

## Preschool Themes Newsletter – Jan/Feb 2021

Hello Everyone,

Welcome back to the preschool themes newsletter after a big interruption to newsletters last year. I hope that this year there will be regular monthly newsletters again and I also have my lovely new computer all sorted out so that should make my life a bit easier. Getting a new computer is lovely but transferring stuff is my worst nightmare. I have combined the January and February newsletter so its longer than usual.

I feel like I should be saying happy new year, but it has certainly not started off very well with the second surge of COVID-19, so who knows what this year holds for everyone but we need to remain positive. I prefer not to send out newsletters when schools are closed as the mailboxes fill up and I get a lot of bounced emails returned to me. I may consider not sending newsletters if schools close again. I have been posting a weekly art activity on my preschool themes Facebook page to help give you some ideas to work with. <https://www.facebook.com/preschoolthemes>.



Despite all the challenges you are facing I do wish you all the best for 2021 and encourage you to try and stay positive and do the best you can. We are all in this together so reach out for support and help and most of all be kind to one another and yourself. Remember the children are also impacted by all this uncertainty which may manifest in different ways.

The preschool themes are still being printed and sent out so if you need to order they are open [www.preschoolthemes.co.za](http://www.preschoolthemes.co.za)

### Calming upset children

These words have never been more true

"So often, children are punished for being human. They are not allowed to have grumpy moods, bad days, disrespectful tones, or bad attitudes. Yet, we adults have them all the time. None of us are perfect. We must stop holding our children to a higher standard of perfection than we can attain ourselves." - Rebecca Eanes



Many children struggle when they return to preschool or start preschool for the first time especially after the prolonged periods they have been home with the Covid lockdowns. Here is a good way to deal with these children. Upset and angry children do not listen so its important to calm them first. Validate their emotions but reiterate safety and a sense of control (e.g., "yes that was scary, I was scared to. But we are safe and will be ok).

# Understanding Dysregulation:

## How to Support a Highly emotional Child

When a child is dysregulated, it becomes hard to listen, comprehend and cope



Dysregulation occurs when the brain responds to sensory input in a manner that triggers the alarm state.

Remember the 3 "R"s:



**R Regulate**

Focus on soothing your child. Make them feel calm, safe and loved. Breathing is a great regulation exercise.

**R Relate**

Validate their feelings with your words and tone of voice. "I know you're upset right now." "This is very hard". Focus on connecting with your child.

**R Reason**

Once your child is calm, it is the time to talk about alternatives to behaviours while reinforcing the limits you set before. You can reassure them that you love them, but that the behaviour they're exhibiting is not ok.



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## Creative activities

### Cut and paste – Dinosaurs or crazy animals!

This activity requires the children to have good cutting skills. If you want to do this activity with the younger children, you can cut the shapes for the children which they use to create their dinosaurs. This activity can be altered to create crazy animals, monsters or robots. I always provide a container such as a plastic plate or polystyrene tray to keep the cut pieces safe otherwise they end up getting mixed in with the off-cut scraps and they get lost which equals frustration and tears. Trust me on this one.... I have experienced it several times even with containers!!

**Integration: Language or story time:** The children named their dinosaur and discussed where it lived, what it ate and was it a friendly or scary dinosaur. Another good idea is to invite the children to ask questions to the child about their dinosaur. E.g. Does your dinosaur have a favourite toy? Remind them not to ask the same questions which makes them listen more carefully. Children can also make up a story about their dinosaur and tell it to the group at story time.

**Themes:** Dinosaurs, Hands (cutting)

**Ages:** 4 - 5-year-olds

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

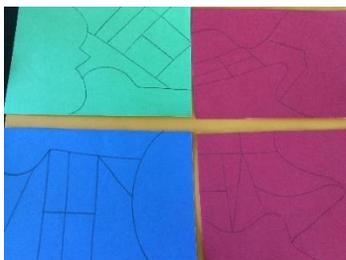
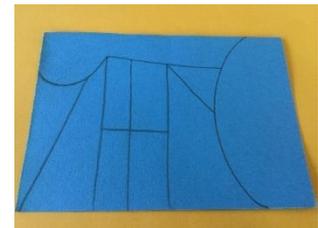
#### Materials:

