

Preschool Themes Newsletter – July 2018

Hello Everyone,

Welcome back to a very cold third term. The good news is that it can only improve from now on and it's not too long before we will be celebrating Spring. We are also past the middle of the year which is always a bit scary.

We are experiencing one of the coldest winters in 20 years in NZ with most mornings very cold, foggy and frosty so I have had lots of fun at school doing winter and ice activities. I hope you enjoy them and can incorporate some of them into your themes. Stay warm and healthy.

I will be visiting SA in August and September so I am sending an extra-long July and August newsletter and there will be no September edition. I have held back the July newsletter as I find many email boxes get full in the holidays and the newsletters bounce. So here it is.



Self-reflection

How many times have you presented a lesson or activity and it didn't go quite according to plan? Believe me it happens to all of us, even to experienced teachers. Sometimes you can 'rescue' the lesson by making some quick changes straight way e.g change the glue for an art activity, skip pages in a story that is too long and inappropriate, cut a lesson short or add in something extra to hold the children's attention, but other times you just have to put it down to a lesson learned!

The important part of this discussion is that you need to reflect on the lesson and make notes for the following year or for the next lesson. I do it with every art activity I discuss here with the section called NOTES.

Sometimes all the lesson needs is a little tweak to improve it but sometimes it's just a complete disaster and needs to be completely re planned. Often it's also a timing issue. You think the children will enjoy a certain lesson or activity and its way off so you just have to cut the lesson short and put it down to experience. One thing that is always good is that the children don't know the lesson was not great so don't stress about it.

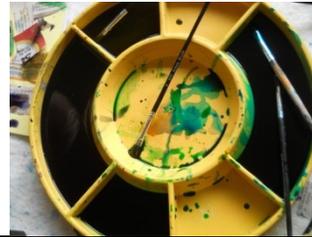
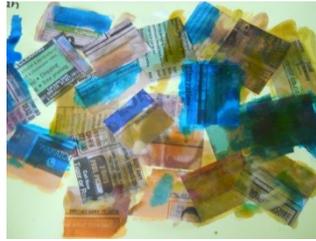
I am a firm believer that if your lesson is not going well and the children are not listening or are being disruptive, first you need to look at yourself and not to blame the children.

Obviously you will always have one or two children who are always disruptive and don't sit still or listen but if the majority of the group are not listening then there is something wrong with the lesson or planning.

Aspects to think about:

- The materials and resources
- The colours and quantity of paints
- The size of the paint brushes
- The type of paper and glue
- The length of the lesson
- The level of the lesson
- Leaving scissors out

Here is just one example of what I am discussing. In this art activity I put the diluted food colouring into flat trays and the children muddled the brushes into the different colours causing the colour to become muddy and unattractive. I managed to sort this out mid-way in the activity by placing the colouring in small bottles each with its own paint brush but even this does not guarantee that there will not be some mixing. I also find that putting less into the bottles is better and you can tip out muddy colours and add fresh colour.



Nice clear colours keeping the food colouring in jars with individual paint brushes

Muddy colours from food colouring in a flat container

Creative activities

This activity didn't quite work out as I had planned. I have sorted the problem for you so you don't get the same issue. There were two main problems and it once again reminded me to test an activity before presenting it to the children. You will always get some surprises with every activity but basically the technique still needs to work.

I saw a similar activity on Pinterest and gave it a go. Often on Pinterest the activity is being done by a mom with her one or two kids and then when it gets presented in a preschool context you encounter problems they didn't. The main issue with this activity was that I placed the diluted food colouring into a flat container and the children mixed the brushes and colours creating muddy colours which didn't look very nice on the drab newspaper. Once most of the children had completed the activity I set it out for a child who had missed out. This time I put the food colouring into small baby food bottles so she could see the colours and each jar had its own brush. The end results were much more pleasing. I didn't have the primary colours in food colouring but I think next time I would limit it to two primary colours that will blend to make a new colour like blue and yellow or blue and red.



It's more effective to use the print section of the newspaper as opposed to pictures and photographs. I had the local paper which had a lot of photos versus the classified section of a larger newspaper (I had not given this any thought before the activity!!!)

