

March
in the
Outdoor Classroom

'M' for March, for **mud**, and for **messy**. 'D' for **dirt** and for **dinosaurs**. This month, the children discovered a Mud Kitchen welcoming our 'little chefs' and a great selection of dinosaurs to stomp in our very special classroom.

Messy play is wonderful for a child's learning and playing in a Mud Kitchen is marvelous fun! One should ask, "How can a slimy sticky mixture of solid material with a liquid be an educational tool?" Let's find out...Mud play enables children to connect and interact with the natural world around them. Playing with mud stimulates imagination and creativity in children as it fosters open-ended play, communication, collaboration, and physical activity. As the children touch the dirt when dry or wet, they are developing sensory skills which are vital for brain development for building nerve connections which are essential for all kinds of learning. We have observed many 'little chefs' (aka 'scientists') conducting numerous experiments and making discoveries. As a child plays with mud, he/she thinks like a scientist. As they mix the dirt and the water, they change the consistency of the mud by adding more water or create bubbles by whisking the mud, they observe the changes and experience how things work. Playing with mud encourages role play which enhances social and emotional understanding, it promotes gross/fine motor development, and it fosters perseverance. In transporting the water, the dirt, or the spices, the medium spills yet our friends continue their efforts until they accomplish their goals.

Preschoolers like dinosaurs and some children are fascinated by them. One should wonder, "How can dinosaurs be an educational tool?" Let's find out...As a child plays with dinosaurs, he/she will want to learn more about them. In doing so, he/she will acquire an impressive amount of information, and consequently, learn many skills. The interest will motivate them to read more dinosaurs books. A preschooler's attention span is limited but when he/she plays with dinosaurs, the play will last longer and increase his/her attention span. There are subcategories of dinosaurs and in sorting the meat eaters from the plant eaters, children will learn about classification. Our 'paleontologists' can easily identify and name the multi-syllabled creatures and they know many facts about their diet and habitats. As they master all that knowledge, the children will gain confidence in their ability to learn. Best of all, the thinking skills learned through a child's play will never go extinct.









