

One Page Resource: Exploring clay with young children

“A teacher takes a hand, opens the mind and touches the heart.”

Caring for Clay:

Think about having a place in your classroom that could be for daily clay play.

Store clay and materials for the clay in a plastic tub that is easily accessible for the children. **Clay is messy!** But if organized, it is one of the best materials for young children to be able to use frequently. Teaching the children how to set up and then clean-up is important.

Always store the clay in sturdy air tight plastic bags - big freezer zip lock bags can work well.

Make sure it is **moist** when putting clay away; flick some water on top of it before closing the bag. Keep clay wrapped up in a plastic bag when the children are not using it at the table, but make sure the children know it is there for them to use even though it is wrapped up!

Teaching Children how to Care for Clay:

Show the children how it can dry very easily in our climate. **Science Experiment-** leave some clay out and see what happens versus keeping it in plastic. Talk with children about ways to keep the clay moist especially in the dry climate in New Mexico. This can lead to great science explorations and conversations. Revisit the caring for the clay as much as you see the need. By helping the children to care for the clay you make your job a lot easier.

Prepping for Clay:

Cover a table or portion of a table with a sturdy cloth/canvas or mats that have cloth material or buy a sturdy plastic table cloth that has felt like material underneath (Wal-Mart sells these). **Note** - Thin Plastic sheets are hard to use as clay sticks to the plastic.

Playing with Clay:

- Put whole amount on the table and see what happens!
- Slice off large pieces of clay for the children to use. Don't add tools - just let the children discover how it feels and see what happens.
- Let the children play with it often or have it available during the Discovery Choice Play Time
- Add clay as another material for expression in the art area.
- Intentionally add tools for children to explore with the clay. Such as: twigs, small sticks, pebbles, leaves, recycled materials, different sizes of wire, tooth picks, pipe cleaners, paper, popsicle sticks.....
- Allow children to paint clay creations after they dry with acrylic or tempera paint.
- Read books about clay and look at pictures of clay artwork or bring in artwork that is made of clay to show children the many possibilities when exploring and creating with clay.

Cleaning Up - Clay will clog your drainsso have a tub of water near the clay table with a towel under it, to catch the drips, plus a towel to dry hands, so the children can easily wash their hands.

After Playing with Clay:

- Have pieces of cardboard to put the art on to transport to a drying shelf or cubby for children who want to allow their creation to dry. Encourage the child to display their work in the classroom while it dries.
- Talk to the children about their creation, using open ended questions. Write down their words and add to the displayed clay work.
- Recycle the clay. Teach the children to roll the clay up in a ball and, if getting dry, add a little water before putting it in the air tight clay bag.

HAVE FUN!!