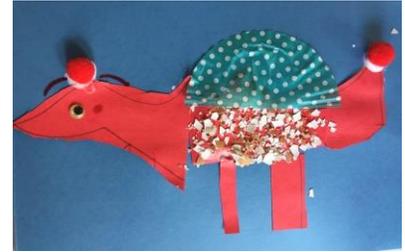
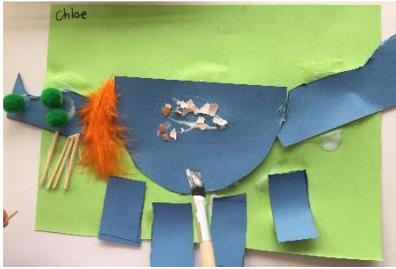
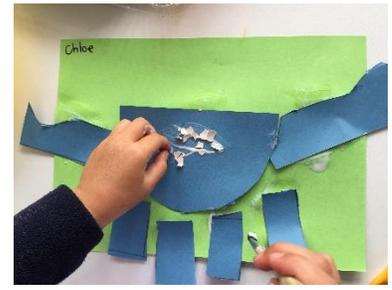
- Paper – lightweight card with lines drawn on (see note)
- Glue and glue brushes
- Scissors
- Collage materials: Cupcake cases cut into smaller pieces, crushed eggshells, pom poms, coloured cardboard shapes, googly eyes.
- Optional: something to draw with



**Method: Teacher:** Prepare the lines on the cardboard. Draw lines to create a body, a head, spikes and a tail shape when the child cuts along the lines. Each page can be different. Draw free hand and don't worry about rulers.

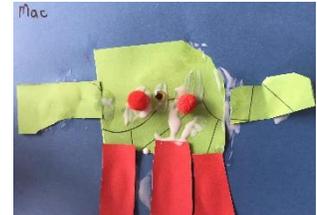
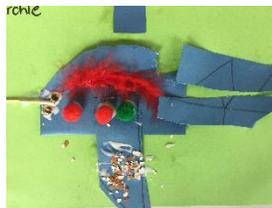
**Child:** The child selects a paper and carefully cuts along the lines. Provide a container for the child to store the cut pieces such as a plastic tray or plate. The child arranges the pieces to create a dinosaur or crazy animal. Once the animal has been planned the child glues the pieces to the paper. The children decorate the dinosaur with collage materials of their choice. Some children wanted to draw face features. Encourage the children to place the glue on the cardboard pieces and not on the base paper.





### Notes:

- Some children struggled to cut on the lines. Its okay if the cutting is not accurate and correcting it or insisting its accurate detracts from the creative process.
- Some children struggled to plan the dinosaur before pasting it. Its an important skill and part of the learning with this activity so encourage and remind them to do this. I get them to call me to "approve" before they can paste.
- Encourage the children to put the glue on the cut shapes and not on the base paper.
- This activity was popular with the boys.
- The collage materials can be varied according to what you have available.
- Prepare extra sheets as many children chose to make more than one creation.
- A few children decided to cut their own shapes and create their own pictures.



## Umbrella and rain collage and drawing

I enjoy presenting creative activities that use a variety of materials to keep children interested while offering them repeat opportunities to practice fine motor and eye hand coordination skills. (all essential for formal learning.) In this activity we used candles to draw with and colour washed over them for the drawing to show up. The surprise element was enjoyed by all the children. Pastels also offer a different drawing medium and give lovely bright vibrant colours that respond well to being colour washed. They are more expensive than wax crayons so you can substitute wax crayons for pastels.

**Themes:** Spring, Summer or winter depending on your rainfall area, water, clothing (rain clothes), weather

**Ages:** 4 – 5 ½ year olds

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

### Materials:

- Paper plate – small – half per child
- Glue and glue brushes
- Wooden sucker sticks or strips of cut toilet rolls
- Pastels or wax crayons
- A4 paper
- Candles – white and broken or cut into smaller pieces –about 1/4s or 1/3 rd.
- Blue food colouring or school dye – diluted.
- Cottonwool balls (optional) or tissues or squares of toilet paper

**Teacher:** Cut the paper plates in half and cut a scalloped edge on the straight edge.

**Child:** The child draws rain stripes over the paper using the candles. The child colours and decorates the front of the paper plate using the wax crayons or pastels. The umbrella is pasted to the paper and a wooden sucker stick is attached for the handle of the umbrella. The child draws a picture of themselves under the umbrella. The whole page of paper is colour washed with diluted blue food colouring (test it first to be sure it doesn't cover the pastel drawing) including the umbrella. The candle drawing shows up like magic! The child pastes cotton wool or crumpled tissues as clouds. Some children chose to paint the clouds with the food colouring. Encourage the children to use enough glue when pasting the umbrella. Preferably dry flat.





### Notes:

- This activity was enjoyed by both the boys and girls.
- Keep the tissue paper squares biggish otherwise they squash them too small.
- Half circles can be used instead of paper plates.
- The younger children did not place everything in the right orientation but that does not matter.
- Some children chose to paint the clouds too. If you don't want this to happen place the cotton wool at a different table where there is no paint.

