

Preschool Themes Newsletter – February 2016

Hello Everyone,

Welcome back to school and happy New Year to you all. By the time this first newsletter gets to you, most of you will have been at school for most of January and things should be settling down into a good routine. I am sure some of you will feel the need for a holiday already!! It's such a busy time at the beginning of the year and can be stressful for teachers, parents and children so take it one day at a time. I wish you all the best for a great year.



Setting classroom boundaries and managing discipline

I cannot stress enough the need for establishing a good classroom routine and consistent and firm discipline at the start of the year. One doesn't want to come across as a "witch" with being overbearing but if you don't establish firm boundaries with the children's behaviour and classroom expectations you will have a challenging year ahead of you. We can all make improvements and changes and some ideas will be more effective than others.

Here are a few of my own thoughts and experiences on discipline. It takes time and practice to use these techniques and for children to get used to them if you have always shouted and scolded children in your classroom. I also don't overly agree with a time out chair, but sometimes it helps to send children to sit down away from others to calm down. **Personally I am not in favour of the naughty chair.**

- **Always try and say things in the positive** – please walk instead of don't run, use your inside voice instead of you are too noisy or stop shouting.
- **Don't continually threaten and promise action and consequence.** Follow through immediately. I have asked you not to throw sand so you need to go and play somewhere else please.
- **Speak respectfully to children.** How would you feel if your boss demanded from you without a please as we so often do to children. Remember you are the role model
- **Dislike the behaviour and not the child.** I don't like it when you hurt your friend. Please use your gentle hands.
- **Think about where you place children on the mat and in groups.** It can make a big difference to the activity if you avoid obvious conflict situations. Not all children have to get along with each other and be friends. (Think about yourself? We all have people we get along with less than others)
- **Be well prepared.** Children play up when they are bored and have to wait.
- **Redirect/ distract from bad behaviour** – if a child is throwing sand in the sand pit suggest they fill up a truck with sand or a bucket. Turn it into a competition to see who can get theirs filled first. You may have to fetch the truck or bucket for the child as they cannot manage their own behaviour.
- **Encourage children to make good choices.** When children are not listening or being 'naughty' rather than say 'are you being naughty, rather ask the child if they are making good choices. But be sure you have had a mat time to discuss what good choices are versus bad choices. Children need to take responsibility for their own actions and behaviours. Praise good choices and good behaviour.
- **Encourage children to work out conflict situations** on their own as much as possible. Teach children to say "please stop, I don't like it" if another child is annoying them or hurting them and likewise teach children to listen to their friends and respect the request. This part needs help at time... are you listening to your friends words.
- **Teach children to 'use your words'** to ask for their needs and to sort out conflict situations if they are old enough.
- **Get up and go to the child to speak to them.** Don't yell across the playground or classroom. (Role model)
- **Be proactive.** Listen to situations that are getting out of hand and intervene early. Know your children and their frustration levels. Some levels are very low and they lose their cool quickly and become physical.
- **Discourage physical hurting at all times.** Be aware of subtle bullying. It starts in preschool.... It is never okay to hurt another child.

- **Be consistent.** Always respond in the same way every day. If you are fair the children will respect your decision.
- **Never argue with an upset or angry child.** They are not listening in this state. Wait till they have calmed down and then discuss the event.
- **Don't over explain.** We use too many words and go on way too long. Keep your explanation short.

We were given a very simple "discipline/ behaviour management technique which works really well. If a child consistently disregards your requests ask once and then inform the child they will have to hold your hand if they do the behaviour again. If it happens again, get up and don't enter into an argument or discussion, take the child's hand and make them walk a bit behind you so there is no eye contact and no communication with them. Hold on to their hand firmly as they will try and wriggle away. Just wander aimlessly for a few minutes and then ask if they are ready to play nicely or to listen and let them go. Don't explain, justify or argue with the child. Don't engage in a discussion with the child or explain why you are holding their hand.

It's a very simple technique but I have found it works very well. On most children!! Keeps me calm....

