyc.org/files/tyc/file/TYC_V3N3_Swartz.pdf - March 2005 NAEYC Young Children – “Playdough – What's Standard About It?”

Cover story continued next page . . .

Source: <http://winemommies.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/fun-dough-9pics011.jpg>



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What Children Learn from Playdough

Playdough play at home or school supports development and learning in many areas. When children use playdough, they explore ideas and try different approaches until they find one that works. They compare and contrast objects (“Mine’s a fat pancake and yours is skinny”), actions (“No, don’t cut it! Scrape it, like this”), and experiences (“We’re not making a snake—we’re making a road”). 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 (“I’m good at rolling the dough”) and proud of their accomplishments (“Hey, I made a dog”). 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!

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.

Read the full article!

The above is a small excerpt from *Playdough Power - families.naeyc.org*. To read the complete article with great examples of how you can use playdough with your children, visit: <http://bit.ly/1RqFIZM>

Playdough Props from Around the House

Birthday candles; Blocks; Bottle caps; Cookie cutters; Combs; Garlic press (be prepared to give it up forever); Large buttons and other objects that can be pressed into the playdough to make a design; Leaves, twigs, pebbles; Plastic knives, forks, and spoons; Rolling pin or bottle; Small toy people and animals; Straws; String or shoelaces; Tea strainer; Toothpicks (only for older children)

The above is a small excerpt from *Playdough Power - families.naeyc.org* Visit: <http://families.naeyc.org/learning-and-development/music-math-more/playdough-power#sthash.aPK6Xgaa.dpuf>. Caterpillar image source: <http://www.yummyyumclub.ca>



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 (“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.

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.

On-Cloud-9-Dough

1 cup water
food coloring
6 cups flour
1 cup vegetable oil

Mix water and food coloring in bowl. Add flour and oil. Stir. Knead until smooth.

Variation: For the first step, children can drop the food coloring in the water and watch the color spread.
Note: Dough can be reused; store in the refrigerator in an airtight container.



Source: <http://www.growingajewelrose.com/2014/03/colored-cloud-dough-recipe.html>

Flubber

3/4 cup cold water
1 cup Elmer’s glue
liquid food coloring
1/2 cup hot water
1 teaspoon borax

(you can find borax in a box in the laundry aisle, Walmart, Canadian Tire and similar stores)

step 1: in bowl 1 – mix together the cold water, glue, and food coloring. set aside.

step 2: in bowl 2 – mix together the hot water and borax, until the borax is completely dissolved.

step 3: slowly add glue mixture to borax mixture. mix well. pour off excess water.



Source: <http://www.livecraft-eat.com/craft/homemade-flubber-for-kids>

Parent Link Centres

Supporting parents and their children

What is a Parent Link Centre?
Parent Link Centres are a province-wide network of family resource centres that support Alberta's parents as their children's first and most influential teacher. A Parent Link Centre provides parents and their children with supports to ensure that the children come to school ready to learn and ensure that parents have the supports needed to help their children develop and fulfill their potential. Parents will be able to access information about community services, obtain referrals, and meet other parents, children, and families, while taking part in quality early learning activities at a Parent Link Centre.

Every centre is uniquely designed to meet the needs of families living in each community and offers a range of free services, which include: play-based learning activities for children and parents; parent education including the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program; toy-lending and resource libraries; and information about other resources in the community. Parent Link Centers also offer family support services such as nutrition programs, support

groups, clothing exchanges. Parent Link Centers are specifically designed for young children ages 0-6, by giving them a place to laugh, learn and play during their early years. The provincial framework ensures that all parents have access to similar types of services and the same standards of excellence in each Centre.

Included in the many services offered by Parent Link Centres is the opportunity for parents to monitor and support the development of their children. It's exciting and rewarding to see your child learn and grow. Just like regular visits to the eye doctor or to the dentist, it's important to have a developmental check-up for your child. With the assistance of a Parent Link facilitator, parents and their children can participate in a simple screening that captures their child's stages of development. The facilitator then can provide you with ideas to continue to support your child's healthy growth and development.

Stay tuned to Big Plans in Print for an inside look at some of Calgary Parent Link Centres and the programs and services they offer.

Western Rocky View Parent Link Centre

Based out of Cochrane but has one program that runs out of Bearspaw Lifestyle Centre

253220 Bearspaw Road
Phone: 403-851-2265

BEARSPAW WIGGLE & GIGGLE

Tuesdays 11am - 12pm
(birth - 6 years/parented)

Join us for active fun in the gym!
A great way to burn off some energy and meet other parents and children!
Bring indoor shoes for both parents & tots.
Free. Registration is not required.