Painting newspaper squares with food colouring to create a background and adding a black and white outline drawing.

Themes: Myself, My family, Pets, My home – any theme can work by altering what the children draw.

You will need:

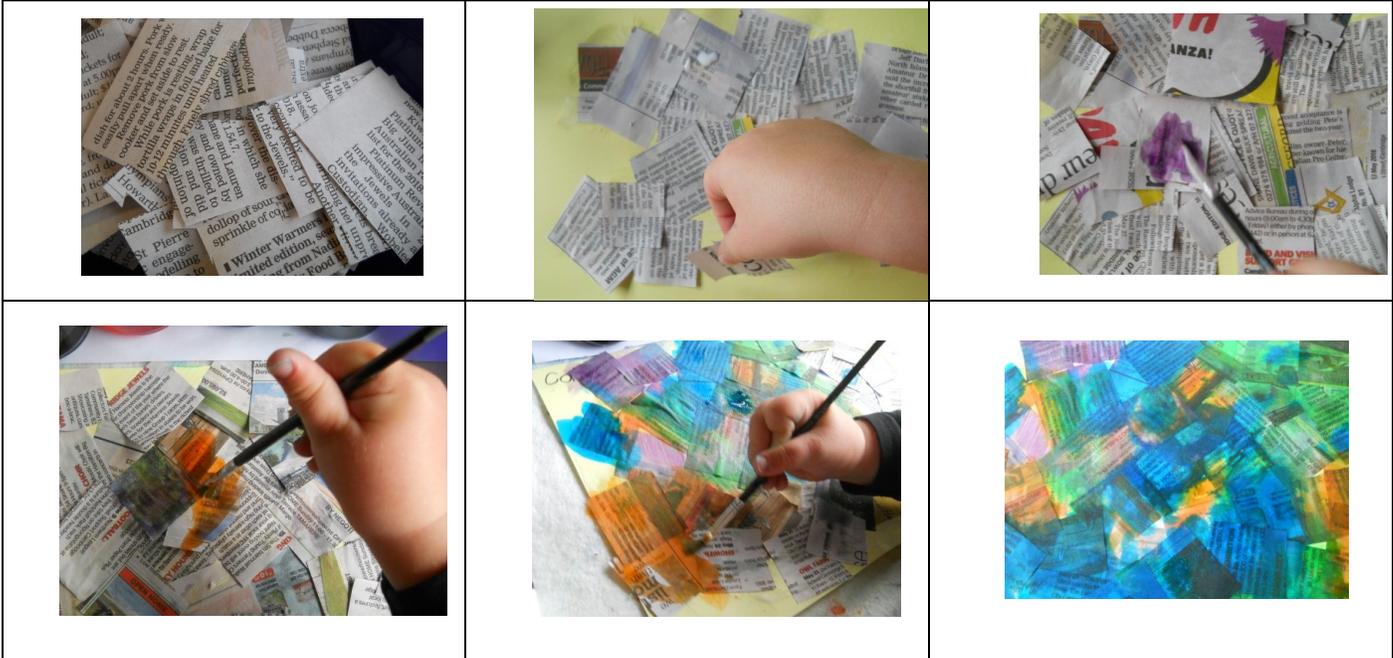
- Newspaper – classified section or areas with lots of print rather than photographs cut into squares about 4 x 4 cm – no need to measure
- Glue and glue brushes
- Lightweight card – plain or coloured
- Food colouring – 2 colours in small containers diluted with water – check the colour strength before using
- Paint brushes – preferably **small thin** ones so there is not too much food colouring used
- A5 paper to draw on
- Scissors
- Black pens or wax crayons



Method:

Teacher: Cut the newspaper into smaller pieces. Prepare some A5 paper otherwise the drawings end up being too big.

The children spread a layer of glue on the lightweight card and place the newspaper squares close together. Some overlapping is acceptable. There should not be too much cardboard showing through. Encourage the children to use the whole page (Consider an A5 page if your children are younger so there is less to cover and they don't lose interest). Once the page is well covered the children paint the newspaper squares with the food colouring. Set aside to dry. At another table the children create their drawings using the A5 paper and the black koki pens or black wax crayons (coloured can be used too). Cut out the drawn pictures. Draw a general circle line around the children's drawing for them to cut along. The children paste the drawing to the background.



