

Preschool Themes Newsletter – January 2017

Hello Everyone,

Welcome to 2017. May it be a happy and healthy year for you all. I trust you all had a good break and are feeling energised for another busy teaching year. I love the start of the New Year with a clean classroom ready to be filled with endless learning opportunities. It's a great time to assess your classroom layout and your resources and make changes now so your classroom works for you.

Price increase in January: As I mentioned in the newsletters last year we were expecting a price increase. We are pleased to say we have been able to hold the price of the books at R40 but unfortunately postage and courier fees have been increased for us as has the cost of the plastic storage container for the theme books.

I will have the new prices from February.

Archived newsletters: Just a reminder that all the previous newsletters can be found on the web site www.preschoolthemes.co.za



Just to remind you how important you and your job are!

The Hand Holders: A Tribute to Caregivers

There is no job more important than yours,
 no job anywhere else in the land.
 You are the keepers of the future;
 you hold the smallest of hands.

Into your care you are trusted
 to nurture and care for the young,
 and for all of your everyday heroics,
 your talents and skills go unsung.

You wipe tears from the eyes of the injured.
 You rock babies brand new in your arms.
 You encourage the shy and unsure child.
 You make sure they are safe from all harm.

You foster the bonds of friendships,
 letting no child go away mad.
 You respect and you honour their emotions.
 You give hugs to each child when they're sad.

You have more impact than does a professor,
 a child's mind is moulded by four;
 so whatever you lay on the table
 is whatever the child will explore.

Give each child the tools for adventure,
 let them be artists and writers and more;
 let them fly on the wind and dance on the stars
 and build castles of sand on the shore.

It is true that you
 don't make much
 money
 and you don't get a
 whole lot of praise,
 but when one small
 child says "I love
 you",
 you're reminded of
 how this job pays.



cardboard tubes, the circles from inside Cellotape, and empty cotton reels. (I've noticed that the rings from empty Cellotape rolls are particularly popular. Some are slightly sticky from the tape, so children enjoy attaching and detaching them. They are easier to pick up than curtain rings, are small enough to fit into other items, and have a centre through which fingers or objects can be poked.) Between sessions staff maintains the supplies, checking for cleanliness and safety, discarding unsuitable items and collecting new ones.). It is important to provide large numbers of each item, so that children do not feel compelled to protect 'their' things from each other. Goldschmied and Jackson point out that it is premature to expect children to share at this age (page 132).

For this play to be effective you need to provide several of the same items in one basket

For the heuristic play session, a large floor area is freed for a specified period; an hour is good, allowing time for children to help pack up. One staff member makes heaps of the objects for play and distributes tins (at least three per child. **The heuristic play session** offers staff an opportunity to observe. Carers sit quietly nearby, where children take assurance from their presence. So much can be learned about each child when one removes oneself slightly from the action! **This may not be possible in all your learning environments as you have to supervise other children in the group but it's still of educational value to offer the children the baskets to explore in their own way.**

Some observations of the learning taking place

It's exciting to witness the thought processes children display. I watched James slide a thin tube through a wider one, repeat the action, and then try to slide a larger object through the tube. He tried several times before rejecting the large object to try something else. Another child dropped a cork into a cone-shaped reel, tried unsuccessfully to reach it with her hand, shook the cone, and when the cork (to her surprise) flew out, repeated the procedure.

Discerning sound is part of heuristic play. Children often notice noises accidentally produced by some action (rubbing two rough items together, sliding a chain across a tin, threading on lids...) and purposely repeat the action, sometimes over and over again. The adults need to resist the urge to move them on to something else.

At the end of the session, children help pick up the objects. A two-year-old may manage to put items in the correct bag. Younger children do not seem to grasp this concept, and bring any item to pop into the bag. They enjoy the clean-up process as much as the play time – after all, dropping an item in a bag is as much fun as dropping it in a tin!

To learn more, read:

People under Three, Young Children in Day Care (2nd edition), Elinor Goldschmied & Sonia Jackson, Routledge, London & New York, 2004

Examples of items that can go into a treasure basket are;

<https://uk.pinterest.com/nadinehoward/treasure-baskets/>

Here you can see several ideas of what items you can use to create themed treasure baskets.

The selected items can be random or themed by textures, colours or themes



The resources don't need to cost a fortune. You may have most of the items already. And be creative. The resources should be kept in draw string bags with wide mouths, or small baskets or small boxes so children can easily help to put the resources away. They should be kept in a special place and only brought out a few times each week. Just as with treasure baskets, the resources are limitless, but below are some examples:

- Range of boxes that will slot inside each other
- Tubes which will slide inside each other (inside of foil tubes, kitchen rolls, cling films etc)
- Strips of materials with different textures
- Items with slots or holes (spatulas, rings)
- Jar tops
- Shells
- Corks
- Hair rollers of different sizes
- Chains of various sizes and shapes
- Variety of tins (with safe tops)

The items should be selected for their sensory properties, so natural materials are preferable. **Smooth plastic, which gives very little sensory feedback, should be avoided.**

Picture source: finesolutions.co.uk

A word on health and safety

Obviously as a practitioner you are not going to place your children in harm's way. Some of these objects may be considered to be potentially dangerous, particularly for babies who are still putting things in their mouths. You know your children and what you would be happy for them to experience. You know which ones will always chew first, ask questions later, or see any object as a weapon! This is entirely at your discretion.

