

Arm and Hand Strength

The small muscles of the hand, as well as the larger muscles in the forearm, are used together when performing fine motor tasks. The muscles of the forearm provide strength and stability, while the smaller intrinsic muscles of our hands allow for more skilled and isolated movement. Prior to writing, children must have well developed arches in the palms of their hands. They must also be able to perform slight sustained wrist extension for writing on horizontal surface. With mature writing and coloring tasks, the thumb, index finger, and middle finger should act as the “skill” fingers by providing movement. The ring and pinky fingers should act as stabilizers. One possible indicator of hand weakness is if a child is unable to maintain an open index finger-thumb web space (an “O”) during fine motor tasks, particularly when using a writing utensil.



Classroom Activities:

- Use large tweezers to pick up small marshmallows or pom poms.
- Squeeze a stress ball, play dough or putty.
- Use eye droppers to pick up colored water and make designs on coffee filters.
- Use a spray bottle to water plants or to “melt monsters” drawn on the white board or chalk board. Fill the spray bottles with food coloring and make designs in the snow.
- Play on the playground (monkey bars and climbing walls).
- Crumple newspaper in one hand and shoot baskets into the garbage.
- Use pop-beads or pull tubes for warm up activities.
- Squeeze different sized clothespins and place on edge of a container.
- Use a single hole punch to make confetti.
- Play games that incorporate tug-of-war, wheelbarrow walking, or animal walking games to strengthen the arches of the hand.