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BEEP @ Clark Rd. Preschool Teacher
BEF Idea Lab Proposal: Fall 2022

The purpose of this proposal is to request funds for a mud kitchen and related accessories to begin developing an “outdoor classroom” for BEEP at Clark Rd. A mud kitchen is an outdoor structure where children can use kitchen tools to pretend to prepare and cook with any variation of mud, sand, water, leaves, stones, and other natural materials. Mud kitchens can include a working sink by means of a hand pump for added science learning and physical development.



My hope is that the mud kitchen will be just one component of an ongoing project to create an “outdoor classroom” to increase outdoor nature-based learning for BEEP students. A rich body of research supports the understanding that outdoor nature-based learning positively supports young children’s learning and development. Benefits of contact with nature for children include positive outcomes in the areas of physical health, cognitive functioning and self-control, psychological well-being, imaginative play, and a sense of connection with and greater understanding of other species and the natural world. (Chawla, L., (2015). *Benefits of nature contact for children. Journal of Planning Literature*, 30(4), 433-452.)

Adding a mud kitchen to the outdoor space at BEEP at Clark will address all domains of child development:

Physical

- When working at the mud kitchen, children will develop their fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination through mixing, measuring, scooping, pouring, and using utensils.
- Children will develop their gross motor skills through bending, squatting, reaching, and carrying and balancing mud, sand, water, pots and pans, plates and bowls, and other objects.
- Mud kitchens encourage sensory-motor play that stimulates and organizes children’s proprioceptive and tactile sensory systems.
- A study of 2- to 5-year-olds showed that children who play outdoors sleep better at night. This may be due to the physical activity, stress reduction, and exposure to natural light that come with playing outdoors. (Coyle, K.J. 2011. *Green Time for Sleep Time:*

Three Ways Nature and Outdoor Time Improve Your Child's Sleep: A Guide for Parents and Caregivers. Reston, VA: National Wildlife Federation.)

-Studies show that exposure to microbes in dirt may be protective against asthma and allergies. (Stein MM, Hrusch CL, Gozdz J, Igartua C, Pivniouk V, Murray SE, Ledford JG, Marques Dos Santos M, Anderson RL, Metwali N, et al. 2016. *Innate immunity and asthma risk in amish and hutterite farm children. New England Journal of Medicine. 375(5):411–421.*)

Cognitive

- Mud kitchen play stimulates multiple senses simultaneously.
- Mud kitchen play promotes creativity and the executive function skills of planning, prioritizing, problem solving and negotiating.
- A mud kitchen provides ample opportunities for developing the mathematical skills of measuring, weighing, counting, filling, sorting, and spatial knowledge.
- Children will use the scientific skills of observing, comparing, classifying, communicating, inferring, and predicting while engaging with mud and various natural materials.
- Unstructured play outdoors allows children to self-direct their play, which can increase attention and engagement.

Social-Emotional

- Children will increase their social skills through turn-taking, communicating, and cooperating with one another.
- When children take on a role during sociodramatic play, such as that of a caregiver or restaurant worker, they are learning to develop empathy for the feelings and experiences of others.
- Children can build relationships and be introduced to different cultures and values through culturally relevant play, eg. playing “house” and “cooking” family recipes.
- A mud kitchen can disrupt gender norms by combining messy play with domestic play.

Linguistic

- Mud kitchens create a language-rich environment that provide the opportunity to use vocabulary related to nature, cooking, and kitchen utensils.
- The outdoor space tends to be a low-pressure environment where children have confidence to express themselves around their peers. The excitement of a mud kitchen will foster this expressive language development.

Requested Funds

Wooden outdoor mud kitchen: \$790

https://www.etsy.com/listing/1011758678/handmade-wooden-outdoor-play-kitchen?click_key=23923d735d50d679e699449050fa0601d2040cce%3A1011758678&click_sum=dc6d9b3d&ref=shop_home_recs_5&frs=1&crt=1

Hand water pump for mud kitchen: \$90

https://www.etsy.com/listing/975708356/hand-water-pump-mud-kitchen-add-on?click_key=b3268b324dada6e006f5fa960438635e54323c33%3A975708356&click_sum=12a11040&ref=shop_home_recs_3&frs=1&crt=1

Mud kitchen food sensory stones- vegetables: \$29.50

<https://www.etsy.com/listing/1191241118/mud-kitchen-food-sensory-stones-pretend?ref=cart>

Mud kitchen food sensory stones- breads of the world: \$29.50

<https://www.etsy.com/listing/1191241118/mud-kitchen-food-sensory-stones-pretend?ref=cart>

Subtotal: \$939.00

Tax: \$58.69

Total: \$997.69