



Red paint in the hair? Blue paint on the jeans? Sand in the shoes? Peanut butter on the favorite shirt? White socks that look brown? Sleeves a little bit damp?

Your Child probably . . .

- worked with a friend
- solved a problem
- created a masterpiece
- negotiated a difference
- learned a new skill
- had a great time
- developed new language

Your Child probably didn't . . .

- feel lonely
- become bored
- do repetitive tasks that are too babyish
- do worksheet tasks that are too easy
- do sit-down work that is discouraging

You probably . . .

- paid good money for those clothes
- will have trouble getting the red paint out
- are concerned that the caregiver isn't paying enough attention to your child

The Caregiver probably . . .

- was aware of your child's needs and interests
- spent time planning a challenging activity for the children
- encouraged the children to try new things
- put smocks on the children
- was worried that you might be concerned

Try to remember your favorite activity when you were four years old. Was it outdoor play with water, mud, dress-up clothes? Young children really learn when they are actively involved in play, not when someone is talking to them. There is a difference between "messy" and "lack of care."

The Caregiver made sure your child was fed, warm, took a nap, washed hands after toileting and before eating – and planned messy, fun things to do, because that's how young children learn!

Send your child in clothes that can get dirty! Keep extra old clothes at the play site for times when the child gets wet or really messy. If you need to take the child out, bring the dress-up clothes and allow time to change. Keep calm. Remember, in a few years, teenagers will use shampoo, mirrors and all the towels! But children need time to be kids. If you have concerns, talk to your child's caregiver about active play.