



LCNCK Parents As Teachers

Cloud, Republic & Washington Counties
Serving USD #108, 109, 224, 333 & 426

A Fun, Free, Early-Learning Program for soon-to-be parents
and parents with children up to three years of age.

February 2019

Exploring the benefits of sensory play

<https://www.goodstart.org.au/news-and-advice/october-2016/exploring-the-benefits-of-sensory-play>

From birth to early childhood, children use their five senses to explore and try to make sense of the world around them.

It's an important part of early childhood development, and providing opportunities for children to actively use their senses as they explore their world through 'sensory play' is crucial to brain development.

Learning through sensory exploration comes naturally to babies and young children, which makes sense when you consider that the skills they'll come to rely on to build an understanding of objects, spaces, people and interactions are yet to be fully developed.



As adults, our senses provide us with vital information that we use to inform decision making thousands of times a day. We may take this ability for granted and barely notice it, but it's for this reason that helping children to learn about their own senses is so important.

So, what is sensory play?

Picking things up and feeling their texture is what people often associate with sensory play, but it's about much more than touch.

Sensory play includes any activity that stimulates a young child's senses of touch, smell, taste, sight and hearing, as well as anything which engages movement and balance.

Sensory play is only really limited by your own imagination, with of course some common sense being used around the materials and types of play appropriate for your child's age and ability.

Some examples to get you started are:

- **Sensory play for babies** – watching bubbles float and feeling them land on their skin, or scrunching colored paper to hear the noise, feel the contours and see the shapes change
- **Sensory play for toddlers** – observing light and shadow created by torch light on objects of different shapes or sizes, or watching the colors mix and the patterns form by finger painting or sponge painting (with child-safe paint)
- **Sensory play for pre-school aged children** – creating shapes and playing with kinetic sand, or playing with musical instruments and listening to the tone and pitch as they strike or blow through instruments softly or forcefully

Probably the simplest way to help children engage their senses is by playing outside with nature, full of colors, movement, textures, sounds and smells.

The benefits of sensory play

With sensory play, there's always much more going on than meets the eye.

Sensory activities, in addition to being fun and interesting for babies and young children, encourage children to explore and investigate. Furthermore, these activities support children to use the 'scientific method' of observing, forming a hypothesis, experimenting and making conclusions.

Sensory activities also allow children to refine their thresholds for different sensory information, helping their brain to create stronger connections to sensory information and learn which are useful and which can be filtered out.

For example, a child may find it difficult to play with other children when there is too much going on in their environment with conflicting noises or sights.

Through sensory play, the child can learn to block out the noise which is not important and focus on the play which is occurring with their peer.

Another example is a child who is particularly fussy with eating foods with a wet texture such as spaghetti.

The use of sensory play can assist the child with touching, smelling and playing with the texture in an environment with little expectation. As the child develops trust and understanding of this texture it helps build positive pathways in the brain to say it is safe to engage with this food.

Other reasons sensory play is beneficial for children include:

- It helps to build nerve connections in the brain
- It encourages the development of motor skills
- It supports language development
- It encourages 'scientific thinking' and problem solving
- It can involve **mindful activities** which are beneficial for all children

The desire to engage with sensory play comes naturally for children and should be encouraged and supported both at home and in early learning environments.

LCNCK Parents As Teachers
219 W. 7th Street
Concordia, KS 66901

Group Connection Opportunities:
Sensory Activities & Brain Development
We will explore your baby's/toddler's senses and discuss the connections to brain development.

Monday, February 25th

10 a.m. at the East Elementary School Gym, 101 W. College St., Washington

Monday, February 25th

4 p.m. at the PAT playroom, 1001 E. 7th Street (Old Middle School), Concordia
Park in the circle drive and come in the main doors.

Monday, February 25th

6 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church playroom, 2013 M St., Belleville

Come make some memories with your little one(s)! Kindly RSVP to
parentsasteachers@usd333.com or call/text 785-243-0959.