Drawing and pasting to the background



Notes:

- Some children did not place the newspaper squares close enough while others overlapped too much
- Try and keep the food colouring from mixing and getting muddy
- No food colouring – use water colour paints
- Paint may work as long as its powder paint mixed with water as the newspaper is absorbent
- The younger children struggled to cut their pictures. Consider giving them paper cut in a circle so no cutting is necessary
- Don't leave scissors on the table – the younger children will enjoy cutting all your newspaper squares into small pieces and cutting their paper
- The younger children enjoyed the newspaper squares in a different way.



		
		
Nice clear colours by keeping the food colouring in jars with individual paint brushes	Muddy colours from food colouring in a flat container	Some of the younger children cut their drawings into pieces so I had to do a repair job and paste the picture together on the background

Winter trees with snow (the snow looks pink in the photos but it is white paint)

With the very cold and frosty mornings we have at school I thought it would be a good idea to make some winter icy trees. Often we have rain at night and the water on the trees and in the playground freezes over at night. We get a lot of snow around us but not where school is located. It's a debate in education on whether children should be making snow pictures if they don't get snow where they live as it's not part of their environment, but I disagree with this. Most of our children have either been in snow or seen it on TV so I am comfortable presenting this activity to the group.

Theme: Winter

Other themes: Trees, Snow, spring – using pink paint

Ages: 3 - 5 year olds

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

Materials:

- Brown paper
- Glue and glue brushes
- White paint on flat containers with glue added
- Milk lids
- Shiny plastic glitter
- Blue paper for the background
- Cottonwool balls or pieces of cottonwool



Method:

Teacher: Cut brown paper into strips; some wider for tree trunks and thinner and smaller for branches

Add glue to the white paint.

The children select a wider piece of brown paper for the tree trunk, apply glue to the paper and paste at the base of the blue paper. The children add thinner strips of paper for the branches. Encourage the children to apply the glue to the brown paper and not the background paper. Once the tree is pasted, the children make swirls of white paint with the plastic milk lids by twisting the milk lids on the paper after dipping it in the paint. Repeat a few times. The children sprinkle shiny plastic snow on the picture. If you do not have shiny snow or artificial snow, Epsom salts or salt will give it a shiny appearance when it dries. The children paste some cottonwool on the bottom of the tree on the 'ground'.

Note: I ration the shiny snow by giving it to each child in a milk lid.



Notes:

- Some of the younger children did not place the tree branches in the correct place. Allow them to collage the tree pieces randomly and then add the snow
- Some children put snow on the tree trunk. Let the younger children enjoy the process
- Shiny snow glitter is best purchased at Christmas time but can be left out or substituted with Epsom salts, salt or silver glitter. Alternatively cottonwool will also be effective
- A blue background shows up the snow painting best.



Extension

One child decided she wanted to use the brown paper strips to create a house. We added snow to the roof to make it a winter picture. I cut roof shapes for her.



Winter process art painting with torn paper snowflakes

Painting background

Themes: Winter, snow, water

Ages: 3 ½ y- 5 year olds

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



You will need:

