



The Ministry of Play Dough

Writer: Joanne Moran

As a teacher of preschoolers, I know the value of using play dough as a manipulative. As I observe boys and girls use play dough in learning centers, I notice their curiosity when they see play dough in different colors or smell the scents. Over the years, I have shared the recipe with parents and grandparents. I don't remember when I realized that play dough is more than something I use in teaching. What started with giving a bag of play dough to a child during a home visit several years ago has become something I do for a variety of reasons.

When preparing for a first visit to a child's home, I make a lapboard by covering a piece of cardboard with clear contact paper. Before covering the board, I make a personalized Bible verse strip to attach to the board to say something like "Kelby is wonderfully made." I then place the play dough in a zip-lock bag with a label such as "Play Dough for Kelby." After the visit I leave the play dough with Kelby, knowing he can enjoy using it at home as much as he enjoyed it in our room at church.

Other Times to Use Play Dough

- **New Sibling.** When Jackson's mother had a baby and I was going to visit with a gift for the new baby, I also wanted to visit with Jackson. I made play dough to share with Jackson and take something for him. It was time to make a play dough visit to Jackson's home.
- **Hospital.** Ashlyn had only visited a few times, but I had been praying for her family to come to our church. When I learned that Ashlyn was in the hospital, I visited her – with a bag of play dough. The play dough was an activity she could enjoy during her time in the hospital.
- **Death in the Family.** I visited Lauren after learning about the death of her uncle. I knew there would be a lot of people at her grandparents' home where she lived. I wanted to spend time with Lauren. I took a bag of play dough so Lauren would have a quiet activity to do during this sad time for her family.
- **Child of Staff Member.** Park's dad is on our church staff. I thought about the importance of including a staff member's child in our ministry plans. He always enjoyed play dough in our room, but one morning he asked if Mr. Moran – the official play dough maker – knew how to make blue play dough. He knew that Mr. Moran is the play dough make for our room, and I knew that Mr. Moran would be making blue play dough that week.
- **Vacation.** Chase's family was planning a vacation. When I made a visit to Chase's home, I gave a plastic tray to Chase with a bag of play dough. His mother said that he could carry the play dough on the airplane and enjoy it as they traveled.
- **Visitation.** I have included preschoolers in the ministry of play dough. I made arrangements to take Kate with me to visit a girl who would be coming to our room. I showed Kate a bag of play dough and explained to her that we would give it to Kenady to show her something we have in our room. Kate assured me she could tell her new friend about play dough.

