

IN THEIR OWN HANDS



THROUGH CLAY MODELLING, NTUC FIRST CAMPUS' MY FIRST SKOOL AT BLOCK 347 WOODLANDS HELPS CHILDREN MASTER EVERYDAY TASKS AND GROW IN CONFIDENCE.

Playing with clay provides hours of fun. But how does it improve children's self-help skills such as feeding and dressing themselves? The answer lies in the malleability of the medium. Clay is soft and easy to manipulate — it can be kneaded, pinched and squeezed into any shape by little fingers, and at the same time develop and build dexterity in the smaller muscles in the hands and fingers.

The development of fine motor skills is one of the benefits of playing with clay, observes Ms Natra Binte Mohd Mokhtar, English Lead Teacher, My First Skool at Block 347 Woodlands.

“My children are happy and excited to play with clay. Pinching, patting, kneading and rolling the clay is a process which helps coordinate the interaction between hands, eyes and the brain. Through this activity, I find that my children have also become more confident in their everyday tasks.”

MR REN CHAO, father of Ren Chen Hao, 6, and Ren Chen Yu, 4

MOULDING CONFIDENCE

“Kneading and moulding clay strengthens children's muscles and coordination so that they gain confidence to perform tasks such as using a spoon, brushing their teeth or buttoning their clothes,” says Ms Natra. “When children are able to do a task independently, they feel a sense of accomplishment and agency.”

This gives them a confidence boost which motivates them to try

HELP KIDS HELP THEMSELVES

To develop children's fine motor skills and independence at home, parents can follow these tips.

- **Ask your child to do simple tasks or chores** such as spreading jam on bread and setting the table for meals.
- **Use household items to create play activities** such as scooping and transferring objects (e.g. beads) with a spoon.
- **Let your child work at his own pace.** If he takes longer to complete a task, give him the time and space he needs. Be patient.



By age 3, children are able to roll, squeeze, pinch and press on clay



A K1 child buttoning up his uniform independently



Simple chores such as cleaning the table strengthen fine motor skills



Children getting ready for nap time by putting on mattress covers on their own



Ms Natra's clay modelling project is an ECDA-funded Innovation Grant Project. The Innovation Grant aims to improve the quality of preschool programmes and teaching and learning practices, and foster a culture of innovation. For details, visit www.ecda.gov.sg/Educators/Pages/ECDA-Innovation-Projects-Grant.aspx.