

## Preschool Themes Newsletter – July 2019

Hello Everyone,

Whew we are past mid-winter and the days will get longer bringing more sunshine yah! I hope you had an enjoyable break if you were lucky enough to have one. In NZ we have Matariki in June. Matariki is the name for the Maori New Year. The New Year is celebrated with a Hangi (cooking food in a traditional pit in the ground using hot stones) and time spent with family and friends enjoying food together.

At our centre we invite the parents to join us for a dinner to celebrate the New Year. We decorate the classroom with art work and create a star trail for the children to follow.

With this happening I have had stars and night skies as the main focus of our art so this newsletter has all the art for you to enjoy.



### 'Matariki' Maori New Year Information

In the Māori language Matariki is both the name of the Pleiades star cluster and also of the season of its first rising in late May or early June. This is a marker of the beginning of the New Year. Different peoples celebrate Matariki at different times; some when Matariki rises in late May or early June while others observe it at the first full moon or first new moon following the rising of Matariki.

Matariki is the Māori name for the cluster of stars also known as the Pleiades. It rises in mid-winter and for many Māori, it heralds the start of a new year.

Matariki literally means the 'eyes of god' (mata ariki) or 'little eyes' (mata riki). According to myth, when Ranginui, the sky father, and Papatūānuku, the earth mother, were separated by their children, the god of the winds, Tāwhirimātea, became so angry that he tore out his eyes and threw them into the heavens.

Matariki is a time to gather with family and friends to reflect on the past, celebrate the present, and plan for the future.

A special feature of Matariki celebrations is the flying of kites – according to ancient custom they flutter close to the stars. (The kite activity is in the August newsletter)



### Creative activities

#### Night sky with stars using a paper plate

This activity needs to be done over a few days and is made up of a few activities. Vary this activity to suit your circumstances and materials. I found the children really struggle with the toothbrush splatter painting and half the time they ended up covering their faces in paint as they kept turning the toothbrushes upwards. This was more so with the younger children. In the end I let them rub two toothbrushes together to create splatters. It would probably work equally as effectively if they just rubbed a pencil over the bristles but it's really all about keeping the brush downwards which is the part they struggle to comprehend.

When using glitter on art works it can be a bit dominating as the children always spread glue everywhere. I also add the glitter myself to prevent too much being added and overwhelming the picture. I wanted 'stripes' of glue on the paper plate so I decided to use small squeeze glue bottles like the ponal glue bottle as I didn't want the whole background covered in glue and glitter. BUT I didn't anticipate that they would squeeze big pools of glue in one spot making a real mess and taking ages to dry. So perhaps small brushes with glue may be a better idea!



**Themes:** Day and Night, Darkness, Night skies, Stars

**Ages:** 3 ½ - 5 year olds

**Skills:** Small and large muscles, eye hand co-ordination

## Paper plate sky with toothbrush painting (Part one)

### Materials:

- Small or large paper plate
- Black paint
- Glue
- Silver glitter
- White paint in flat containers
- Toothbrushes



### Method:

**Child:** The child paints the paper plate black. Using the toothbrushes and white paint the child speckles white paint onto the black sky to create the Milky Way. Once dry the child added glue to the paper plate and teacher sprinkles glitter onto the glue to make a sparkly night sky. Set aside to dry. This will be used for the background for some paper stars.



**Notes:**

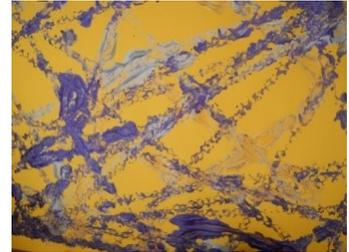
- The children struggled to paint the whole paper plate as the edges are tricky. I did help a few of the youngest children
- See notes re splatter painting at the introduction of this activity
- Some children painted with the toothbrushes instead of splatter painting which was quite effective too and is a good option for the younger children but be careful you don't just end up with a grey night sky

**Golf ball painting to create star paper ( Part 2)**

Once we had the night sky sorted the children made some gold and silver paper. I used this paper to cut out stars for the night sky. I got the cardboard boxes from the supermarket. They had coke tins in them.

