

Preschool Themes Newsletter – April 2017

Hello Everyone,

Yah! No doubt a most welcome school holiday break for some of you and hopefully lower numbers and a slower pace for those of you who still have to work. I thought I would get this newsletter out before the schools close as many mails get returned when the schools are closed as the message box gets filled up. I have tried several different art activities at school this past month which I will share with you over the next two newsletters. In this newsletter I am also looking at process art and extending art activities to be more complex.



Process art and Extending creative activities

As you are all well aware I am rather passionate about presenting creative activities to preschool children on a daily basis because they are fun, so much learning takes places while having fun and it's one of the best ways to practice the many skills the children need for success in the formal school situation. Process art may be a new way of thinking about creative activities for some of you and well worth exploring. All it requires is a change of mind set and a few questions about your art activities you are selecting.

<http://fun-a-day.com/process-art-for-kids/> The following information is from this web site

What is process art?

Process art is all about the experience the children have while they're creating. If it has a nice end product, that's great, **but the end product isn't the focus of process art.** If you're unsure, ask yourself the questions below. If the answer to either is "YES!" then it is not a process art activity.

- "Will I be upset if the end result doesn't look a specific way?"
- "Do I have a preconceived notion about what the end result 'should' look like?"

Why is process art important for children?

Children learn through play and open-ended activities. It allows them the chance to explore the world around them, ask questions, and see how things work. Process art fits in with how children learn because it allows them room to be themselves, make their own decisions, and just create! Below is some of the learning that can place via process art activities:

- Fine motor skills
- Gross motor skills and coordination
- Sensory exploration
- Literacy
- Math
- Science
- Language
- Art history
- Creativity and self-expression
- Art techniques
- Risk-taking
- Spatial reasoning



As you can see it's such a useful learning opportunity.

Left is painting with cardboard tubes on glad wrap and right is painting with old credit cards.

Crafts versus process art

It's sometimes assumed (by parents and teachers alike) that young children will always produce cute crafts to bring home. There's nothing wrong with crafts – they can help improve fine motor skills, as well as listening skills, and many children really do enjoy them! Crafts focus more on a specific end result, though, leaving children little or no room to deviate from the plan. At the end of a craft, each child's piece will look almost identical to every other child's piece. Additionally, crafts put more of the preparation and "work" on the teacher's shoulders!

So as a preschool teacher you need to be asking yourself some very important questions when planning an art activity. Parents may need some educating too.

- How much of the activity do I need to prepare or do? – Too much means you need to reassess
- Will they all look the same at the end? – They should all look different otherwise you need to reassess
- Am I using photocopied pictures for art? – Children should be able to be creative on their own. Consider how you can change the activity to allow for this e.g. cut some shapes for the children to use or give them a starting point such as drawing a circle for the face.

I am always looking for ways of keeping the art activities such that there is freedom of creativity, some process art and some technique or something that needs instructions to be followed. Often the younger children are more focussed on enjoying the materials and gaining skills in using and mastering the tools and equipment which is good and age appropriate. Below is an art activity that does this. The children enjoyed painting the paper first using a variety of green paints and white and focussing on getting the whole paper covered. Once we had created an interesting background (process art) the children had to follow the instructions on how to use the cookie cutters to print clean prints. Several of the younger children could not do this and chose to use the cookie cutter to spread the paint. (Process art for them) Again it was not what I had in mind as the end product, but the children enjoyed the process. I asked the children to cover the background paper with the paint in any way they chose but a child chose to make checker board stripes and fill them in. I did not stop her creative process and the end product was very pleasing.

Art activities

Painting and Printing with cookie cutters

You will need:

- Paint – different greens and white (any colours will work)
- Paint in flat containers for printing
- Cookie cutters
- Paint brushes
- White light weight cardboard – paper is too thin to carry all the weight of the paint (Cereal boxes will work well too as the cardboard gets completely covered with paint)



Method

The children paint the cardboard using a variety of greens and white paint completely covering the paper. Using the cookie cutters the children print the shapes of the cookie cutters onto the green background. This can be done while it is still wet with no problem. I chose dark coloured paint for the printing so the colour would show up nicely on the green background. Remind the children to print and not paint with the cookie cutters.



Notes:

- This activity was enjoyed by all the children 3 ½ to 5 years
- Some children smeared the paint with the cookie cutters
- Change the cookie cutters to suit the theme
- Some children wanted to do too many prints. Rather offer them another piece of paper to make a second art work



This 4 year old chose to paint stripes to cover her background paper

She filled in the squares with a different green. She painted really carefully.

The end effect was lovely. This may be a more challenging way of covering the paper with paint for the older children.

Collage and cut and paste – Paper plate faces

I left this activity quite open with not much demonstration or direction and it was interesting to see what the children created. These were done by the 4- 5 year olds.

You will need:

- Large paper plate
- Egg boxes cut into indents or plastic lids
- Coloured paper
- Wool
- Crayons or koki pens
- Glue
- Scissors



Method:

The children selected the collage materials they would like to use to create their paper plate faces. They pasted the face features to the paper plate adding wool for hair. Some children chose to add hats and did some drawing.



Notes:

- I didn't structure this activity much, so the end results are very much the child's choice and end product. (As it should be!)
- Dry flat as the egg box indents fall off
- I added some Cellotape to stick the hair.



Colour washed paper (process art) with cut and paste of own drawings

You will need:

- A4 paper
- Diluted food colouring or school dye – I used blue, purple and green.
- Paint brushes
- Carlton roll or serviettes to mop the paint
- Koki pens or wax crayons
- Scissors
- Glue and glue brushes



Method

Dilute the food colouring and check that the colours are not too overpowering especially one more than the other. Encourage the children to paint the whole page without wetting it too much and allowing the colours to merge to create new colours. Place some Carlton roll or paper serviettes on top of the wet painting to absorb the excess paint. You can skip this step but the paper takes a while to dry and will drip everywhere.



While the paper is drying the children draw pictures and cut them out and paste to the background. Some children chose to draw people which are quite difficult to cut out so I drew a line around the drawing to guide them for the cutting.



Notes:

- The younger children are unable to draw and cut out pictures. Let them draw or scribble directly onto the paper once it's dry
- The coloured paper is lovely to cut into shapes to use for collage or a background for another activity
- Dyes stain clothes and hands. Use aprons and cover work surfaces
- Some children chose to write letters and cut them out and paste them.



Happy Easter to you and your family. I hope you have a restful and blessed break. Drive safely.
Happy teaching

Regards
Karin

