

MUDDY MATTERS

GIVING CHILDREN FREEDOM TO GET THEIR HANDS DIRTY HELPS THEM CONSTRUCT UNDERSTANDING AND NURTURES AN INNOVATIVE MINDSET.



Drafting the mud kitchen floor plan



Using brick sets and bamboo poles as measuring tools

BY CHILDREN, FOR CHILDREN

Teachers play an important role when it comes to child-initiated or child-directed learning. They provide guidance and support based on their observations, as children curate their own learning. With the teachers' guidance, the K1 class learned to research online for items and utensils that they wanted in their mud kitchen, such as ladles and bowls. The children were the main architects. They drafted the area and floor plan before bringing their design to life with connectors, wooden pallets and crates. They conducted tests on the design and realised they needed to widen the base for better stability, and to lower the height so that it would be suitable for younger children.

“Mud play has increased my child's awareness of his senses and the world around him. It has improved his fine motor skills and helped him to create innovative works with building blocks too.”

MDM TAN YUN YING, mother of Lau Jie Kai, 6



Pretend cooking in the mud kitchen

Once the mud kitchen was set up, children had the autonomy to arrange the space and materials. To ensure hygiene and safety, the centre purchased clean sand and clay for children to make the mud. Children experimented with different ratios of sand, clay and water, and chose what they wanted to create. Some decided to make mud castles, while others opted for mud desserts.

LEARNING THROUGH COLLABORATION

Building a mud kitchen from scratch facilitates reasoning, decision-making, problem-solving, critical thinking and language skills. These skills are further enhanced as the children work collaboratively with their peers. “It's important to empower children to be active participants in their learning and create opportunities for peer interactions,” Ms Shafiqah advises. “Let children plan and envision their project. Ask open-ended questions so that you have a glimpse into their thinking and can understand their thought processes and support their intentions.”

Mud play activities are now part of the preschool curriculum and integrate different learning domains, she adds. “For example, when children role-play buying ingredients to make mud cookies, they practise communication and listening skills. They pick up numeracy skills when they follow the instructions in the recipe and count the ingredients needed.” ●



Mixing sand, clay and water to make mud

When learning about how plants grow and the insects that live at the centre's outdoor space, K1 children at PCF Sparkletots @ Radin Mas became interested in soil and water, and their properties. Observing this, the educators took their interest further and encouraged them to plan, design and build a mud kitchen suitable for all children at the centre.

This project won the preschool the 2022 Early Childhood Innovation Merit Award. “Mud is a versatile and tactile material that allows children to explore freely and experiment with it in new ways, thus fostering creativity,” says teacher Ms Shafiqah Adzirah.



DON'T WAIT, INNOVATE! Kudos to all the recipients of the 2022 Early Childhood Innovation Awards! See go.gov.sg/2022-early-childhood-innovation-award-winners for a showcase of the winning projects. Look out for the opening of nominations for the 2023 ECDA Awards at go.gov.sg/ecda-awards.