Activity Guide: April

Items in green are included in your PBL kit from CMNH

Ages 0-24 months:

- **Make & Play: Ball drop!**
  - **Make a very simple ball drop game using a cardboard box.**
    - Use a box cutter to cut circles in the top of the box about the size of the plastic balls *(bonus if the hole is a tiny bit smaller so the ball can sit on top of it, but still easily be pushed in)*
    - Cut a large tab on the side of the box that can easily be open & shut to find the balls inside the box.
  - Place the balls on top of the box. Show babies how to push them in and then open the tab to find the balls inside! Or leave the tab open so they can see them fall through. Encourage them to place and push the balls themselves.
- This activity is chalk full of fun skills for babies! They are experimenting with sequencing *(put the ball on top of the box, push the ball, get the ball from the box, put it back on top!)*, object permanence *(The ball is there, I pushed it, where did it go? There it is!)*, and some fine & gross motor skills *(picking up and placing the ball, and hitting it to make it go through the hole!)*

Ronan, son of Museum staffer Colie, is 13 months old.

"It was really fun to see him figuring out where the balls went by peeking into the box afterward. It was a huge hit—he figured out how it worked without any direction from me, which was so neat to see!"

Ages 2-3 years:

- **Guided play: Sink or Float!**
    - Set up a water station using the metal bowls. Put some water in each of the bowls.
    - Assemble some items from the classroom or the PBL kits (Duplos, clothespins, plastic animals, etc) If it's a nice day, take this activity outside and gather some materials from nature, too!
    - Invite children to experiment with the items. Have them all select something from the classroom or outside that they think will SINK. Then something they think will FLOAT. *Why do you think that item will sink/float? What is similar about all the items that sink? The ones that float?*
        - *This activity is a great opportunity to explore asking open ended questions during play. Check out this video from CMNH for some ideas and tips for asking this type of question. A great staff training opportunity!*

- For a fun book about sinking and floating, check out Pamela Allen's classic Who Sank the Boat?
    - While this isn't a book that is designed to help children understand the science behind sinking and floating (we're not really trying to do that at age 2-3 anyway!) it does illustrate some of the fun concepts they will have been experimenting with during this activity.

Jules, daughter of Museum staffer Meredith, is 2.5 years old

"She really loved this one and explored it for quite awhile. She discovered that the Duplos float at first, but gradually sink, which was exciting! She also started using the clothespin clip as a tool to pick up items and put them in the water-a great fine motor extension activity!"

Ages 4-5 years:

- **Guided play: Exploring your sense of touch!**
    - Create a sensory bin with whatever material you have *(shredded paper, rice, sand, water etc)* Hide a bunch of the small counters in the sensory bin.
    - Invite children to work in pairs.
        - One child can close their eyes and reach into the sensory bin to find a counter. Then use their sense of touch to try and figure out what it is!
        - If they aren't sure what it is, they can ask their partner for some hints:
            - "It's an animal that lives on a farm"
            - "It's a machine that goes under water"
        - Once one partner has found a few, another partner can try!
    - This activity will work on some critical thinking skills for both the partner that is searching for an item and the partner who is helping with hints!
    - A great book to read when exploring this activity is Seven Blind Mice by Ed Young.
        - *In this story, the blind mice discover an elephant nearby-each mouse feels a part of the elephant and thinks it is something different (the tail is a rope, the leg is a pillar), but one clever mouse investigates the whole elephant using her sense of touch and discovers what it truly is!*

- Try leaving this activity out and see what kind of play happens. Will they do this activity again on their own? Put out the sensory bin tools as well!

(An example set-up using Kinetic Sand as the sensory bin material)