



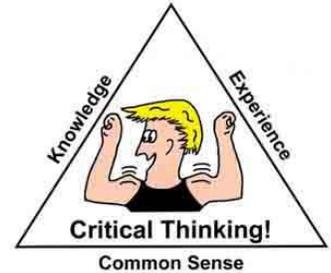
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Preschool Themes Newsletter – October 2015

Hello Everyone,

While on my travels overseas I became aware of the skills a person needs when travelling. This led to a discussion on what we are taught at school and the relevance of it to life in general.

Of course there have been many changes in the world since I was last in high school especially in terms of technology. All the world history was useful to a degree on my travels as was the basic geography, but I was so aware of the many skills I was using on a daily basis in a foreign country. I was aware that you needed to be able to problem solve, persevere, plan, have time management skills and be willing to venture into the unknown with confidence in your abilities. I found this article below which says all the above way better than I can. Some interesting thoughts about how we need to be teaching in the 21st century and how we need to be far more focussed on teaching children life skills and not knowledge based learning. And of course being able to communicate effectively, use technology and interact socially are essential life skills too.



Teaching in the 21st Century

I found this very interesting article on what skills are needed to be successful in the 21st century.

Teaching Children to Think: Meeting the Demands of the 21st Century

By Janice Greenberg Director of Early Childhood Education Services, The Hanen Centre
<http://www.hanen.org/Helpful-Info/Articles/Teaching-Children-to-Think--Meeting-the-demands-of.aspx>

If your school years were anything like mine, you probably recall hours of memorizing information to be regurgitated in response to teachers' questions or during a test or exam. With the passing years, my retention and recall of all this information has been dimming. However, the potentially tragic loss of key information like the four levels on the Beaufort Wind Scale or the year that Ponce de Leon came to North America is not such a tragedy since I have been saved by modern technology – Google! All of this information and everything else from the number of teeth an elephant has to the date of the first rocket launch into space can be found at the click of a button.

The advantages that technology presents to the baby boomer generation are quite evident. However, as children in much of the world return to school, I have been wondering what the advent of immediately accessible search technology means to the present generation of children and to the way they are being educated. With information so readily available, the need to learn and memorize facts diminishes. But then what should education in the 21st century look like? That is exactly what educators around the world are in the process of figuring out! If accessible and efficient technology can drum up information for us in a way that is faster and better than we ever can, then maybe it's time to leave the drilling and regurgitation of facts behind us.

Today's kindergarteners may be entering the workforce around the year 2034. We have no idea what the world will look like in five years, much less 20 years. What we do know is that education in the 21st century will need to address a rapidly changing world filled with problems and possibilities that could not have been imagined several decades ago.

Shifting the Focus to Critical Thinking

Critical thinking includes skills such as questioning, predicting, investigating, hypothesizing, analysing, reflecting, revising, comparing, evaluating and forming opinions

To function and create change in this modern world, individuals need critical thinking skills – the ability to think about ideas or situations in order to fully understand their implications so as to be able to make an informed judgement or decision? Critical thinking includes skills such as questioning, predicting, investigating, hypothesizing, analysing, reflecting, revising, comparing, evaluating and forming opinions. It involves an inquiry process of exploring issues that may not be clearly defined and for which there are no clear-cut answers. Critical thinking also

includes metacognition – the process of thinking that enables us to reflect on our own learning as we develop knowledge and skills.

According to Tony Wagner in his book, *The Global Achievement Gap*, mastery of the basic skills of reading, writing and math is no longer enough. Instead, work, learning and citizenship in the 21st century demand that we all know how to think – to reason, analyse, weigh evidence and problem solve. He goes on to say that children will need seven basic survival skills to succeed in the world that awaits them:

- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Collaboration across Networks and Leading by Influence
- Agility and Adaptability
- Initiative and Entrepreneurialism
- Effective Oral and Written Communication
- Accessing and Analysing Information
- Curiosity and Imagination

Robert Fisher, a leading expert in developing children’s thinking skills, says that thinking is not a natural function like sleeping, walking and talking. **Thinking, he stresses, is a skill that needs to be developed, and people do not necessarily become wiser as they become older. Children learn to think when adults take them seriously, engage them in meaningful conversations, inspire their imaginations and ask them questions that get them to think. This is exactly the approach that we need to incorporate into the classroom.**

Re-defining the Role of the Teacher

Teachers need to move from primarily being the information keeper and information dispenser to being an orchestrator of learning where knowledge is co-constructed with the student. Teachers will become facilitators, guides, mentors, sources and resources who make use of spontaneous teachable moments to scaffold children’s learning.

According to many experts, to develop these basic skills, we need to re-define the role of the teacher and the student. Teachers need to move from primarily being the information keeper and information dispenser to being an orchestrator of learning where knowledge is co-constructed with the student. **Teachers will become facilitators, guides, mentors, sources and resources who make use of spontaneous teachable moments to scaffold children’s learning.** The 21st century will require knowledge generation, not just information delivery, and schools will need to create a “culture of inquiry” that is shared equally by teachers and students.

The rest of the article can be found at this link. It is a Canadian article but has fundamental relevance to everyone working with pre-school children.

<http://www.hanen.org/Helpful-Info/Articles/Teaching-Children-to-Think--Meeting-the-demands-of.aspx>

Art activities

Join the paint dots painting

The children really enjoyed this simple painting activity.

All you need for this activity is thick paint, paint brushes and large sheets of paper.