**Materials:**

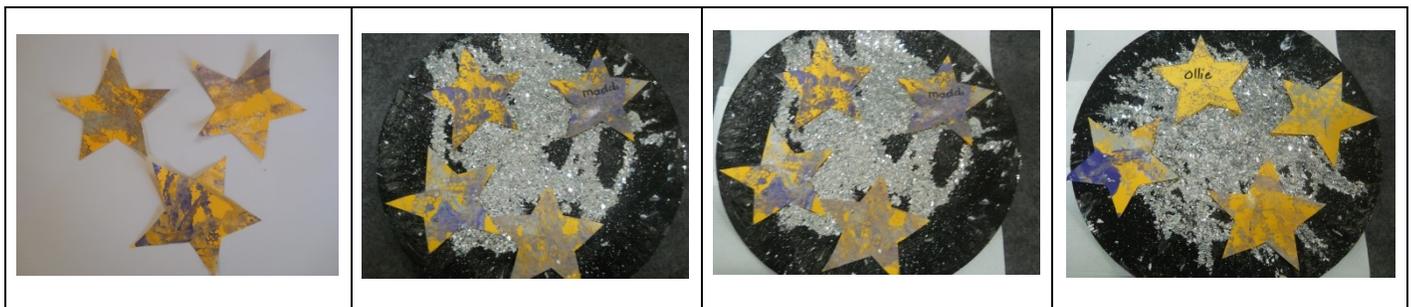
- A 4 white paper
- Gold and silver paint in flat containers (I added purple paint too)
- Golf balls
- Table spoons to remove the golf balls
- Small cardboard lids or boxes

**Method:**

**Child:** The child places a paper into the cardboard box. Using the spoon the child drops the golf ball onto the paper and gently rolls it around the paper until there is no more paint on the golf ball. The ball gets returned to the paint and the procedure is repeated until the paper is well covered with gold and silver paint. Once dry I cut out small stars from this paper and pasted them to the night sky.

**Notes:**

- The paint needs to be quite thick and preferably ready mixed (gold and silver only come ready mixed)
- Supervise as golf balls can be dangerous if thrown
- Some children dropped a few golf balls onto the paper which worked well
- Remind the children to roll the golf balls in all directions
- Some children wanted to paint with the spoons instead of the golf balls
- Marbles can be used instead of golf balls



## Night sky with string painting

For this activity you need some black paper. If you don't have black paper paint some ahead of time as it needs to be dry to use. The stars I used were bought from a bead wholesaler but any stars will be effective. Alternatively cut stars from silver paper. Another option is to cut tin foil into small squares and get the children to crumple them into small balls and paste them to the night sky.



**Themes:** Day and Night, Darkness, Night skies, Stars

**Ages:** 3 ½ - 5 year olds

**Skills:** Small and large muscles, eye hand co-ordination

### Materials:

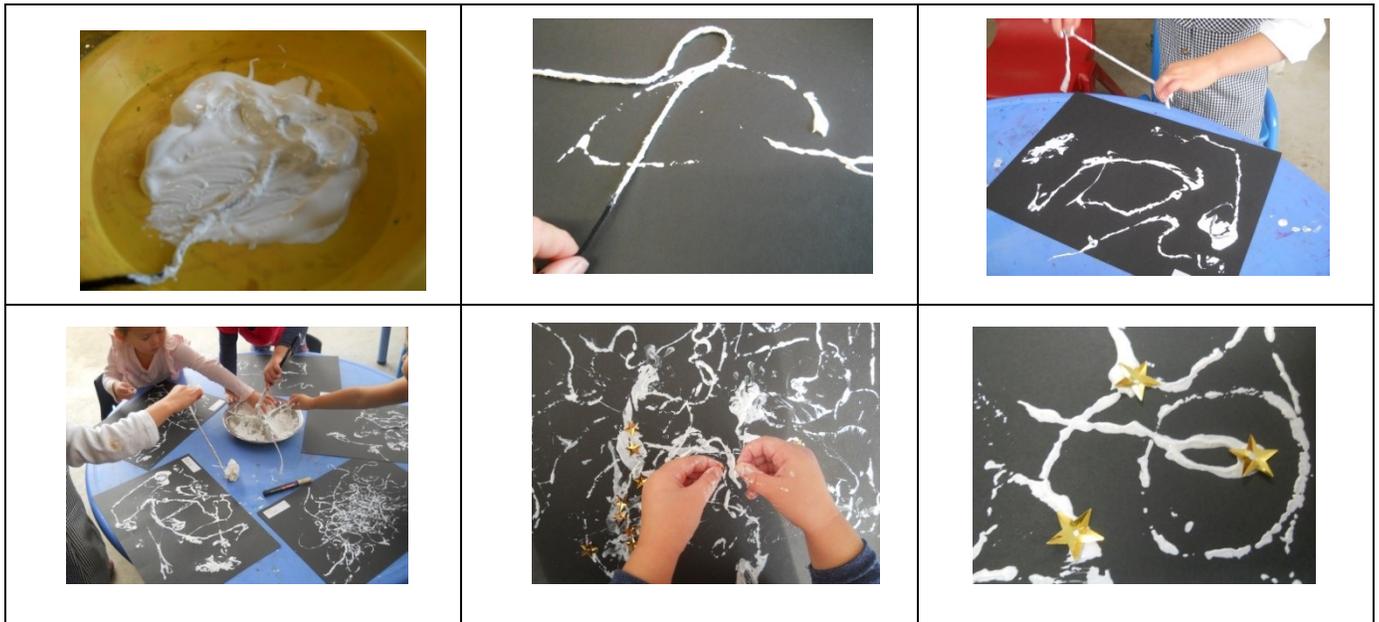
- Large sheet of black paper
- String or thick wool
- White paint – thick
- Flat containers for the paint
- A few paintbrushes
- Glue and glue brushes
- Stars or tin foil ( Milk lids to dispense the stars)
- Optional: Silver glitter