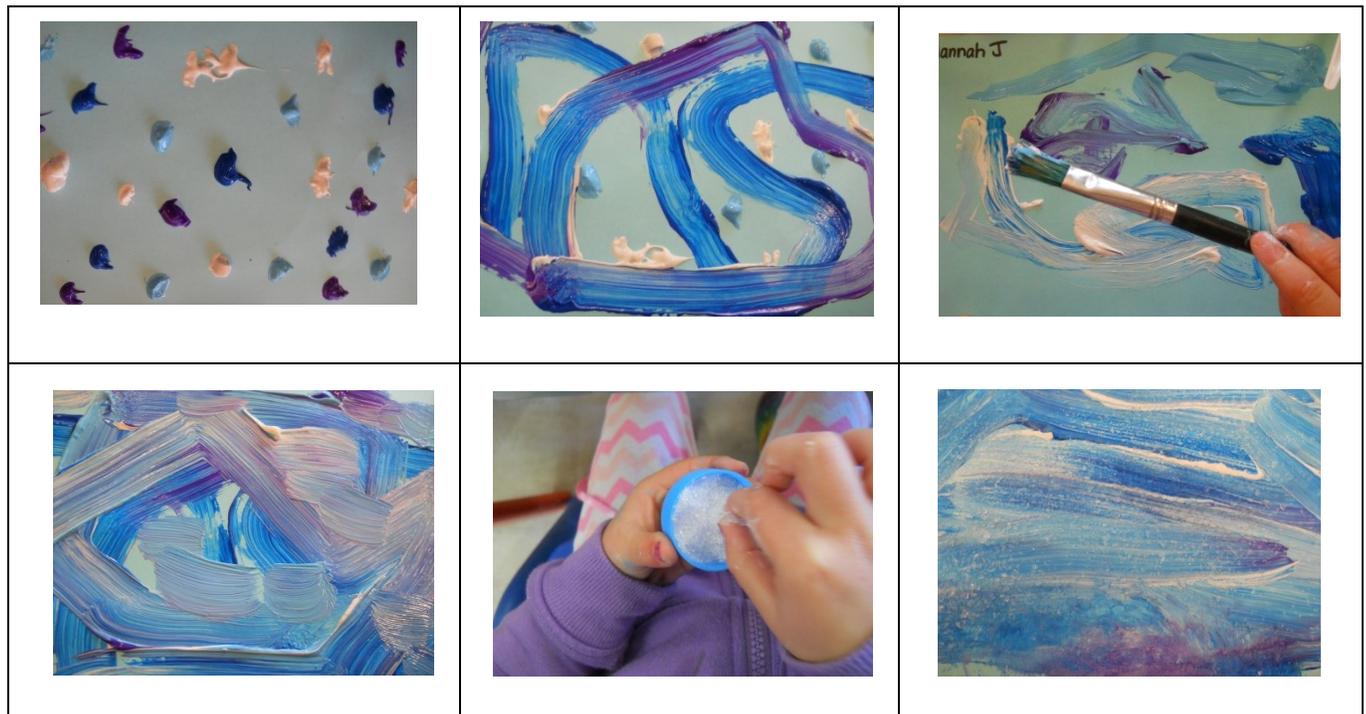
- Paint – dark blue, light blue, purple and white in a flat container with teaspoons **with white glue added to the paint**
- Paint brushes
- Lightweight card to support the paper
- Epsom salts or salt (small containers or milk lids to dispense the Epsom salts)



Teacher: You may have to remove some of the excess paint if it's too thick. Encourage the children to cover the whole page.

Method: The children drop blobs of the different colours of paint onto their paper. Using the paint brush the child joins the dots of paint of the same colour together. Do the same for all the colours. There will be some cross blending which will create a lovely icy background. Sprinkle with Epsom salts and leave to dry.

Note: Give each child a milk lid of Epsom salts so they are not excessive and you can ration it. It will dry sparkly and with the glue in the paint it will stick



Notes:

- Some children 'painted' with the teaspoons.
- Some children did not put enough paint in the blobs
- Some children did not spread the blobs of paint over the paper
- Some children used excessive paint which will take long to dry. Others did not use enough so it would not paint



I would consider using white cardboard or silver cardboard for the snowflake as the blue did not show up all that well on the background.

