



Newsletter – January 2013

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Hello everyone and Happy New Year to you all. I would like to welcome all the new people who have been added to my mailing list. I hope you enjoy the preschool theme newsletters in 2013. I love the start of a new year with a clean classroom and empty walls waiting to be filled with beautiful art creations made by your children and useful and interesting displays and charts. I don't usually send out a January Newsletter as I have been off school myself over December and I only start again in a weeks' time, but I thought I would send one with some ideas on coping with the first few days of new children, anxious parents and tears from either or both! In New Zealand (some of you may not know that I live and teach in NZ) we have a very different system so our new year is less stressful as we have many of the same children returning. Despite that, there are tears as some have been off on a very long holiday and it feels like they are starting again.

In this newsletter I have included some creative activities from previous newsletters for the theme of 'me and my body' and some ideas you can set out at arrival time.

I wish you all many happy days teaching in 2013 and I look forward to hearing from you all, sharing ideas and supporting each other through the Facebook book page or emailing me.

New themes

I will be writing several new themes this year. There are a few gaps in the theme list suggested in the CAPS life Skills document which I plan to fill and I have had several requests for other themes. If there are specific themes you need please let me know either through the Facebook page or email me rodandkarin@xtra.co.nz. Here are some of the titles I have already had requested: The sea and beach, sports and balls, books, counting and numbers, community workers, sea and air transport, push and pull, weather, healthy living. I am sure there are many more you can suggest and I welcome your input.

The next theme will be sports and balls

Ideas for easing the pains of the first few days of starting preschool

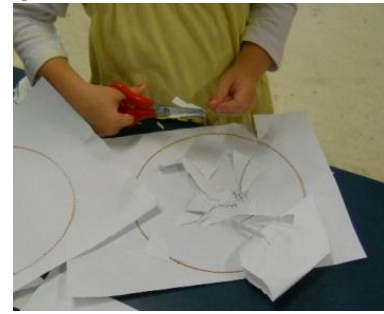
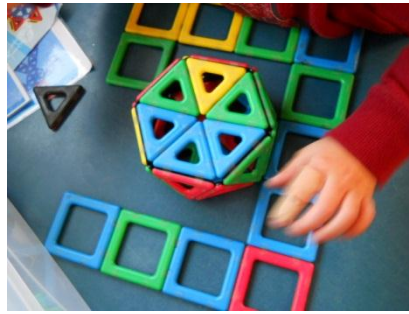
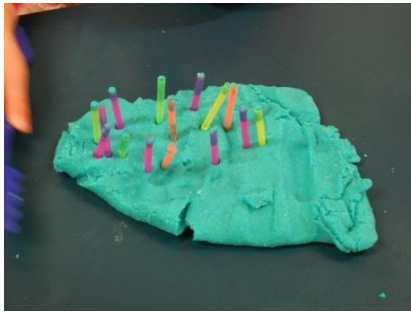
The first few days at preschool can be stressful for teachers, children and parents. To help ease this anxiety there are a few things you can do.

- Be organised.
- Be available to receive the parents and children, to welcome them and to guide them to an activity.
- Set out a few activities for the children to go to when they arrive. (see next page) These should be simple but interesting activities that do not require much teacher attention e.g. free drawing with koki pens, simple puzzles, construction sets, small cars, play dough, free collage (pasting), scissors and paper, toys that make noises and move and posting activities such as posting shapes. This helps the children to get distracted and the parents can get the child settled at an activity before they leave.
- **A quick goodbye helps me not to cry.** This is a good poster to put up at the front door or any other place parents will see it.
- In contrast to the above it may be a good idea to allow the parents to stay a while with the child. Allow this for the first few weeks.
- Assure parents of crying children that if they do not settle you will call them.
- Try to have a staggered intake so you don't have too many new children per day. If this is not possible try and stagger the arrival time.
- Be patient and supportive to crying and clinging children but be careful that you don't set up bad habits!
- If they ask for their parents tell them they have gone to work and will be back later to collect them.

- Draw a heart on the child's hand and if they are feeling sad remind them to give the heart a kiss.



Some ideas for activities to set out at arrival and free play time



Birthdays and birthday charts – for those who missed this



Birthday charts are an important display of every classroom. So I thought I would give you a few ideas in preparation for the New Year. For every child their birthday is a special day and they should be made to feel special and unique. Each school does this in a different way. In our preschool in NZ, the child decorates their own crown using 'special art material' reserved for this activity only. We have stickers, special clean and easy to use paints in sponge tipped bottles (so they are clean and easy to get out and put away). We add glue and glitter and print a photo of each child to paste to the crown. If possible we try and make the crown the day before so it is dry and stapled and ready to be worn on their birthday. At mat time, the birthday child sits on a chair next to the teacher wearing their crown. We allow them to choose a story for the teacher to read and they also choose their favourite song for everyone to sing. Of course we all sing happy birthday and give them claps for their age. Sometimes we have cake and candles to light if the parents have brought in one, but if not we make one from play dough and always keep a set of candles and matches for these times. We also encourage parents to join the birthday mat time and to share the cake with the children. Birthday cakes and eats is another topic on its own.....