### Method:

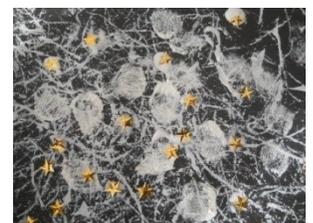
**Teacher:** Cut the string or wool into pieces about 30-40 cm long. Place them in the paint and use a paint brush to make sure the string or wool is well saturated and covered in paint. **Note: I prefer thick wool**

**Child:** The child picks up a piece of string and places it onto the black paper. The child lifts the string and replaces it in another place on the paper. Replenish the string with paint and repeat the action until the paper is well covered with paint. Using the glue make dabs of glue and attach the stars or tin foil balls. **Optional:** Sprinkle some silver glitter onto the painting while it's wet and while the glue is wet.



### Notes:

- it's a good idea to help the children put more paint onto the wool or string using a paint brush. Don't leave the paint brushes on the table as the children will paint with them
- Don't make the string or wool too long.
- The string gets sort of muddled in the paint so you may need to help the children get started with a piece of string



- One child make these big sploches of glue for applying the stars instead of small blobs. It was quite effective for the night sky( but not so for the applying the stars... they need a blob of paint)
- I used A 3 paper but it needs lots of table space so A4 paper is fine too
- If you have younger children you could cover a table with black paper and let the children do this as a group activity all working on the paper.
- The childrens hands get quite messy so have paper towels or washing up close by.

## Stars made from triangles

Working with the younger children creates some challenges so I often like to do group work activities. These stars are made of 8 triangles each and if you have older children they can each do 8 triangles to make their own star but I got each child to decorate a few triangles and used them to create several stars. It works best if you use lightweight card as paper may curl when wet with food colouring but it can be done.

**Always test the strength of your food colouring before putting it out.**

**Themes:** Shape – triangles, Stars, Sun, Day and night

**Ages:** 3 ½ - 5 year olds

**Skills:** Small and large muscles, eye hand co-ordination, follow instructions

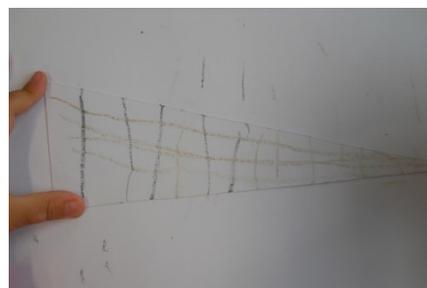


### Materials:

- Paper triangles - best done with lightweight cardboard
- Wax crayons or pastels
- Yellow food colouring - diluted
- Paint brushes
- Teacher – glue

**Teacher:** Prepare the cardboard triangles. They don't have to be a specific size. I used an A5 card, measured the centre and drew my triangles from the corner to the centre line making 4 triangles per card. Each star requires 8 triangles

**Child:** The child colours the triangles as they please. For Grade R encourage writing patterns. Some children chose to do stripes and others drew pictures. Encourage the children to press firmly with the crayons otherwise the colours don't show up when colour washed. Once dry the teacher overlaps and pastes 8 together to create the star.