Winter process art painting with torn paper snowflakes

Torn paper snowflakes

Themes: Winter, snow, water

Ages: 3 ½ y- 5 year olds

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

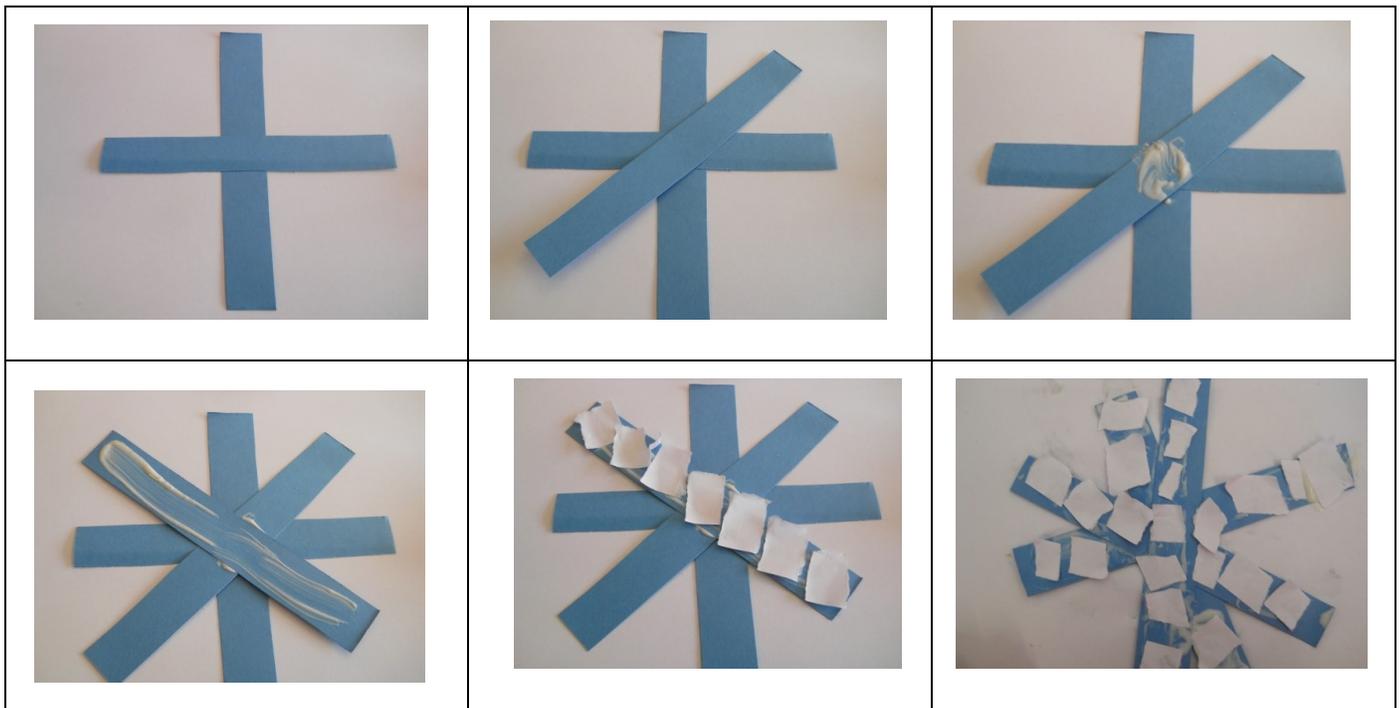
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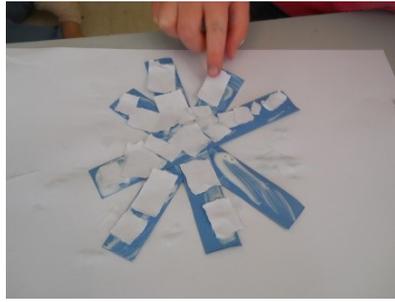
- Lightweight card – dark blue – see notes
- Glue and glue brushes
- Paper – cut into 1 cm wide strips

Teacher: Cut the blue cardboard into 1 cm strips along the length and then cut each one in half again. You will need 8 pieces per snowflake. I give each child their 4 pieces when they start the activity.

Note: The children need to work on a scrap background paper to be able to pick up the snowflake to take it to the drying area – the actual flake needs time to dry before it can be moved.

Method: The children create their snowflake by making a cross with two of the cardboard strips and then placing glue in the centre and adding diagonal strips (see pictures)
The children tear the paper strips into smaller pieces and paste them to snowflake. The completed snowflake is pasted to the background.





Notes:

- Some children struggled to tear the paper into smaller pieces. For younger children teacher can tear or cut the paper strips.
- Some children pasted bigger pieces to the snowflake which is fine
- The snowflakes did not glue easily to the background. Use a generous blob of glue or staple
- The snowflakes can be hung as a mobile or attached to a group collage



Winter process art painting with torn paper snowflakes

Torn paper snowflakes

Themes: Winter, clothes

Ages: 3 ½ y- 5 year olds

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

You will need:

- Lightweight card – cereal boxes are a good weight
- Scraps of fleece fabric
- Glue and glue brushes
- Person template (winter theme book)
- Crayons
- Hair – wool or cottonwool
- Optional: Scissors if the children can manage to cut their own templates.