Here are a few more thoughts

<http://www.internationalschool.info/setting-clear-boundaries-for-the-new-school-year/>

The start of a new school year is a great time to establish new rules and boundaries that can benefit the whole family and school community. Here are some things to keep in mind when setting effective boundaries (both at home and at school!):

Be moderate – Successful boundaries don't have to be an elaborate set of rules or regulations. They should be worded **in positive and virtues-based language rather than a list of do's and don'ts.** Also, a general statement that can apply to a variety of settings and situations is usually more effective as it does not excessively limit the child and encourages independent thinking. Simple examples are "Tell the truth" or "Respect each other's space/room"

Set educative consequences – When a boundary is broken, it should have a clearly understood/explained consequence that all parties are agreed upon. If a clear boundary within the home is to "Tell the truth" but a window is broken without explanation, the consequence may be that outdoor games will have to be suspended for a week. It should be clearly explained that the consequence is because of the lack of truthfulness, not because the window is broken! Accidents will always happen, so we need to create boundaries around the virtues that we want our children to develop rather than punish them for acts that are often unintentional.

Be firm – As described above, the purpose of creating boundaries is to create a safe environment. Boundaries should be like the walls of a house that protect us from harm. If the walls are constantly moving, shifting, and even disappearing, we are definitely not in a safe place. On the contrary, this creates a dangerous and frightening environment. We can take the time to consult with others so that the boundaries we create are based on the principles of justice, and then... stick to them!

Start with yourself – Create boundaries for your own self as a parent and educator. What do you need to feel safe, peaceful and joyful? What gives you energy? What drains you? Allocate time to activities that re-energize and uplift you. When your life is in order and you respect the boundaries you have set for yourself, you are much better equipped to creatively respond to your children's needs for order and boundaries in their lives.

Here's to a new school year full of creating successful boundaries!

Art activities – Myself, my home and my family

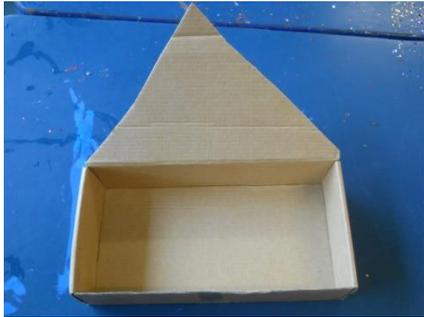
Box construction – making houses, people and dinosaurs

I collected a variety of cardboard boxes for this activity. The children selected the boxes they wanted to use. Some chose to make a house and cut the lid of the box to be a roof shape. They continued to complete the house (unfortunately I did not get a photograph) by pasting the house to paper and adding in the people and or furniture which they drew on paper and pasted into the house.



The children who chose to make a person used wooden sucker sticks for the arms and legs but if you don't have sucker sticks then cut firm toilet rolls into strips and use them. The head was a circle of cardboard and the children painted their construction.

Note: I find box construction more effective if the children paste the construction to some paper or cardboard.

		
		
		
<p>She chose to make her person from paper shapes attached to the box. (31/2 y)</p>	<p>One child decided he wanted to make a spikey dinosaur. We poked holes in the box and inserted headless matches (4 y)</p>	<p>He put some grass in the dinosaurs tummy</p>