Calgary Parent Link Centre Locations

Native Network - Aboriginal Parent Link Centre: 19 Erinwoods Drive; Phone: 403-240-4642; <https://www.facebook.com/aboriginal.parentlinkcentre>

Awo Taan Healing Lodge Parent Link Centre: 4518, 17ave SE; Phone: 403-531-1880 Ext. 100; Website: <http://awotaan.org/index.php/programs/parent-link-centre>

Calgary Catholic Immigration Society Parent Link Family Resource Centre
103, 1111-11 Avenue SW; Phone: 403-266-6686; *Our programs and services are open to all families, although we specialize in services to immigrant families.*

Families Matter Parent Link
3940-73 Street NW - Inside Bowcroft Elementary School, Rooms 17/18. Please enter from SW door and press doorbell for entrance. Phone: 403-205-5178
Website: <http://www.familiesmatter.ca/parent-link-centres>

Hand in Hand Parent Link Centre - Calgary: <http://www.aspenfamily.org/what-we-do/families/hand-in-hand>
2653-56 Street NE
Phone: 403-293-5467 ext. 32

North of McKnight Hand in Hand Parent Link Centre - 101, 3901-54 Avenue NE
Phone: 587-352-3583

North Central Family Connections
Huntington Hills Community Association - 520-78 Avenue NW; Phone: 403-275-6666; Website: www.weconnectyou.ca

YWCA Parent Link Corridor -YWCA of Calgary: 226, 320-5 Avenue SE; Phone: 403-262-0497; *The YWCA Parent Link Corridor is a partnership between the YWCA and community agencies.*

For more information on these locations and more please visit www.parentlinkalberta.ca.

Are You Talking With Your Child On a Daily Basis?

Are you aware of the opportunities for parent-child conversation in your home? Whether it's eye-to-eye or shoulder-to-shoulder (on a walk, in the car,) talking with your kids is vital to creating a connection and doing our job as parents.

Why does this matter?

1. The brain is built by an interactive process known as serve and return because it is very much like a game of tennis or volleyball. A child begins with a gesture or sound - the "serve" - and you respond with the "return. When parents respond sensitively, a child is surrounded by positive serve and return exchanges which are the building blocks of a healthy brain. (AHS- Our Brains Apple Magazine, 2013)
2. In the first 8 years of development, our children need to have eye-to-eye conversations so that they can watch us and learn how to move their mouths properly (speech-therapy referrals are increasing).
3. Older children need this connection because they have lots going on and need to talk about it with someone. If they are not talking with you, they are likely talking with their peers. Their peers may not be able to share the values that you would want to share. Peers also may have expertise in all sorts of things that you would rather your child did not learn.



This week, take a look at what's happening in your family.

- Are you making space for conversation?
- Are there times when the devices are off and you are talking with your child?
- Is it happening in the car, at the dinner table?

If you don't like what you see, get rid of the guilt and change the behaviour. Find ways to set your family up for success, by creating small, intentional spaces for conversation and connection.

Reprinted with permission from Gail Bell and Julie Freedman Smith of Parenting Power - parentingpower.ca

Holidays: Strategies for Success

While the holiday season is filled with enjoyable activities, events and traditions, it can also be a hectic and stressful time. Travel, shopping, loud music, bright lights, unfamiliar food, and busy schedules can turn typical routines upside down! The disruption to routine can be particularly difficult for children who depend on routine and predictability to engage in appropriate behavior. The following tips will help ensure that the holiday season is enjoyable for you and your child.



Making Life Easier: Surviving and Enjoying the Holidays

- ★ **Prepare your child for changes** in routines and schedule.
- ★ **Involve your child** in some of the holiday preparations.
- ★ Keep aspects of your **typical routine** whenever possible.
- ★ Give **clear directions**.
 - Use **positive words**.
 - Provide **transition warnings**.
 - Use **'Wait Time.'**
 - Provide limited **choices**.
 - Tell your child **how to behave**.
 - Provide **frequent and specific praise** for acceptable behavior.
- ★ **Empathize** with your child's feelings.
- ★ **Inform family** and friends of helpful strategies.
- ★ Be attentive to **your child's diet**.
- ★ Holiday Travel – **Plan ahead**
 - Pack a bag of **favorite items** to take with you.
 - Call airlines, airport or bus depot ahead about **special accommodations**.
 - **Visit the airport** or bus depot in advance.
 - Create a **personal story**.
- ★ **Celebrate** the successes along the way.

For great examples and more, read the entire article - *Holidays: Strategies for Success* at <http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/communities/families.htm>

This is part of a backpack series designed specifically for parents and caregivers. This series of tipsheets contains valuable information on how to make often challenging events easier to navigate, and even enjoyable, for both caregivers and children.