CLAY FOR PRESCHOOLERS

HOW AND WHY

by Marvin Bartel, Ed.D. in Art Education

Most children, when given a piece of ordinary soft pottery clay, are instinctively motivated to explore its inviting soft and responsive sensory qualities. They poke it, squeeze it, hit it, pick it up and pound it down, and so on. Each time they act on the clay, the clay adjusts and responds. These changes mean very little to us as adults, but for a child these changes in the clay are magical. The child is naturally fascinated, motivated, and empowered to keep experimenting.

Clay stimulates the child's curiosity. Intelligence, imagination, and creativity are engaged and fostered. Many new neurons and synapses in the brain are being generated when a child is engaged by the immediate tactile and visual feedback provided by clay.

Manipulating a piece of clay develops the child's large and small muscles. Clay play fosters eye-hand coordination. Soft clay is receptive and responsive to all kinds of emotional expression.

Pre-K: Clay Turkeys

Process Art

We used our clay to explore shapes (round, ball, triangles), textures (hard, smooth, dry, sticky, hard), and explore with our imaginations what turkeys can look like from our own perspectives. We counted and named colors of feathers, explored texture of feathers, used texture tools as part of our art creations, and enjoyed making them talk as we worked…*Gobble, Gobble!*