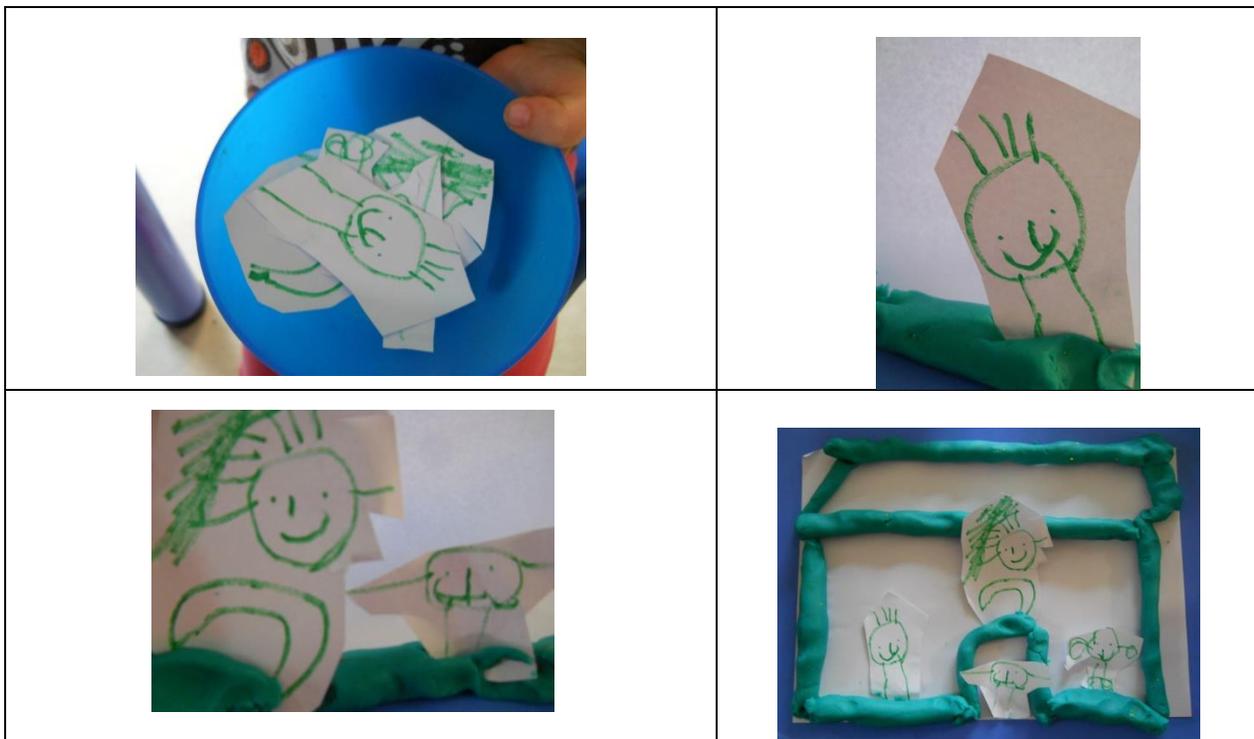
Drawing – my family and making a playdough house for the family

The children drew their family on paper using koki pens and cut out each family member. They made a house of playdough by rolling the play dough into sausages and pressing the paper people into the play dough house.

Note: I gave the children each a small bowl to keep their family members safe while making the play dough houses. Lots of good dialogue followed with the children discussing their family members and where they were placing them in the house and



