



from

Providence Children's Museum

Come play, come learn!

Hanna and the Oobleck

By Cathy Saunders, Director of Education

"Let's make oobleck and a spaceship that will land in it," I say to Hanna. "Cool, I love oobleck!" she replies. I start adding cornstarch to water. Hanna tests the mixture. "It flows when I tip the pan, Cathy, but I think it's still too liquid." I add a bit more cornstarch. "The cornstarch is evaporating into the water," she says. I ask her what she means by that. "You know, like water evaporates into the sun." While she doesn't have the exact science of it, she's onto something. The cornstarch is *dissolving* into water, not evaporating. Her observation of evaporation, though, is that water dissolves into the air, much like the cornstarch into water.

When we've added enough cornstarch, the substance pours but feels like a solid if you poke it. Hanna is in heaven. She digs in and scoops up a handful. She squeezes the clump and it quickly changes form. "It's melting! It's all runny like milk that's been mixed with gum." Now the questions start: "What if we mix milk and gum together?" "Will it be thicker if we add more cornstarch?" "What if we heat it?" This, I think, is like the mind of a chef or an engineer – asking questions rapid-fire, inspired by the moment.

We get down to the business of building a spaceship to land on Planet Oobleck. The spaceship has three tiers and a series of escape pods made from cups, foil, toothpicks and foam. Hanna forms a foil scoop to collect a

sample to bring back to Earth for study. When the scoop won't reach the planet's surface, I encourage her to make some design changes. After a few minutes, she produces a new model, tests it and declares it a success. Hanna's constant queries lead us to a discussion about planets, moons and satellites.

I never cease to be amazed at the link between imagination, play, discovery and science. If I tried to explain how a satellite works or how to set up a proper experiment, she would roll her eyes. Instead inspired by her own creations and discoveries, she genuinely wanted to know the connection between the satellite dish on her house and a spaceship.

Every month Providence Children's Museum offers activities that aim to inspire the same level of imagination, creativity and invention. In February, preschoolers explore the dark during a *Scinterrific* program and children create aliens and space vehicles at *Ocho's Art Cart*. Families make their own oobleck and try other challenges with the Society of Women Engineers. And each Wednesday afternoon the new *FETCH!™ Lab* provides creative problem-solving challenges, too.

Whether it's at the Museum or using simple materials at home, discover new ways for you and your child to stretch your imaginations together!



PROVIDENCE

Children's museum

Come play, come learn!



Explore the swirling, whirling ways of water. Ride a bike with a skeleton. Brush some giant teeth and much more. Kids and their families play and learn together at Rhode Island's only hands-on museum for children.

There's something new everyday!

Visit www.childrenmuseum.org for a complete calendar of events.

Admission is \$6.50. Members are always free!

100 South Street,
Providence, RI 02903
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www.childrenmuseum.org

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