Teacher: Trace and cut out people using the cardboard. Prepare small squares of fleece fabric

Note: Keep the fabric pieces small enough as the school scissors are useless for cutting fabric

Method: The children add glue to the body and paste squares of fleece onto the body to cover the shape with winter warmth.

Draw a face and use wool for hair or cottonwool.





Ice activities – Science and Senses

(Sorry the photos are not great as the light was very bright outside)

The water looks dirty but we had used the plastic tray for painting ice – see next activity



For this activity I froze several ice blocks. This needs to be done slowly allowing each layer of ice to freeze before adding more water. Fill a 1 litre yogurt container or something similar with about 4 cm of water and add a few items to the water. These can be Lego pieces, milk lids, wooden sticks, plastic shapes, small animals etc. I also coloured a few layers with food colouring. Each time you add a new layer of water, add a few more items.

Once frozen solid run some cold water on the outside and the ice block will pop out. The yogurt containers were used at the end of the activity for water play once they were all melted



I used a plastic sand tray positioned on a table for setting out this activity outside. You could use large individual plastic containers if you don't have a sand tray.

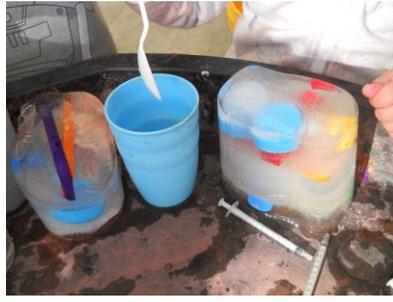
Here is another perfect example of self-reflection of an activity as discussed earlier. I thought giving the children a cup of warm water and small syringes would be perfect but the amount of water in the small syringes made little impact on melting the ice blocks and the children were getting very cold hands and a bit frustrated. So I changed to large syringes but they were very stiff to use and added to the frustration. Then I thought plastic spoons would be perfect only to find you have to tilt the cup to get water in the plastic spoon so that idea had to be discarded. Eventually I added my good old milk lids and this was perfect. Once the ice blocks began to melt the children could scoop up the surrounding water with the plastic cups and pour that over the ice block and this was actually the most effective.

This was a perfect activity for the children to practice perseverance and cooperation and I was interested to see which kids continued until they got the items out. This activity was very well liked by many children and especially the boys.

Once all the ice blocks were melted the children spent ages playing with the very icy water using all the spoons, syringes, cups and yogurt containers and this also kept many children happy for a good while.



Any child who splashed or squirted another child with water was asked to leave the table. I only had to do this once and the other children realised I meant it so I had no behaviour issues at this activity BUT I did supervise all the time.



Notes:

- Try to have no more than two children per ice block. I froze 13 blocks
- Small yogurt cups will be perfect to pour water onto the blocks
- I would add some warm water in the water tray to start off and let the children scoop this over the ice blocks
- This was done outside with the children standing
- Lots of child and teacher led discussion discussed what was happening, why and what senses were involved
- Discourage the children from drinking the water!
- Some children wanted to chop the ice blocks with the spoons. I discouraged this



Painting on big blocks of ice using water colour paint

In keeping with our winter and ice theme I froze plain blocks of ice in half filled 2 litre plastic containers. Make sure they lie flat when freezing otherwise they wobble when painting.

Place the ice blocks in the water tray and place water colour paints and paint brushes for the children to paint the ice. It took a while for the ice to melt and once it did it became easier to paint on.





I just had to add this photo of one child painting the ice but refusing to part with his handbag from the fantasy area. Only issue was that he was holding the bag with his dominant right hand and then used the paint brush in his left hand!! There was no way he would even listen to my suggestion to change the hands as he thought I wanted to take the bag off him even though I assured him he would still be holding it.

So this would have definitely not been a good time to assess him or his dominant hand.

Happy teaching
Regards
Karin

