



## February 2012 Newsletter

Welcome to the February edition of the preschool theme newsletter. I wish you all the best for 2012 and another year of exciting theme teaching.



Hopefully there were not too many tears at the start of the New Year!

Make this year the one that you really observe things and make the necessary changes when and where needed. As they say "A change is as good as a holiday". My exciting news is that we will be grandparents this year so we have much to look forward to.

### News

My new web site is well under way and should be ready soon. It will be more users friendly and more streamlined.



There is a new theme on Space which is proving to be very popular.

The next theme I am writing is on safety, dangers and strangers. I will notify you all when it is complete.

### CAPS documents

Once again the education department is making changes to the curriculum for Grade R learners. Don't let this new curriculum worry you. It is very similar to the NCS but less work in assessment in particular. Although some learning areas have been joined, the outcomes are essentially much the same. I have been working with documents off the web sites and I must admit I find them inconsistent and a little confusing at times. In some places creative activities are called arts and crafts and I have even seen free choice table activities referred to as science activities which is no longer even a subject in Grade R. If you feel confused you are not alone and try and network with other teachers and schools. If any training is offered attend it.

I have had several requests for the CAPS documents. I found them on the internet but it did take me a while. There also seem to be

various editions of the document so you need to be sure the one you are using the final one. I am not aware of how the education department intends to train all the teachers on the new document or how to obtain a hard copy.

**If you would like to look at the documents on the internet here are the steps to follow:**

1. Google CAPS
2. The first site on the list is called CAPS and it's the education department's site.
3. Open this site.
4. Look for Foundation phase and open it
5. Then select each document according to the subject and the language you would like to read the document in e.g. Home languages English.
6. The subjects are
  - Home language
  - First Additional language
  - Life Skills
  - Mathematics
7. Download each document. BE PATIENT! It takes a while. Then scroll to the Grade R sections.
8. Be aware that you should look through the whole document as there are different sections – grade R is not all in one place.

Here is the direct link which is rather long to type in!

<http://www.education.gov.za/Curriculum/CurriculumAssessmentPolicyStatements/CAPSFoundationPhase/tabid/671/Default.aspx>

### Classroom layout

How often do you review the layout of your classroom and play areas. If you have not changed the classroom layout for some time it is a good idea to



review this at least twice a year, but every term is recommended. Ideally you should try and have someone assist in the classroom to free you up to sit and observe for half an hour in the free choice time with no distractions from the children. You will be surprised at the observations.

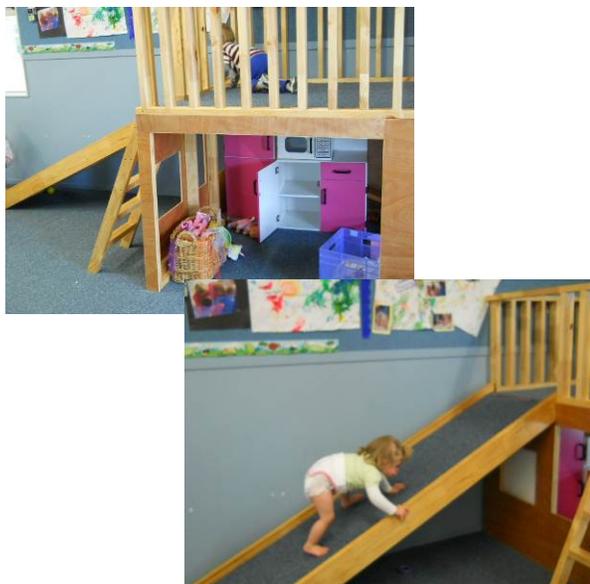
Some points to look out for:

- How well used is the area?
- How many children can comfortably play there at one time?
- How many children do play in the area at the same time?
- Are they playing happily or is there a lot of conflict and if so, why?
- Observe which resources are well liked and which are not used?
- Observe the traffic flow through and around the area. Are block constructions being destroyed by accident?

So often you are not really aware of what is happening in each play area, although you think you do! This play area in the photo's was installed in the baby room to maximise the use of a small space.

To date no one has fallen off it yet.

The house area is underneath and the top area is varied with different activities.



### Purchasing equipment

Always purchase the best equipment you can afford. Rather purchase less of good quality products than more of cheaper products. Be aware of impulse buys and gimmick buys. Often the simpler more basic equipment is enjoyed and used more often by the children. Leave some budget to buy new things during the term time too and to make use of sales.