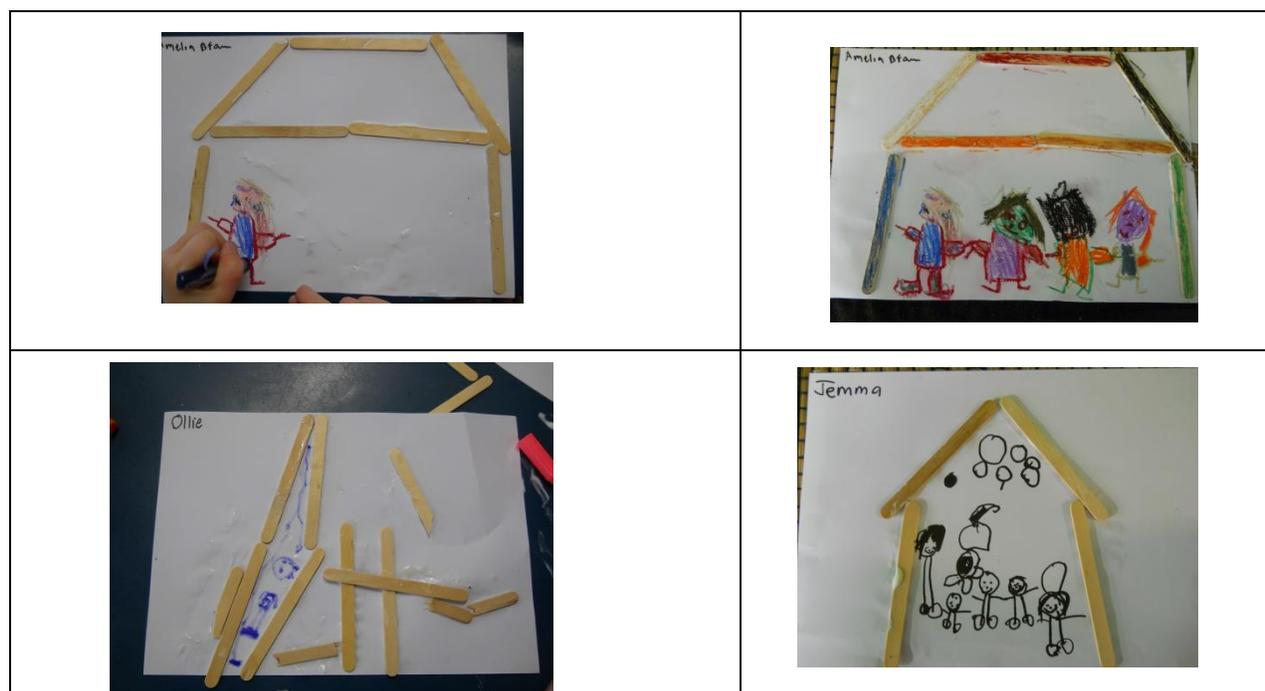
what they were doing.



Collage and drawing – my home and family

The children used sucker sticks to create a house shape. Some chose to make a big house as they had several family members while others made smaller houses.

Note: Create the house first and then draw the family. Encourage the children to put the glue on the sticks rather than the paper. Suggest the children plan their house first before pasting the sticks. Once again if you do not have access to sucker sticks use cut toilet rolls. Some children chose to colour the sticks but painting them would work well too.



The above two pictures have been done by twins. It's interesting to see the different level of skills as so often happens with twins. Both the girls visit the art area often so it's not lack of opportunity.

Painting and printing – with bubble wrap glove using hands

I made the children "packets" using some discarded bubble wrap packaging I was given. I stapled the edges together. The children put their hand in the packet and painted the bubble wrap. They then either printed or painted with the hand glove. This is a great activity for the younger children.



My family (mother) – cardboard toilet roll bracelet

I cut a toilet roll in half and cut it open on one side so it can be slipped over the child's arm. The children painted and glittered the bracelet



A few other ideas



		
<p>Give the younger children a circle as a starting point</p>	<p>Free drawing – this child made a birthday card for her dad and drew her family</p>	<p>The same child painted her mother</p>

Valentine's Day – 14 Th February

I like to do the theme of Colour Red in the week of Valentine's Day. Here are the links to the pinterest boards where you will find lots of ideas to use. Remember to integrate the theme across all the learning areas.

<https://www.pinterest.com/kstedall/colour-red/>

<https://www.pinterest.com/kstedall/valentines-school/>

I also have a pinterest board for adult Valentine's ideas with a few ideas

<https://www.pinterest.com/kstedall/valentines-for-adults/>



<https://www.pinterest.com/source/greatestresourcechildcare.com>

In case you missed this great game I am repeating it.

Game – who's hiding under the blanket?

The children love this game. All the children sit in a circle and close their eyes. One child is chosen by the teacher to hide under the blanket. The children in the circle ask the child under the blanket questions to try and identify who the person is. We had some amusing questions such as do you have a bike, do you have lawn mower... but we guided them back to ask questions such as are you a boy, a girl, 3 years old, etc.



Just a reminder of the useful document called The ECD Guidelines

<http://www.isasa.org/early-childhood-development-curriculum-guidelines/>

Happy teaching

**Regards
Karin**