

Introduction to Distance Learning for Early Childhood



Dear families,

We hope this letter finds all of you in good health and spirit, as we understand that all of you are navigating changes in how you go about your daily lives. Our hearts go out to you as you work to support your children through these changes as well.

As much as we have loved teaching your children this year, we recognize that you, as parents and guardians, are the most important teachers in your children's lives. We as early childhood teachers are here to support and empower you by providing learning activity suggestions you can do with your children at home. Children learn through play and we hope that your family enjoys all your time together filled with play, snuggles and outdoor time.

Daily Flow:

In terms of the home environment, we suggest keeping your days as consistent and predictable as possible. Children feel safe and at ease when they know what is going to happen each day. Some children would also benefit from a basic visual schedule of the day spent at home, similar to what they would see at school. This schedule could include meals, book time, play times, quiet time, screen time (if that is allowed at your house), and daily outdoor play times. A basic drawing you and your child create together to demonstrate the schedule of the day would do.

Come up with a list of 2-3 tasks or chores your child can do to help the family every day. When children can contribute meaningfully to the family in a developmentally appropriate way it not only helps you out, but also grows their confidence and responsibility. Preschoolers can set the table, feed the pet, put away their laundry, fold towels, clear the table, and more!

Also, please try your best to keep news of the "grownup world" away from children. Information children learn about the virus should be filtered through you. News exposure at a young age causes anxiety because young children do not understand the abstract nature of the world outside their family, and repeated news clips and stories cause children to think the events are happening again and again. We understand that you need to talk with other adults about this crisis as well, but these conversations should be had away from children as much as possible. They are always listening!

Weekly Newsletter:

We will be sending out a newsletter each Monday, which will give you a wide variety of learning activities for your child. Many of the activities can be experienced in a variety of ways throughout the week, or will offer variations or extensions to try as your child masters the concept. Activities will be

provided in the areas of math, literacy, music and movement, fine motor and emergent writing, and nature nook.

We will be reinforcing a learning concept every week with play dough activities. We are encouraging everyone to make a batch of play dough! It offers endless learning activities (which will come home each week in your newsletter!), promotes fine motor skills, offers sensory experiences, and keeps those young minds and hands busy!

Play dough can have its challenges, so we want to offer these simple guidelines to making play dough a happy and successful activity in your home! It can be a daily part of your routine and has so many benefits for your child.

Introduce it to your child like this: *“Your teachers suggested that we make a batch of homemade play dough! They will be sending us fun ideas each week! Your school has a play dough table. Our kitchen table will be our play dough table, and you can work on this cookie tray” (or plastic table cloth, old beach towel, etc.).*

- The play dough stays in the designated area (i.e. kitchen table, on a cookie tray)
- Play dough cannot leave this area (when it inevitably does the first few times, reinforce the rule and direct your child back to the designated area)
- Have a small bin/shoebox for the play dough tools, store the play dough in a ziploc bag or tupperware.

(*It will take some time at first to reinforce these boundaries. Plan to play with your child or do something in the kitchen the first few times, so there is close supervision. Your consistent messages that the play dough stays at the table will be rewarded by endless hours of activity in the near future! Play dough time coordinates well with preparing meals, washing dishes and other adult tasks done in the kitchen.)

Play dough recipe

- **In a large bowl, mix:**
 - **4 cups flour**
 - **1/2 c salt**
 - **1 heaping tsp Alum**
 - **2 Packages of Kool Aid**
- **Bring 3 cups of water to a boil, remove from heat, add 5 Tbsp oil, stir, then pour over flour mixture. Mix with a spoon. When cool enough, knead by hand. Store in a tupperware container or Ziploc bag with a wet paper towel.**

Nature-Based Learning and Outdoor Space:

In addition, each newsletter will contain a “Nature Nook” section, which is a nature-based activity that your family can do on your daily outdoor outings. Being in nature has a multitude of benefits for children and adults, and playing in nature can provide a needed escape and opportunity for creative, stress-relieving, loud, big-body play. At the time of writing this (end of March), many playgrounds are closed due to difficulties keeping equipment sanitized and keeping children properly distanced. However, you can still play in the woods, fields, and backyards in the area without problem - as long as your family practices proper social distancing around other people.

To make nature play easy and accessible, bring loose, moveable natural parts into a place in your yard where your child can dig and make their mark. Logs, rocks, sticks, shells, scraps of lumber, old kitchen utensils and pots, sand, mud, and a bucket as a refillable water source can offer endless free play opportunities for your child. Nature play is free, promotes creative thinking, and can entertain your child for hours on end.

Virtual Story Time:

We want to maintain a connection with your child as much as possible throughout the school year. One way we have decided to do this is by implementing a "Virtual Story Time," meaning that your teacher will post videos of herself reading story books that your child can watch. You will also have access to other early childhood teachers' videos if you would like to access other story books as well. [Click here to access.](#)

Teacher Communication:

You will receive your newsletter on Mondays through SeeSaw. If you would like to send a photo or video of your child engaging in some of the activities presented in the newsletter, your child's teacher would love to see it! Teachers miss school and all of the students too!

Materials you will need:

Play dough ingredients:

- 1 jar alum (in the spice aisle)
- 1 package of Kool-Aid (or a variety of packages, if you would like to try different colors/scents!)
- Flour
- Salt
- Vegetable oil

Dice (pull 1-2 dice out of a game like Yahtzee to use for math activities or purchase dice from the office supply section of the grocery store)

**Also, please start collecting your recyclables, if possible. We will be sending home ideas in the future. Items such as small cracker/cereal/Kleenex boxes, toilet paper and paper towel tubes, a couple of egg cartons, newspaper/junk mail, and ALL of your caps to milk and juice cartons, etc.

Please let us know if there is anything we can do to make this experience better for your family.

Sincerely,

Jen, Caitlyn, Tiffanee, Rachael, Tina, and Michaela