Some schools allow birthday children to wear civvies for the day if they usually wear a uniform or a special rosette badge for the day. You can find several birthday charts at this web site.

<http://gigglepotz.com/2012/07/10/birthday-charts-for-the-classroom/>





This is rather a cute idea where each child gets a pencil when it's their birthday.
<http://www.lessonplandiva.com/p/photos.html>

I have created a Pinterest board with birthday charts and birthday ideas for the classroom
<http://pinterest.com/kstedall/birthday-charts/>

Also look at <http://pinterest.com/kstedall/bulletin-boards-and-classroom-displays/>

Creative ideas for the theme 'Me and my body'

Me and my body: Paper packet face puppets



This activity is great for the 2-1/2 year – 5/6 year olds. The above pictures were taken when I did the activity with the 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 year olds.

I gave each child a 'greaseproof packet' which I bought at the supermarket and is used for packing sandwiches into lunch boxes. A brown paper packet will be as effective. They crumpled magazine pages (which I tore out for them) into balls and

filled their packets. I then closed the end with some tape or you could use wool or an elastic band. The children painted the faces and pasted googly eyes and crinkle paper strips for the hair. Some children managed to make a nose and mouth using folded crinkle paper, but you could set out milk lids cut in half for the mouth and round lids for the nose.

Useful tips:

- Mix the glue into the paint so everything sticks
- Choose paint colours that blend together so they make a new colour when mixed
- Only give each child the googly eyes when they need them. If you put them on the table they will all be pasted to one child's face!
- Don't expect perfection and don't correct the faces.

Extension:

- Use the puppets in your language ring the next day. They could name their puppet and introduce them to the others and tell you what their favourite colour or food is.
- The puppets can be used to tell the group what makes them feel happy or what is their favourite activity at preschool.
- Teacher could use a few puppets and present a puppet show for story time.
- Attach a long cardboard roll to the neck of the puppet and add clothes (older learners) using scraps of fabric.

Me and my body: Thin foam or paper shapes

Age group: 4-6 years



I cut out several different body shapes out of thin sponge. The children created a person and painted the sponge. Make sure the size of your shapes is suitable for the size of the paper you set out; otherwise you will have arms, legs and heads off the paper!

Useful tips:

- Some children were unable to make a body. Guide them by suggesting they start with the body.
- For the 4 year olds at the beginning of the year it may work better to paste the body to the page as the starting point for their collage.
- **Not suitable to the little ones. They will just paste shapes all over their page.**
- Encourage the children to use plenty of glue.

Extension:

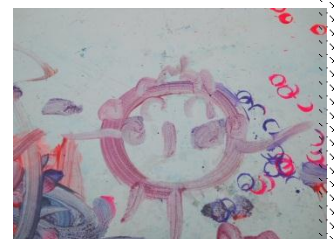
- Use the same concept to make houses when doing the theme 'My home'.

Me and my body: Play dough faces

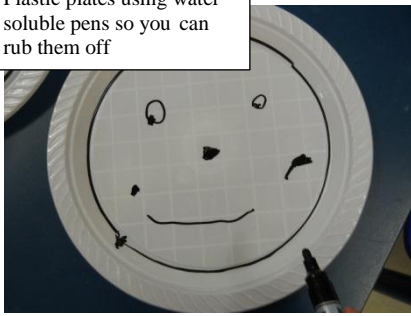
I set out paper with oval shapes on them and encouraged the children to make faces with the play dough. Here are a few of the faces they made. (They look a bit like mug shots!)



Me and my body: A few other ideas



Plastic plates using water soluble pens so you can rub them off



Classroom organisation

The habits and rules you determine in the first few weeks of the school year can make or break your year in terms of classroom management and behaviour. The children need to know what acceptable behaviour is and how to look after the resources and equipment. Take the time to 'teach and show' the children how you expect the materials to be used and to be cleaned and put away. Set boundaries and enforce them consistently. (Even if it feels mean)

Teachers: Make it a habit to put away things where they belong either immediately or at the end of each day. A few days of 'dumping' stuff down when you are in a hurry soon leads to a very messy and cluttered classroom.

Here are a few ideas: Visit [http://pinterest.com/kstedall/classroom-and-behavior-management/for more ideas](http://pinterest.com/kstedall/classroom-and-behavior-management/for-more-ideas)



Label storage places and storage containers with pictures. This ensures that the children can pack away independently.



This is a block of wood and the lids of the pens are glued into the wood so they don't get lost!



Make and laminate a name card for each child. They are useful for signing in each day, moving their name over when they have done the main art activity, copying their name, etc

Courier service

Do to the many postal strikes and slow postal service we are offering a courier service for the delivery of your books you order. Please enquire about the cost from Ilette. If you order 32 or more books postage is usually free. If you choose to have your set of books couriered to you instead of posting them, R75 will be credited towards the courier fees.

I leave you with this thought....

Children have to be educated, but they have also to be left to educate themselves.

[Ernest Dimnet](#)

Happy teaching
Regards Karin