## Paper packet fish on a printed background

This activity is once again made up of various components to extend the complexity of the activity and the skills practiced. The background is made by printing with spikey balls. You may not have these balls so choose another option to create the background. Some suggestions are marble painting, bubble wrap printing or candle drawing with a diluted food colouring wash. If you choose one of these methods the background is best done the day before.

The spikey balls are bought from a shop like the excitement stall and offer the children a great sensory opportunity while printing. Excellent fine motor skills are developed while holding the ball and gross motor as they move it up and down and over the paper while printing. A similar effect can be achieved by using small balloons filled with a bit of water to weight them. They are filled before you blow them up. Keep them small so small hands can easily grip them. The balloons are dipped in paint on a flat container and bounced up and down on the paper to create a print. Both methods offer a novelty component to the activity and encourage boys and the girls to participate.



**Themes:** The sea, under the water, fish, water animals

**Ages:** 4 - 5-year-olds (younger children will need extra help)

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

### Materials:

- Paper – A4
- Blue and white thick paint on a flat container
- Spikey balls or balloons if using
- Small paper packets such as lunch packets (see note)
- Tin foil cut into smaller pieces (see note)
- Glue and glue brushes
- Wax crayons or pastels
- Magazine pages or newspaper to stuff the fish.
- Small elastic bands or string/wool



**Note:** If you do not have lunch packets or small paper bags you can make your own by folding an A 4 paper in half and sealing the one short and one long side of the paper leaving the one short end open to stuff the fish with the paper. Prepare these ahead of time so the glue is dry and secure.

When you cut the tin foil into squares by layering it the pieces stick together and its very time consuming to separate them. I prefer to cut only a single layer into strips and then cut these into squares.

**Teacher:** Prepare the tin foil squares and the magazine or newspaper pages

**Background:** The children dip the spikey balls or balloons into the paint and print paint over the background page. I put blue and white paint on the plate, so it blends to create a nice textured water background. Print by bouncing the ball/balloon up and down on the paper refreshing it with more paint until the page is well covered.

**Child:** The child draws patterns on the paper packet including an eye at the closed end. The open end becomes the tail. The child stuffs the packet with 3-4 pieces of lightly crumpled magazine pages until the fish is plumped up but there is still space to secure the bag closed with a small elastic band or some string. The child pastes tin foil squares onto the fish body to represent the scales. The fish is pasted to the painted background. Using cut paper cupcake casings, the children paste on fins.

### Dry flat

**Grade R:** The children can draw writing patterns to decorate the fish body.





**Notes:**

- Some children chose not to put scales on their fish.
- The boys and girls both enjoyed this activity.
- The background can also just be painted if preferred.



**Here are some activities I have done in the past for my family, my home and Valentine's day.**

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

**Themes:** My family, my home

**Ages:** 3 ½ - 5-year-olds (younger children will need extra help and may not draw but may scribble.)

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

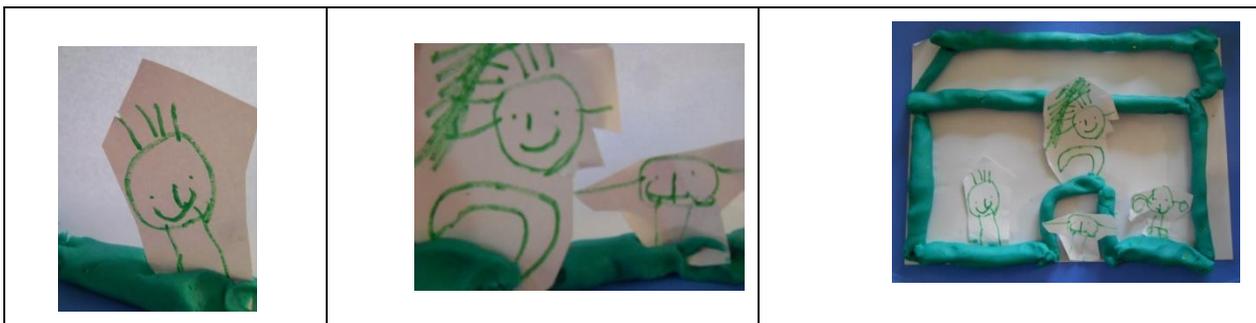
**Materials:**

- Paper – A4 or A3 paper
- Something to draw with
- Scissors
- Playdough
- Cardboard or paper for the base. A cereal box is effective.
- Note: a plastic bowl or container is useful for keeping the drawings safe

**Teacher:** Prepare the playdough

**Child:** The children drew their family on paper using the writing materials and cut out each family member. They made a house of playdough by rolling the play dough into sausages and creating a house outline on the cardboard or base paper. They attached the family people by pressing the paper people into the play dough house.