**Notes:**

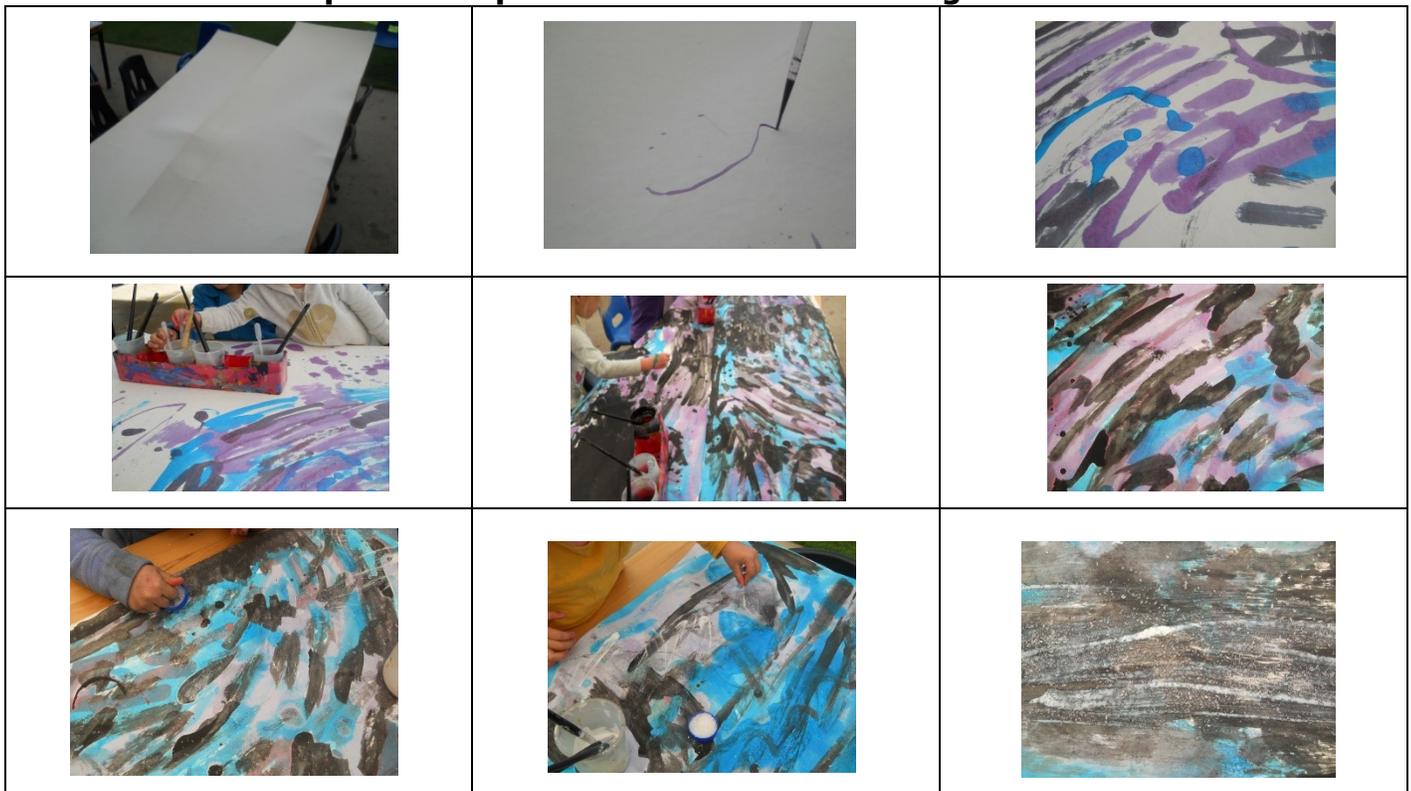
- Some children did not make dark lines and it did not show well once colour washed
- Don't place too much food colouring in a container as it often gets tipped over
- Pastels are more effective than wax crayons

**Night Sky background**

To display the yellow stars I had the children make a sparkly night sky background. We have a thick cardboard on a roll at school that is very absorbent and was ideal for making the background using diluted food colouring or school dye. I had some black colouring I had bought from a cake making shop but there was not enough so I made some very diluted black powder paint. This worked well but I had to be careful that the children didn't dominate the painting with the black paint as I wanted some blue and purple to show too. To paint the background we used brushes and pipettes but thick brushes were the most effective. Once the background was dry we spread some glue onto the cardboard and sprinkled on some Epsom salts. If you prefer you can sprinkle coarse salt instead of Epsom salts but it can sting if there are any small cuts on the children's hands. Alternatively leave off this step.

I did not attach the yellow stars to the background as it will only be displayed later in July for the Matariki celebration. I will put a picture in the next newsletter.

**I did add in a few splashes of paint to make sure the background was balanced**



**Notes:**

- Remind the children not to paint over and over in the same area. For some children this is really hard!
- I give out the Epsom salts in milk lids and encourage the children to sprinkle the salts with their fingers rather than tip out the whole lid in one spot.
- Lots of the salts came off when I picked the background up. It's not an issue just a bit messy.

## Collage stars

I had hoped this activity would be more effective than it was but I did get some nice end products. This activity is better suited to the older children as an individual activity but could work well with the younger children as a group collage. Either collage pieces of paper and join them together or cut out big stars. To prevent collage material from being pasted around the star the star needs to be cut out. I did not cut my star out so a few children did paste collage items around it which is not really an issue.

I had some round sticky labels so I chose to paste them to the centre of the star and write the child's name on their star in the middle.

**Themes:** Shape – star, Stars, Day and night, Shiny things

**Ages:** 3 ½ - 5 year olds

**Skills:** Small and large muscles, eye hand co-ordination

### Materials:

- Black paper with a star traced on it
- Collage material – shiny silver and gold paper, tin foil, stars etc
- Labels to write the child's name or a white pen or wax crayon
- Glue and glue brushes

**Teacher:** Prepare the collage materials and trace the stars

**Child:** The child chooses collage material of their choice and pastes it into the star shape.



Happy teaching  
Regards Karin