Good sturdy trucks and bikes give endless pleasure. Here we added a wooden ramp and the children created a new game which kept them happy for some time. As you can see from these pictures even the girls were actively involved with the bikes and ramps



### Variety is the spice of life

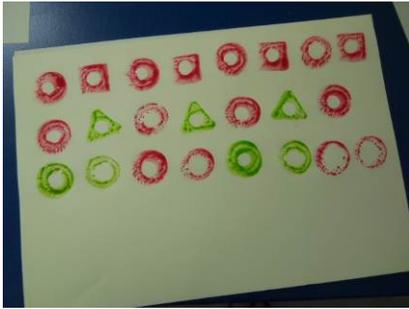
When children seem disruptive stop a moment and look closer. Are they bored with the materials? After all if you had to do the same thing over each day you would lose interest too. Are the materials of a poor quality and causing frustration, is the space insufficient or is the activity too difficult or too easy.

Make sure you change your resources regularly and add new items too; this does not mean you have to spend a fortune. Adding simple things like empty cardboard boxes, wooden planks and pieces of fabric is all you need for a change. The children will create their own play with them.

Rotate your books, games and activities with the other groups in your centre and pack some away to bring out on a rainy day.

Use your resources in different ways. In these pictures I used the shape pegs from the big peg board in the toddler room with the older preschool children to print patterns. Encourage the older learners to create repeat patterns.





**Tip:** Use baking paper on your baking trays to prevent the biscuits from sticking and it's easy to lift the biscuits on the baking paper. Write the child's name on the baking paper. These were made by a group of five year olds. I just popped in the Xmas one for this year!!



### News and updates

I did send out a newsletter last week with some updates. However, I have a new computer and I have encountered some problems sending out bulk mailing. If you find you have not received a newsletter or you get them twice please let me know so I can look into the matter. You are all welcome to refer friends to receive the mail. Just ask them to mail me so I can add them to the mailing list.

### Valentine's Day

In the new CAPS document cooking and baking are part of the creative activities and of course teach many life skills too. This year try baking some heart shaped cookies with the children and have them ice them and share them with their loved ones and friends at school.

At the end of the newsletter I have included a good biscuit recipe to use with children. Many biscuit recipes require the dough to go into the fridge first before rolling out and that is not very practical in the preschool setting. This recipe is firm and will survive being handled by children.

Make the dough as a group and give each learner some dough to roll and cut out in a heart shape.

Ice them the following day. When icing give each child a small cup or bowl with icing sugar and add water and food colouring for them to mix. Always make a bit more than you need so they can eat some and lick the spoon – the best part of baking! And of course they are learning about their senses.

### A few Valentine's Day activities



The hearts to the left are done with shaved wax crayons ironed between two sheets of greaseproof paper. It is

very tiring to gather the wax crayon shavings. Small pieces of shiny red paper will be as effective.

### Happy Valentine's Day

**Q. What did the boy bird say to the girl bird on Valentine's Day?**

**A. Can I call you Tweet heart!**

Happy teaching  
Regards Karin



Oven	Time	Quantity
180 deg	15 mins	11

Vanilla biscuits – only makes 11 so double or treble if needed

### You will need

Ingredients	Collect	Utensils
• 60 g butter		• Baking trays and baking paper
• ¼ cup sugar		• Measuring cups and spoons
• ½ egg		• Wooden spoon
• 1 cup plain flour		• Spatula or scraper
• ½ Tbl syrup		• Cooling trays
• ½ tsp. baking powder		• Mixer
• Optional: ½ tsp cinnamon and 1 tsp cocoa		• Cookie cutters and rolling pin

### Method – tick each step as you complete it

<b>1</b>	Switch on the oven to 180 deg C.	
<b>2</b>	Place baking paper onto the baking tins or grease the tins.	
<b>3</b>	Beat together the butter (soft) and the sugar until creamed.	
<b>4</b>	Add egg and syrup and beat well until combined. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.	
<b>5</b>	Add the flour and baking powder and beat together slowly for a few minutes until well mixed	
<b>6</b>	Roll out the mixture to about 3mm and cut out shapes using cookie cutters. Remove cut cookies and place on baking tray. Reroll the remaining mixture and cut more cookies.	
<b>7</b>	Bake for 15 mins. They will be a bit soft and a light colour.	
<b>8</b>	Leave to cool for 5 mins and then transfer to a cooling rack.	
<b>9</b>	Once completely cool, ice and decorate	
<b>10</b>	Can be frozen plain and iced.	
	<b>Icing:</b> Royal- 1 egg white and 1 ½ cups sifted icing sugar. Beat the egg whites till frothy and slowly add the icing sugar beating until smooth and thick. Add food colouring and use. Can be thinned with some water for easier spreading.	

#### TIPS

If the cookie mixture sticks to the rolling pin spread some flour on the rolling pin and the counter.  
Instead of rolling out the cookies directly on the kitchen counter, roll it on or between baking paper.