



VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY
Vanderbilt Child and Family Center

Building an Emergent Curriculum with Toddlers

“introducing dirt and water with kitchen materials in the outdoor playground”



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Whole Child approaches are practices that integrate to support the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development of children.

Emergent Curriculum is a teaching philosophy that centers the child's interests to frame individual and whole group learning activities that are flexible, adaptable, and promote inquiry.





Teachers observed the children's interest in cooking including in the classroom's dramatic play area. A mud kitchen was resourced on the playground where the children readily mixed, transferred, poured, stirred and explored with their hands.



Fine motor skills include not just grasping, pinching, and squeezing, but also pressing.

How Playing Outdoors Empowers the Child

- Appropriate risk-taking
- Communication and collaboration
- Decreased anxiety
- Enriched perceptual ability
- Heightened focus
- Planning and assessing
- Persistence and resilience
- Self-esteem and self-image
- Strength, agility, and coordination

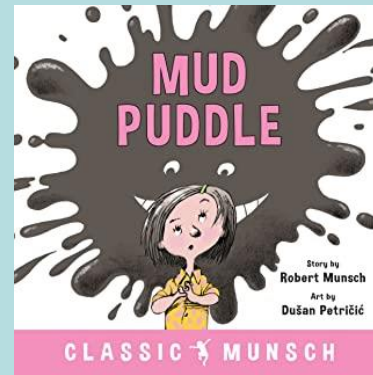
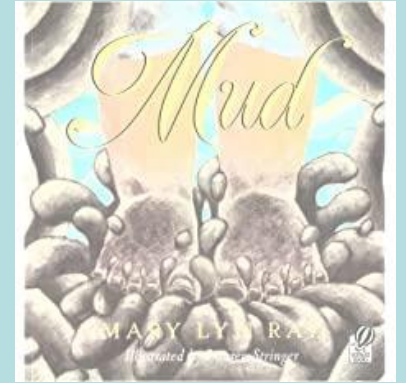
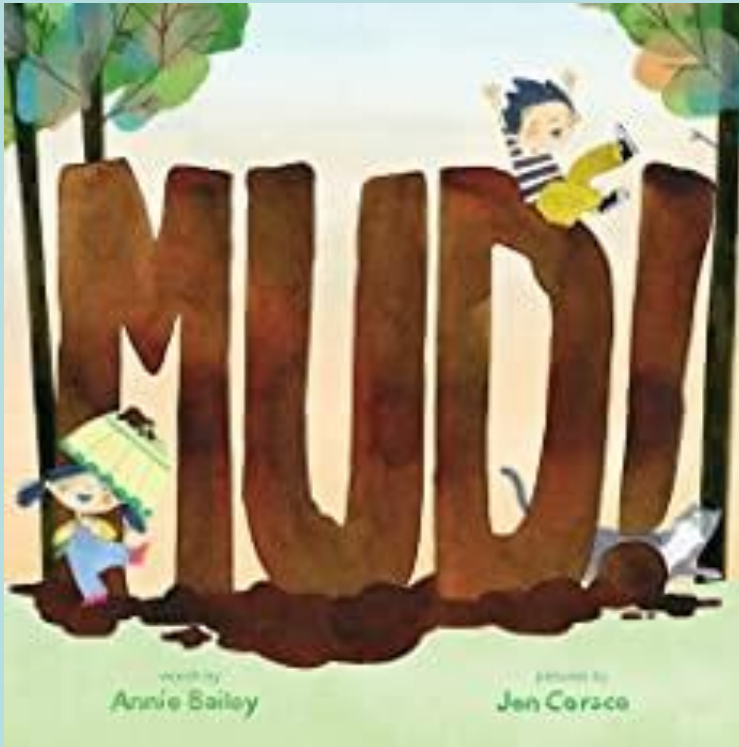




Going barefoot stimulates thousands of nerve endings in the feet and activates the vestibular and proprioceptive systems in children's brains. This helps children orient their bodies in space and develop skills like balance and coordination.



The American Academy of Pediatrics strongly emphasizes the importance of play for children and provides a useful definition of something that seems intuitive but difficult to describe: “Play often creates an imaginative private reality, contains elements of makebelieve, and is nonliteral. ‘Play is engaging and social, helping children learn new skills as well as how to get along with others and manage their own desires and emotions. Play can take place in any location, and outdoor play is a particularly important context.” (Bravender, 2020)



Teachers may provide affirming literature in the classroom library and for indoor or outside storytimes.

Resources



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