Items should be cleaned regularly and thrown away if broken or considered dangerous.

Art ideas

It's a good idea to start the New Year off using the themes of me and my body, my family, my home and the five senses. Usually a theme runs for one week but some teachers choose to take two weeks for each theme at the beginning of the year as they are still getting to know their children, their skills and their interests.

Making blackboards

Blackboards are easy to make and can be used by all the children all year so they are well worth the effort. Go to the hardware store or builder's warehouse and ask them to cut you boards about 30 cm x 20 cm or the measurement that will get you several boards from the large sheet of MDF. (Thin board) Paint each board with two coats of blackboard paint. You may be able to purchase ready-made small blackboards from an educational toys store or school supply shop

Drawing with wet chalk and painting with water (Theme; Myself)

You will need:

- Chalk
- Blackboards or black paper or the outdoor paving
- Paint brushes and water

The child covers the paper or black board or a space on the paving with chalk. It works best to use the chalk sideways and create a solid area of chalk. Using the paintbrush dipped in water the child draws a picture of themselves. Remember that some children are unable to draw a person so encourage "free drawing" with the chalk. 3 year olds will be drawing the head foot man at the beginning of the year. These pictures can't be saved but they love the magic of seeing a dark line drawing appear as they paint. This method is great for drawing things for many of the themes over the year.

If you only have white chalk this activity is still effective.



Note: Regular white paper is too thin and will tear when wet. If you don't have blackboards or black paper using cereal boxes cut open.



Cardboard shape collage with sponge painting (Theme: My home)

You will need:

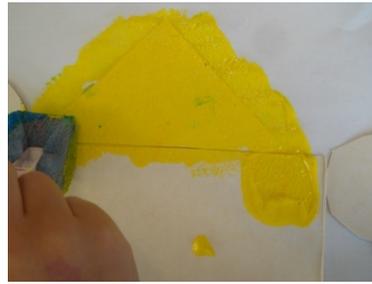
- Cereal boxes
- Scissors or precut shapes depending on the age of the children
- Presstick
- Paint and sponges in pegs
- Paper

The child selects the shapes they need to create a house. They Presstick the cardboard shapes to the paper. Using the sponge paintbrush, the child dabs paint around the edge of the cardboard. Once the edges are all painted the child removes the cardboard shapes leaving an outline of a house.



Note: Some children painted the whole cardboard which is fine but you will need to leave the paint to dry before removing the shapes. Give each child a small piece of presstick otherwise one child may take it all. Some of the older children added trees. It's best to have a lot of shapes for the children to select from as the painted cardboard is too messy to reuse.





Beaded bracelets (Theme: My family)

For this activity I set out beads and some flexible wire for the children to thread and create a bracelet. Make sure you secure a bead to one end of the wire before the child starts threading otherwise the beads will fall off. Using wire makes it easy for the children to thread but nylon thread will be effective too. Even though the beads were quite small I was surprised at how well they managed and how long they persevered to complete their bracelet. Many boys joined the table keen to make their mom a gift.

As an extension of this activity the children can hand print some paper to use as wrapping paper and then have the children make a card and write a message for mom.

Mathematics patterning: I encouraged the children to make a pattern when threading the beads as you can see in the last photo.

Notes: I placed the beads on some dishwashing or face cloths to prevent the beads rolling away. This activity needs close supervision. Children need help to secure the bracelet once the threading is complete.



A few other ideas from previous newsletters



Useful links

Please visit the Pinterest boards I have created for the different themes. You will find many more ideas on these boards to complement your theme teaching. I have several other personal boards in particular a lot of Christmas boards as I organise a big Christmas charity festival every year. Just scroll down the boards and you will find the preschool theme boards. Remember to look at sub themes too e.g. Emotions for the theme me and my body

General link <https://nz.pinterest.com/kstedall/>

Here are some of the direct links for these themes

- Me and my body <https://nz.pinterest.com/kstedall/me-and-my-body/>
- My family <https://nz.pinterest.com/kstedall/my-family/>
- My home <https://nz.pinterest.com/kstedall/homes/>
- Five Senses <https://nz.pinterest.com/kstedall/senses/>
- Grade R <https://nz.pinterest.com/kstedall/grade-r-activities/>

Happy teaching

Regards
Karin

Everybody Has A Name
by Jean Warren

Everybody has a name. 

Some are different, 

Some the same, 

Some are short, 

Some are long, 

All are right, 

None are wrong, 

I like my name, 

It's special to me.

It's exactly who,

I want to be! 