
A Letter to Families About Sand and Water Play

Dear Families,

Although you're probably used to seeing your children splash in the bathtub and dig in a playground sandbox, you may be surprised to know that the Sand and Water area is an important part of our school program. Both sand and water are natural materials for learning.

When children pour water into measuring cups, they are exploring math concepts. When they drop corks, stones, feathers, and marbles into a tub of water, they are scientists who are exploring whether objects sink or float. When they comb sand into patterns, they learn about both math and art.

We encourage children to experiment with these materials. As they do, we ask questions to focus their thinking on their discoveries. Here are some examples:

“Now that we've turned the water blue, what should we do with it?”

“How did the water change when we added the soap flakes?”

“What can wet sand do that dry sand can't? What can dry sand do that wet sand can't?”

“How many of these measuring cups of water do you suppose it will take to fill this quart pitcher?”

What You Can Do at Home

If your child particularly enjoys playing with water and sand, you may want to set up some play areas for these activities at home. Water play can be set up at the bathroom or kitchen sink. Lay a large towel on the floor, and, if the sink is too high for the child, provide a stool or stepladder. Outdoors, you can use a small wading pool, tub, or old baby bathtub. Give your child a baster, plastic measuring spoons and cups, a funnel, and plastic or rubber animals and boats. For a novel experience, add soap flakes or food coloring to the water. Don't forget about blowing bubbles with your child! Try using different kinds of bubble-blowing frames. Plastic six-pack rings, empty berry containers, and an eyeglass frame without the lenses make interesting bubble wands.

If a sandbox is not available outdoors, you might use a small dishpan as a miniature sandbox. All you need is a few inches of fine white sand. Collect small items such as shells, rubber animals, a very small rake, coffee scoops, measuring cups and spoons, sieves, and funnels and offer them to your child, a few at a time. These props will lead to many hours of enjoyment.

The opportunity to play with sand and water on a regular basis helps children develop their minds and bodies in relaxing and thoroughly enjoyable ways.