The children dropped blobs of paint on their paper and then joined the same coloured paint blobs using the paint brushes. I rather liked the end product. I have not tried this with the 2-3 year olds or the 3-4 year olds but I think if you put the blobs of paint on the paper they should be able to join them up. Alternatively draw dots for them to paint on and limit the colours to two or three preferably using the primary colours so they mix to make nice new colours. Be prepared for a few children to just paint them all together creating a muddy mess!



Notes: The paint should be thick, ready mixed paint works best. Don't set out too many colours. Encourage the children to use the whole page. White or coloured paper is suitable.



Crazy hair faces

Whenever a teacher leaves at school we have a dress up day to farewell them. (We have a staff of about 20 teachers) This day was a crazy hair day. I was thinking about what creative activity we could do at school when my husband said he had lots of curly wood shavings in his workshop that I could have to make crazy hair faces. See I even have the hubby well trained to save everything for use at school!!

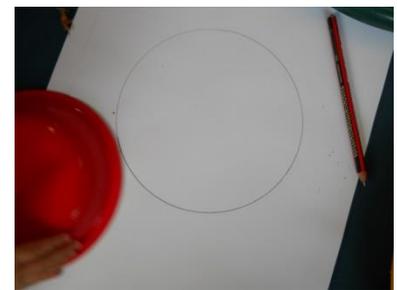


For this activity you will need sawdust or preferably curly wood shavings, a template to draw around to create a face – I just used a plastic bowl, crayons, strong glue, and paper and then as you all know by now the children added glitter to the end products.

One of the girls made Elsa from the "Frozen movie" which the children all love to pieces. I thought she did an awesome job and I loved her creativity especially the glitter and the side plait.



I traced the circle for the younger children but the older children managed fine on their own. They pasted glue and attached the curly wood pieces for the hair. The face and body details were added with crayons. If you use A4 paper they can only make a head and neck. The children need to use a generous amount of glue and it's best to dry these pictures flat.





Lid painting

I think I have had this activity in the newsletter before but this has a few changes. I was digging out some milk bottle lids for the children to use to swirl the paint for this activity when some empty coffee jars in the pantry caught my eye. I decided they would be great for printing and painting with as something different.

For this activity the children dab blobs of paint onto the paper and then used the milk lids to mix the paint into lovely coloured swirls. It works best if the children turn the lid in the paint and then lift it up, repeating the process until the colours are mixed and there is a pleasant end product.



Be aware of the excessive children who use too much paint and swirl so much the paper gets holes in it. Rather offer them a clean page to make another painting.

It was more of a problem of the children not putting enough paint on the paper and not having any paint to swirl together. They tended to dab the paint as if they were painting, dabbing all over the paper until there was no more paint on the brush. It is also important that the blobs of paint are relatively close together so don't make the size of the paper too big.

For this activity we painted on waxed greaseproof paper – the kind you use to wrap your school lunch sandwiches in. It is not essential to use grease proof paper and in fact I thought the colours were much brighter and vibrant on the white paper, but the idea behind using grease proof paper is that the light shines through the paper and makes it attractive on the window as a sun catcher. It's also nice to use a variety of papers when presenting creative activities.



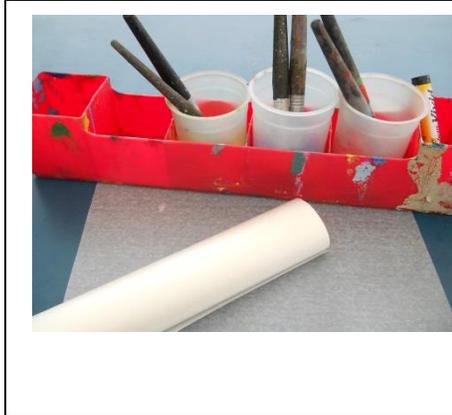
I loved the end products and the children had lots of fun creating their art works. We call this process art as it's the process that matters, not the end product.



They used the glass coffee jar lids from the Mocona coffee bottles to swirl the paint. They have a really nice plastic circle on the underside and the lid part is easy for little hands to hold.

In this painting you can clearly see the coffee jar circles.

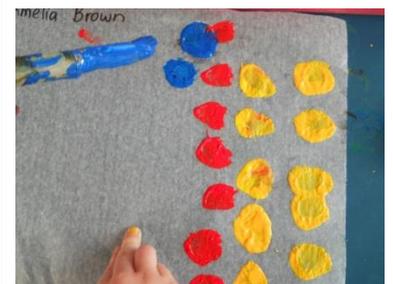
These would be great for printing circles when doing a shape or colour theme.



Biddy chose to paint her blobs of paint in shapes before swirling them together



Another child decided to paint with the lids instead of swirl with them. This is a good way to present this activity to the younger children as swirling is too difficult for them.



Amelia decided to paint her blobs of paint in rows which created its own effect

Doily painting/printing

I bought some inexpensive cake paper doilies for a party and had some left over so I took them to school.

The children painted and dabbed paint onto the doily filling the spaces with paint. Once complete, the doily was removed leaving a lovely print pattern on the paper. The children repeated the activity with a new doily and a new colour of paint.

Notes: Use small doilies, thick paint and put the paint in flat containers if using sponges in pegs or dobbers to dab on the paint on the doily.



<p>This was quite a tricky activity and at times the prints smudged</p>	<p>The painted doily was pretty too but a bit delicate to manage. If they are left to dry they can be used for collage the net day</p>	<p>Sponges in pegs were quite effective but in the end a paint brush worked the best.</p>

Low melt glue gun creations

The children love using the glue guns to make free creations.



Happy teaching

Regards
Karin