

Preschool Theme Newsletter – August 2013

Hello Everyone,

Here we are at the start of the 3rd term and only 5 months to Christmas. Scary thought! My first granddaughter turned one in July and we share a birthday, so it was a very special time to be able to celebrate with her. We had a ladybug cake! (Made by me with some stress I may add!!) I was also surprised with another very special gift on my birthday. Grandchild no 2 is on the way from my other daughter and will arrive at the end of January so lots to look forward to.



On the teaching side of things I have been spending more time in the preschool and the baby group so this newsletter has some fun ideas and activities I did with the children.

Theme delivery woes



The delivery of the themes seems to be going better so I hope it stays that way. Please choose to have your books couriered rather than posted. Once again if you have not received your books within a reasonable time PLEASE let us know so we can sort it out. rodandkarin@xtra.co.nz.

New theme manual – Sea and the beach

Sorry it's still under construction!

Painting with natural items with the babies (all ages can do this)



We took the babies for a walk in the paddock next to the school. You can just walk around your playground. They collected 'treasures' in their buckets and the teachers picked up some items they could paint with. We found some bark, leaves, flowers, branches and plants which we used to paint a group picture. When you paint with the younger children it is preferable to tape the paper to a table and if you can, use thicker paper. Of course there was lots of hand painting and plenty of children ate the paint too. It's all part of the experience.

Emergent writing

Children begin to write from the time they start to scribble and make marks on paper. As they develop and gain more control over their hand and arm muscles they start to form shapes in their drawings. This is the beginning of writing.

For this reason you should provide many opportunities for all ages of children to draw and paint freely using a variety of tools. Theoretically you will learn that younger children need thicker crayons and brushes and as they get older they should become thinner and smaller.

While I mostly agree with this, at the preschool I am at the teachers provide a variety of materials for all the age groups from time to time and many children are quite successful with using these tools. I am sure many of you have experienced as parents and as teachers that young children love nothing more than to take your pen and 'write' with an 'adult' pen and usually on everything they should not be writing on! They are role playing and feel grown up writing like adults. In the preschool group they always ask for the teachers koki pen to write their own names on their art work and then attempt to annex the pen from you.!!



As a teacher you also need to evaluate what size materials are suitable for the activity you have set out. A good example of this is the coffee filter painting activity I did with the preschoolers (see further). Theoretically they should have had thinner brushes but I needed a fair amount of coloured dye on the brushes for it to be successful.

Provide opportunities to develop fine motor skills (small muscles), gross motor skills (large muscles) and eye – hand coordination.

For children to be ready to and able to write with ease you need to provide many opportunities on a daily basis for children to develop the above skills. I am sure you all have many games and activities which will do this. Of course creative activities are still one of the best opportunities for children to practice these skills in a relaxing and fun way.

In the pictures below the children are twisting pipe cleaners and for the older children we shaped them into the beginning letter of their names. They also used the buttons to thread onto laces and pipecleaners (good idea for the younger children who struggle to use the shoe laces)

Any activity that requires some precision will develop these skills. In some of the pictures below the children have to place counters onto matching spaces.



Forming shapes in their writing



Left: Here is a beautiful example of a 4 year old child's emergent writing. Her name is Zoe and she happily filled the page with 'letters' and was very happy with her writing.

Right: Taylor is 3 years old and writing her name. For more fine motor ideas and activities please visit <http://pinterest.com/kstedall/fine-motor-activities/>



Writing stories for pictures the children draw – emergent literacy

One morning a few of the older 4 year olds were drawing at the drawing table and I joined the activity. I cut out a heart shape of paper (3 pages), folded them in half and stapled them into a book. The children drew a picture on the front cover and we wrote the name of the child on the front of the book. They then drew a picture on each page, told me what to write for them, drew the next picture, etc and continued until the story was complete. Then they 'read' the story to their friends and to themselves.

Some of the children have amazing imaginations and concepts of what a story is and their books made lots of sense and they stayed with a story line, while some of the younger children who had joined the table (they are grouped as 3 ½ to 5 years) either asked for random things to be written or copied the older children. Never the less, they enjoyed the activity and were very pleased with their books.



Reversals and other concerns

This is a very wide topic so I am not going to get too technical here but rather to keep it general.

Should you be concerned if children reverse letters and numbers?

Yes and no. So much depends on the context of how the child is with regard to other areas of perceptual development. Generally speaking in the preschool setting you do not have to be overly worried unless the child is behind in many other areas. Grade R teachers should be a little more concerned.

Should children be allowed to draw or paint with a brush or crayon in each hand?

I cannot find any information that specifically indicates yes or no and we have had some discussion between the teachers at school on this topic. Personally I believe that they should not be encouraged to do this. I think they need to choose a hand and use only one brush or crayon. It is okay for the younger children to switch hands, and sometimes even often, while they establish their dominant hand, but switching hands in older children could be an indication of some perceptual problems. Sometimes the children are just being silly with the paint and crayons too and using one in each hand.



Children who draw or write in mirror writing?

Have you had a child who writes completely backwards? If you looked at the writing in the mirror it would all be correct. I have seen this a few times. Should we be concerned? I think it should be what we call a 'red flag' i.e. something to note and observe if it happens all the time. I have also seen children draw 'upside down' i.e. they draw a person starting at the head and ending with the feet and if you turn the picture around it's a perfect picture. Again something to observe more closely, which brings me to the next topic of observation? It is as important or at times even more important to observe the process rather than only the end product. How the child gets to the end result can tell you a lot about their development. Unfortunately I did not get a photo of this.

