

January 30, 2021

Blakely Bundy, Co-Director
Defending the Early Years
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Dear Ms. Bundy,

Thank you so much for awarding us the DEY Mini Grant this past year. Receiving the award served as encouragement and inspiration to spearhead a very ambitious project and fundraising effort which we are still in the process of seeing through to fruition. In the months since we received the grant, we were able to raise over \$4,000 in order to offer the opportunity described in our application to a much wider audience. Our mission to educate parents on experiential art methodologies for early childhood learners, and empower them to become co-facilitators in their children's learning would not be happening in our network without your generous support.

As you may remember, we envisioned a hands-on, virtual professional development opportunity available to all educators, administrators, and families of our network campuses. Workshop participants are being provided a sample of [plasticine clay](#) and led through an activity focusing on the use of the material to support emotional development and expression. Parents and educators in attendance are provided enough materials to integrate these concepts and approaches into the children's daily routine.

On Sunday, January 24th, we invited a small group of parents, educators, and administrators to a pilot session in order to wet our feet before offering the experience to a larger audience in February. The session was a great success, illustrated by the feedback we received from our participants:

"I had a blast! This experience was amazing! I would really like to do one of these on how to handle autistic kids and being patient...I would definitely join the next session! Thank you!!!" - Bri, parent

"This activity was so much fun, yet relaxing at the same time. I left feeling happy and excited to share with others!" - Analissa, teacher

"I attended the Art Methodologies training and it was an eye opening experience. I really appreciated Traci not only taking the time to explain the process, but also allowing us to engage in active learning with real materials. It was really great that the workshop also included brain science and how children construct knowledge. I am no longer in the classroom, but I do support teachers and I will be including some of these strategies and suggestions in my trainings." -Kenneth, HighScope Teacher Trainer and Coach

"After a lot of homework, it's nice to mold the clay into whatever I feel like molding into." - Gaby, student

"Ms. Molloy's workshop was one of the best I've ever experienced! The techniques she introduced to help children (and adults) manage stress were so helpful. I'd love to have her present during a PD at my school, and I will include her techniques in my classroom—especially during mindfulness and restorative circles." -Lynette, parent and teacher

"Working with the clay has been a great way to end our day." - Vanessa, parent and teacher

"Traci was so informative about how the brain works and how these activities help children release stress. Both of my kiddos really enjoyed creating with the clay and using their imagination to mold different things out of it and after doing the activities I could tell that all of our stress levels were down. This will definitely be something that I integrate into our family routines, as well as further school training." - Sarah, School Behavior Specialist



Finally, one of the most rewarding aspects of launching this project has been getting the materials into the hands of the children. While these techniques benefit everyone, each adult in attendance was there to learn how to better support the children we love and care for. We are excited to start promoting the “main event” in February, and hold endless gratitude for DEY and this mini grant that got it all started!

With admiration for all you do for children and the field of early childhood, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Sincerely,
Sarah Stith and Traci Molloy