**Note:** It may be helpful to cut the paper into smaller squares as this will help define the size of the drawings. If children struggle to cut, then I draw a solid line around the drawing for them to cut on.



## **Drawing – my family and making a wooden stick house for the family**

**Themes:** My family, my home

**Ages:** 3 ½ - 5-year-olds (younger children will need extra help and may not draw but may scribble.)

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

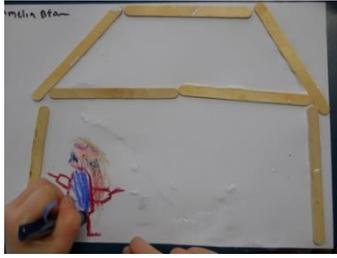
**Materials:**

- Paper – A4 or A3 paper
- Something to draw with
- Cardboard or paper for the base. A cereal box is effective.
- Glue and glue brushes
- Wooden sucker sticks or toilet rolls cut into strips.

**Teacher:** Prepare the wooden sucker sticks by carefully cutting or breaking them into smaller pieces. Encourage the child to plan the house before pasting the sticks to the paper.

**Child:** Using the sucker sticks the child plans the house before pasting the sticks to the paper. The child draws their family in the house and can add pets and a garden. The sticks can be coloured or painted.

**Note:** It is not safe for children to cut the sucker sticks. Encourage the children to put the glue on the sticks rather than the paper.



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.

## Valentine's day activities

Please visit the Pinterest board link below to get lots of ideas and activities for all the learning areas. Valentine's week is a great time to present the theme of Colour red or shapes with the heart shape included.

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



Collage hearts. The children snipped strips of paper over the glue on red painted heart

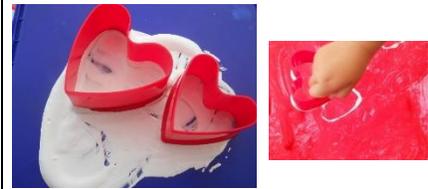
Painted hearts with patterning of shapes around the outside edge

Puppets/people using a heart shape for the head and a packet for the body to be used as a puppet

Younger children can enjoy collaging with cut pieces leaving out the cutting aspect

Younger children can paint the hearts and collage with the cut squares excluding patterning

Not suitable for the younger children



Baskets made from two paper plates folded in half and stapled together. The children painted and decorated the plates before folding and stapling. They drew a picture for the front but they could write a letter

The arms and legs are made by fan folding the strips of cardboard. This is quite a difficult skill so younger children can use plain unfolded strips or sucker sticks

Printing using white paint and cookie cutters on a red painted background. The younger children often try and paint with the cookie cutter so just be aware of this. Its all okay.

## Valentine's Day heart hats

**Themes:** Colour red, Valentine's Day, Shapes – heart, Hats

**Ages:** 3 ½ - 5-year-olds

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

### Materials:

- Paper plate – small or large depending on the age of the child.
- Scissors – Teacher
- Red and white paint
- Paint brushes
- Optional: Paper hearts made from a scrap booking punch

Template: <https://i.pinimg.com/236x/c6/52/9a/c6529ae09093a812e58f5bf157a78dc9.jpg>

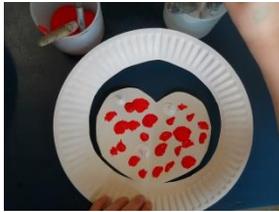


**Teacher:** Cut heart shapes from the centre of the paper plate. To do this fold the paper plate in half and carefully cut the inner circle leaving a small area still attached to the main plate. Cut the circle to be a heart shape. Punch small hearts if using.

**Child:** The child drops blobs of red and white paint onto one side of the heart. The child folds the heart closed and rubs gently on the outside so the paint colours merge to make pink. The child opens the heart. The child paints the area around the heart using red paint. If using paper hearts, the children can collage the hearts to the paper plate hat.

**Many children placed paint blobs on both sides of the heart, and it was still effective.**

**Extension:** The children used the heart shaped punched paper to create their own headbands. These pieces of punched paper can also be pasted as collage material.



### Notes:

- The children really enjoyed this activity.
- Instead of doing squash painting the children can just paint the hats.
- Pink and white confetti can be used instead of the cut-out hearts.

**Happy teaching and Happy Valentines day. Share the love with everyone.**



**Regards**

**Karin**