When is behaviour a concern?

For any behaviour or area of child development to be a real concern you need to observe the behaviour

- Being repeated several times
- In different contexts
- Over time.

Art activities

Printing with cups and painting with diluted food colouring

I saw this idea on Pinterest but I made some changes. They had used black paint to print the circles but I know that black paint will run into the colours being painted after the printing, and that would make the colours go a murky shade of brown. To solve this I thought I would let the children use the cups and trace circles but tracing around a cup is too difficult for most 4-5 year olds and I was not getting clear circles. Since I don't work in the same group every day as I am a reliever teacher, I needed the activity to be done all on the same day. Ideally I would have preferred the printing to happen on one day and to be dry before they painted in the shapes the next day.

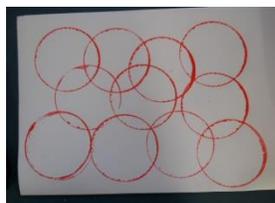
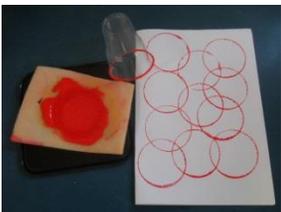
In the end I thought it turned out very nicely and the children enjoyed the activity.



I let them print with red paint using sponge in the printing trays so they did not get too much paint on the cups.

They painted in the shapes carefully using diluted food colouring or school dyes and thin brushes.

Most of the children did really well with the activity, but as usual there are children who insist on doing it their way. They over printed and didn't create neat circles to paint in and some of them just painted over all the circles. And a few of the darlings were stamping so hard with the plastic cups that some of them cracked.



Painting on coffee filters with diluted food colouring (theme: Circle, science – colour mixing)

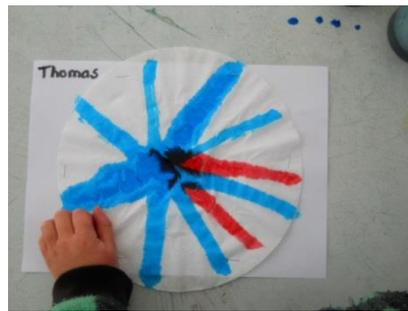


I picked up a packet of coffee filters at the Hospice shop for next to nothing. If you don't have coffee filters carlton roll will have a simlir effect but be rectangle in shape instead of a round.

At first I decided I would staple them to a paper as they are really hard to handle when they are wet. Then a child painted one but it was not very effective. So I tried another activity of folding the circular coffee filter in half and half again several times. I helped them dip the corners into the diluted dye but some came out really wet and it was too teacher intensive. So I scrapped that idea. Then I tried creating the same effect by painting spokes around the circle and adding in more spokes, changing colours as we went along until all the white spaces were filled. And then I had a beautiful end product with lots of colour mixing happening. Each one was

special.

Tips: Stay close to this activity as dye stains and we had some paint pots tip over (use safe paint pot holders) Keep the colours quite dark. Use thicker paint brushes. Stay with the primary colours so that they make pretty new colours when they blend.



Cupcake decorating using a flour, salt and water icing



I bought some special bottles to use when icing cupcakes and they were pretty useless for the kitchen so I took them to school, and the children loved the idea of 'icing' their own cupcake pictures using adult icing tools and icing tips.



If you can't do it with squeezey bottles or plastic packets painting with thick brushes or dribbling the glue paint off the end of a plastic teaspoon will work although it won't be as controlled.

Here are some important tips to make the activity successful.

Make the paste the day before so that all the lumps are dissolved. It doesn't look lumpy but little lumps of flour get stuck in the nozzle and it's very frustrating and very messy when they squeeze really hard to get the lump out and lots of the mixture comes out too! Make enough. You can't stop midway and make more. I used the squeezey bottles but many children did not have good control and they put too much paste on their cupcake and it became a big mess! Supervise all the time. I like the idea above which I found on this web site

<http://www.happinessishomemade.net/2012/02/29/homemade-microwave-puffy-paint/> This idea is great because you can prepare many packets so that more children can participate at one time. Be sure to only cut a very small hole in the corner and also don't over fill the bags. You must use **strong** bags such as the zippy seal ones. And supervise as some of the children will attempt to undo your elastic bands. It does take a day or two to dry and its best dried flat on a paper. Add sparkles and/or glitter.



Recipe (I doubled this recipe for about 15 children)

1 cup flour, 1 cup salt, $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup water, food colouring or paint

Mix all together adding water slowly until it's a thick liquid. Leave to stand preferably overnight stirring occasionally and you may need to add more water. I used quite firm paper and traced the cupcakes. (Template at the end of the newsletter - also great to use with the rhyme five currant buns but change it to five cupcakes)

Puffy paint – from the web site - I have not done this myself but I have seen it done.

We started with one cup of flour and mixed in 3 teaspoons of baking powder, 1 teaspoon of salt and enough water to make it the consistency of pancake batter. We divided our mix into four parts and put them into snack size Ziploc baggies along with some food coloring. Part of the fun was squishing it all around to mix up the colors!

Rubber band the baggies like you would if you were icing a cake and snip off the teeniest little bit of the tip.

Paint away! When you're finished, pop the painting into the microwave for 30-45 seconds and watch the paint puff up and grow - such fun! I loved that it was completely dry out of the microwave so we didn't have to worry about any extra messes or accidents as our pile of paintings grew. **(Don't use black paper in the microwave)**

Have fun and happy teaching

Regards

Karin

