MINI CASE STUDY: OUR PLAYDOUGH STATION

At Childhaven Nursery School within our front room space we have a 'make your own' dough station. This is where children, alongside an adult, can create their own playdough using a range of ingredients. We believe it is important for children to experience and be involved first hand in the process of creating dough and not just the end product. The process can help to experience...

Problem Solving

Working together

Sensory exploration

Mathematical concepts

Giving children the opportunity to experience the process not just the end product...

Developing skills for life.

Having this space encourages children to work together to create an end product. There are many opportunities for mathematical language to be added in, **examples such as: more or less for the ingredients, how many? As well as measuring or weighing.**

Making playdough is also great for children's communication and language as, whilst they are exploring the dough, they experience first hand the meaning of words such as **rolling, squeeze, flatten and pat** at the same time as talking about their creations with others.

Another area of learning that is important within Early Years is developing fine motor skills and control to support them when learning to write. Using the dough helps develop the finger muscles needed for this by squishing, rolling and moulding the dough and also using a range of loose parts or utensils with this.

"It's sticky we need more flour"
"Just a little bit more water"
"This smells nice, I like it". *" This herb is called mint"*
"I can squish it like this, look...It's a big ball!"
"Some for me and then a little bit for you Miss Metcalfe ."

Why not have a go in your setting?

Create a space that can be accessed by the children independently. You can add herbs, spices and more...

When out and about gather some natural items such as twigs, leaves, pine cones. The additions to your handmade dough are endless.

what does the evidence say?

Theorist Jean Piaget thought that adults need to '**Provide concrete experiences before abstract concepts: Especially for younger children, ensure they have hands-on experiences with concepts before introducing more abstract representations.'**
More information on Piaget's theory can be found following the link below in resources.

Erikson Institute Early Math Collaborative highlights - **it is important to nurture interest in mathematics and to build identities as capable mathematicians during early childhood because this is the time when children begin to define their self-concept by making choices and developing preferences.**

One of the **EEF (Education Endowment Foundation) evidence store's latest areas is titled Self-regulation and executive function. Self regulation involves a complex range of skills and abilities that enable children to monitor their emotions and thoughts and choose how to adapt their behaviour in different circumstances. It also includes working towards a goal, which may be self-chosen or guided by a suggestion or request from an adult. Making playdough presents a perfect opportunity to promote this. Very young children begin to develop their self-regulation, in part, through close support and co-regulation from the adults around them. We would always advise adults to be nearby to support teaching, modelling, and practise, and therefore give children an increased capacity to regulate their thoughts, emotions, and actions.**

Self-regulation supports children's executive function. Executive function refers to a set of skills that are often used together. These require teaching and modelling, practice, and repetition to develop. Executive function can help children resist their impulses and control how they direct their attention. Executive function also helps children to hold information in mind so they can apply it. Remembering how to put the ingredients together, what happens when they add water or colouring all present opportunities for this.

Did you know that supporting the development of these skills may mean children are more likely to do better later in school?

Resources
https://www.simplypsychology.org/piaget.html#:~:text=Teachers%20should%20encourage
https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/early-years/evidence-store
https://earlymath.erikson.edu/
https://www.strongerpracticehubs.org.uk/hubs/yh/yh-tgh-eysph/resources/playdough-recipe

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THANK YOU FOR READING.

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