

# FINE MOTOR ACTIVITIES

The use of vertical surfaces in the classroom is very important for hand development. Working on a vertical surface places the wrist in an extended position that promotes hand stability, opposition of the fingers, and balanced use of the muscles of the hand. Many activities can be modified and placed on an easel or adapted for the blackboard. **Routine** use the vertical surface has been found to be helpful in the development of children's functional hand use.

## Activities for the Vertical Surface:

- Making pictures of stickers.
- Colorforms or Unisets.
- Feltboards or flannel boards.
- Chalkboards. Use large diameter sidewalk or regular chalk broken into 1½ - 2 inch pieces for children to grasp with the tips of the fingers. Children can do blackboard circles simultaneously with both hands or with one hand one after the other, overlapping them and progressively getting smaller.
- Paintbrush dipped in water for use on the chalkboard. A child can draw designs or "magically" erase a design drawn in chalk.
- Geoboards (rubber bands and designs on a grid of nails).
- Puzzles with thick pieces having small handles.
- Magna-Doodle.
- Painting or drawing.
- Ink-stamping activities.
- Pegboards.
- Magnet letters and shapes on a magnetic board.
- Have the children "sign in" every morning on a piece of paper hung on a vertical surface such as a wall or attached to an easel.

## Weight Bearing Activities:

Weight bearing activities can also help strengthen wrist in the extended position. Here are some suggestions:

- Crawling games. A child can crawl while holding an object. This will force them to bear weight on the small finger side of the hand which is the power side of the hand.
- Wheelbarrow walk.
- Pushing on the wall. Pretend that the children are trying to "pushdown" the wall.
- Pushing and carrying heavy objects.
- Writing or coloring while lying on the floor or on all fours on the floor.
- Coloring with sidewalk chalk on an outdoor surface.
- Power coloring. Make copies of objects or shapes on a black background. The children then color the picture (while not having to worry about staying within the lines) by standing and weight bearing into the non-dominant hand. Using a crayon, the child will try to color the shape as darkly as they can.

## Activities for Hand Muscle Development:

- Playdough. Have children roll and mold into balls using the tips of the fingers. Also the children can form balls in the palm of the hand to help form the palmer arches of the hand. Use coins or small plastic items such as beads to hide in the playdough. The children then can search for the hidden items.
- Tearing newspaper or construction paper. Encourage the children to use the fingertips of the thumb, index and middle fingers. Creatures can be made by decorating two pictures with torn paper then stapled together and stuffed with crumpled pieces of newspaper for three-dimensional creatures.

### **To Improve Bilateral Hand Use and Hand Dexterity/Strength:**

Select one or more, three to four times per week.

- Lacing.
- Stringing beads.
- Jacob's ladder and other string games.
- Tongs and tweezers.
- Scrunching mylar paper, tissue paper or newspaper into a ball with one hand.
- Creating pictures with glue pens (make sure grip is correct) or push pins.
- Thumb activated toys.
- Hiding and finding coins in playdough (use pincher grip).
- Building with construction toys.

### **Writing Warm-up:**

- On a wet blackboard, parent writes letter with chalk.
  - Child uses one inch piece of wet sponge to "erase" along lines of letter.
  - Child runs a finger along lines of remaining "invisible" letter.
  - Child uses a small stub\* of chalk to recreate letter (where original letter was written).
- \* Purpose of using stub of chalk is that it forces child to use pincher grip, strengthening it.