



ROCKING A RAINY DAY

8 EASY IDEAS WHEN IT'S MUDDY OUT THERE!

by Michele Ranard, M.Ed.

*"The best thing one can do when it's raining is to let it rain."
- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

It's hard to beat splashing in mud puddles, but there are plenty of simple, un-plugged pleasures to enjoy with children when the weather is dreary. In fact, see the precipitation an opportunity to re-discover old school pleasures.

Whether you decide to make it a lazy PJ day with popcorn and a movie, a productive one organizing the playroom, or any of the following, don't forget to squeeze in a little happy dance in the rain.

BAKE UP A STORM IN THE STORM. Allow a cloudy day to inspire their inner pastry chef to make magic in the kitchen. Can't decide on gooey cookies or fancy cupcakes? Make both. You can always freeze extras to throw in school lunches. If they can read, let the kids recite the recipe to you and allow them to do the measuring for extra math practice. You don't need fancy pans or equipment to whip up culinary masterpieces—a wooden spoon and a mixing bowl suffices.

THINK INDOOR PICNIC. Make sandwiches, spread celery sticks with peanut butter, and dream up a yummy dessert. Lay down a quilt on the family room floor, and play a board game or two. Since indoor Frisbee is a bloody sport, think about balloon volleyball instead. If your kids have not volleyed with balloons in the past, you may be surprised at how long this dreamily quiet activity will keep them engaged. **BONUS:** no ants, itchy grass, or botulistic mayonnaise to worry about on this picnic.

RAIN DANCE PARTY. Forget inside voices! Pump up the volume. Kids never seem to tire of the freeze dance game. You control the tunes, and they dance until you silence them at which time they freeze and hold their position until the music resumes.

OUTDOOR PHOTO SHOOT. There's no such thing as too many photos of the kids, and overcast skies are perfect for taking good shots. If there's no lightning and it won't damage your camera, consider capturing puddle splishsplashing Kodak moments. The cuteness factor of kids in rubber boots? Hard to beat.

VIDEOTAPED LOVE LETTERS. Film the kids dancing or speaking into the camera to loved ones far away. Make it more fun by helping them dress up in creative costumes. Braid or spike their hair, and maybe pull out the face paints. Ask them to make funny faces, and make sure to get some screen time yourself.

HEAD TO A GREENHOUSE. Get your tropical on and learn about plants and flowers together. Bring sketchpads to make it an artsy field trip as well.

FASHION SHOW. First, they will need to select their wardrobe. Encourage them to think as imaginative and crazy as possible (offer them sports jerseys, pantyhose, purses, pumps, and hats). Tape off a catwalk with masking tape and play high energy techno music before they strut their stuff for the paparazzi—you!

BUILD MEMORIES AND A SPECIAL FORT. There is nothing quite like snuggling into a tent for dreaming, playing Legos, reading books, or taking a snooze. With sheets, blankets, and clothespins (or duct tape!) help them construct the coziest of forts to escape to.

They will never forget such sunny activities on a dark day!