

Have children wear their swimsuits and long acting waterproof sunscreen to school (along with socks and shoes) and just bring their clothes and undies with them so that they only have to change clothes once on water play or swim days.

Sprinklers and Water Hoses – Play Limbo under a stream of water, run through a sprinkler, use large paintbrushes and water to “paint” playground equipment or the brick wall of the Center, have water relays where children carry cups of from a starting line to cooperatively fill a container at the other end of the play area, and sponge toss or water ball games are a big hit with children and adults on a hot summer day. Hint: Water relays are even more fun when you poke holes in the bottom of the carrying containers! You can also have participants carry them on top of their heads!

Rent an inflatable water slide for the day and let each class have an hour or so to play throughout the day. Start with the youngest children and end with the oldest.

Mixing Experiments – Place small bowls of materials such as flour, sugar, salt, baking soda, paint, sand and oil in your empty water play table. You don’t have to freak out, because you control the amount of each – just a few teaspoons are enough. In turn allow 3 to 4 children at a time to add plastic teaspoons of these materials to their own small bowls of water. Encourage talk about what they think will happen, as well as what did happen, to build critical thinking skills and vocabulary.

Volume – Collect empty jars, milk jugs and other plastic containers in various sizes. Give each child in the group a small paper cup. Choose one of the containers to fill with water. Ask the children to “predict” (guess) how many of their cups it will take to fill it and then call the children in turn to pour their cup of water into the container counting aloud how many cups it takes as you do. Remember to use the words “more, less, bigger, smaller” etc. Ask questions like, “Was our prediction close or way off?” Enhance the activity by adding a container that is smaller than their cups of water, too.

Duck, Duck, Squirt! – Thoroughly rinse an empty dishwashing detergent bottle and fill it half full of clear water. Seat the children in a circle as for “Duck, Duck, Goose!” Tell the children they are going to get wet! Walk around the circle touching each child’s head or shoulder saying, “Duck, duck, duck, duck,…” etc. as though playing the Goose game but instead of saying, “Goose!”, squirt a child on top of his head with the water in the bottle! (Warn children not to squirt each other directly in the face or ear.) As in the Goose game, that player chases you around the circle trying to tag you before you get back to his vacated seat in the circle. If he does, you are in the mushpot (middle). If he doesn’t, you remain in his place in the circle. Either way, he is the new “It” and the game starts over. You can also use a cup of water instead and play “Duck, Duck, Splash!”

Bean Game – Supplies: dry pinto beans, 2 or 3 players Decide on a number between one and ten to start with. You can go higher later if the children are school-age. For example: 5. One player counts out 5 beans. Place them in your hand and hide both hands behind your back. Transfer some of the beans into your other hand. Bring your hands to the front again and show the player how many beans are still in the original hand. The player must tell you how many beans are now in the closed hand. For example: 5 beans. Place 3 in the other hand and show that hand to the player. How many are in the closed hand? Two! Repeat using the same original number of beans but with a different combination of the number of beans in each hand. As the children learn the game, they can split into pairs and play it by themselves. Even very young children can play this game if the number of beans is 1, 2 or 3. And remember that zero is an important number to take away, too.

Vacation Station – Set up a display in your classroom such as a bulletin board, a small table or even a large basket and ask families to place an item that is reminiscent of their vacation or “staycation” in a plastic baggie and include a short note telling what it is and where it is from. Examples: sand, small shells, a rock from another city or state, a postcard, a photo. Children will have fun looking through these and talking about them.