

17th August 2011



A Very Messy Business!

Messy play by its very nature, whilst great fun, can be challenging for practitioners within early years settings. Its importance, however, is underlined in the EYFS document and the benefits are huge.

Messy play encourages children to become little scientists, exploring new mediums, textures, weights, consistencies and properties. It allows children opportunities for social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development. It is in fact a vital part of childhood.

Children are amazingly resourceful, able to use materials in different ways to create something new. This attitude gives children the confidence and freedom to create something different each time they play. Messy play is an open ended activity where children can explore play independently or in a group. It is a great way to introduce someone new to a well established group of children, they immediately become involved, sharing their experiences and getting to know each other. It's a great inclusive activity.

However, some settings may be concerned about how much cleaning up there will be to do after messy play sessions, or how to protect children's clothing at such times. Good quality protective clothing (Tabards from TTS starting at £3.50) or plastic floor coverings can alleviate any worries for a well prepared practitioner.

Messy play products can be split into three different types; Natural resources such as wood, sand and gravel are popular. Opinions differ but some settings use food stuffs such as spaghetti or beans. Then there are some wonderful man-made products on the market that challenge the way a child understands and sees the world. Gloopy cornflower (TTS - £7.99) is really tactile. It is great for exploring texture and properties to create some fun, stretchy slime. Instant snow

(TTS - £7) is a wonderfully innovative product that with the addition of water, creates non-toxic, fluffy snow which even feels cold!

Practitioners can engage with children and ask them open ended questions, e.g. 'What happens when we do this?' 'Why did that happen?' Such activities help to develop enquiring minds. It is useful to record what happens during messy play either through writing, photography or video. Parents enjoy seeing the photographs of their children having fun with these various messy activities.

Commenting Catherine Clark Early Years New Product Development Director from TTS explains why messy play is great fun :-

"Messy play can be incorporated into all areas of play. It's great for mark making and early literacy skills. Science skills can be developed in abundance as mixtures are concocted, seeing properties and colours change. It is about exploring different materials and sensations. Even the youngest children can make marks, squeeze dough and experience a variety of media. With appropriate supervision and a careful selection of materials there's a cornucopia of exciting adventures to be had. Settings should be encouraged to explore all the wonderful educational experiences that can be drawn from messy play!"

So, practitioners can embrace messy play within their settings without the burden of 'the mess' causing havoc! Messy play is an essential part of a child's development. We must allow children to play safely, checking for potential dangers and hazards. This will ensure our messy play is stress free and fun for all!

For further information on TTS please call 0800 318 686 or visit www.tts-shopping.com

-ends-

For further information on this release, please call Lilly on 0114 258 1432 or 07941 661269, or email lilly.elbra@btopenworld.com