

Preschool Theme Newsletter – July 2013

Hello everyone,

Yah! We have passed the middle of winter and it can only get better from now on. Roll on spring! We have had the craziest weather ever this year in New Zealand with the driest, hottest, longest summer in many years and then the worst snow and flooding we have ever had! In this newsletter there are some more fun art ideas for you to enjoy and some interesting and useful reading on midline crossing – a perceptual area which is often neglected but is very important for school readiness.

Dates to note for the 3rd term

September is Arbour Month. (1 September: Arbour Day, 1-7 September: Arbour Week, 1 - 30 September: Arbour Month) so a theme on trees and wood is ideal for this term. This web site is excellent and has lots of useful information.

<http://www.greenworks.co.za/arborday.html>

Heritage day is celebrated on the 24th September.

The Heritage Day theme book (sometimes labelled South Africa) is all about celebrating the diversity of South Africa and the many different cultures. The National symbols are discussed

Spring is officially on September the 1st which ties in nicely with trees and wood and new growth.

Don't forget to visit the pinterest boards for more theme ideas and activities.

<http://pinterest.com/kstedall/boards/>

In 2013 the trees being highlighted are:

Common: Blossom Tree or Keurboom (*Virgilia oroboides*)
Rare: Cross-Berry or Kruisbessie (*Grewia occidentalis*)
 Powder-puff Tree or Poeierkwasboom
 (*Barringtonia racemosa*)

Theme delivery woes



Receiving your themes in a reasonable time and having your theme book orders responded to promptly is of high importance to me. Since I live in New Zealand, I am totally dependent on Ilette and the postal or courier service to be efficient. Sometimes this is not the case and I need to know about it so I can attend to the issues.

There still seem to be some hiccups with the delivery of theme books especially with the postal system and being human we occasionally make errors too. PLEASE e mail me if you have placed an order and delivery seems to be taking an unreasonable amount of time or the response to your order is not dealt with in an adequate time frame. We can only attend to the issues if we are made aware of them, so rather than be disgruntled PLEASE email me ASAP. Karin at rodandkarin@xtra.co.nz Thank you to those of you who have let me know about delays with their orders.

New theme manual – Sea and the beach



The sea and beach theme is well under way and should be ready soon. We made sand castles in the sandpit using a variety of containers and shapes. I gave the children spray bottles filled with diluted food colouring (quite a strong colour is needed) and they sprayed the sandcastles different colours. It was very effective and kept many children happily occupied for some time.

There were some frustrations as the spray bottles stopped working, some started again but had to be pumped a lot and of course they kept tipping the bottle upside down to spray the bottom of the sandcastle, which caused the sprayers not to work. One word of warning here: supervise at all times. I had to move away from the area and the other teacher did not supervise well and a few children were sprayed in the face leaving them covered in spots and looking like they had the measles. The dye we use at school stains quite strongly so I



was not impressed and I am sure the parent wasn't either! I also did not have enough spray bottles so there was a bit of squabbling. You do need to half fill the bottles as the children love to spray and do so with excess. Strict rules are needed for this activity. I just used spray bottles which we collected from empty household spray and wipe cleaners.



Creative activities

Printing with cookie cutters and glue and collaging with glitter – stars and moon

For this activity the children painted moon shaped cookie cutters (from play dough area) with coloured glue, created a print of glue and then sprinkled glitter onto the glue and shook off the excess. I had been given some material stars so we painted those with glue paint (paint mixed with white glue!) and sprinkled glitter onto them too. These were then pasted to the printed black paper and displayed as part of the matariki group display.



The children were quite intrigued to see the glittered moon shape.

TIPS: I let the children paint the cookie cutters with the glue paint. It would be less messy if they just dipped them into glue paint in flat containers. I find the lids of ice cream containers work very well for this sort of activity. Also if you leave paint brushes near printing you will get some children painting instead of printing. Although the painting of the cookie cutters was a bit tricky and a bit messy they were all very careful and I got the best

printing ever. Time did not allow for more prints but if I did it again I would encourage them to print stars too instead of using the material stars. I found it more effective to pop the paper into the glitter for the children but you can have the children do this on their own. Limit the amount of glitter you give them and have a nice big flat container to shake off the excess glitter. Black paper worked well and I gave them an A5 size. Glue without paint is good too.



Classroom group display of Matariki – Maori New year (stars and moon)

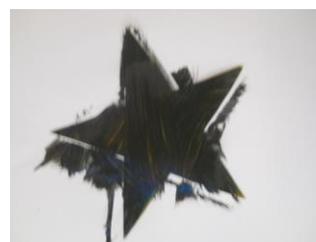
Here is a picture of the group display created over time. As you can see much of it was done by the children. Weaving is a big part of Maori traditions hence the weaving on the board. Traditionally they weave flax leaves.



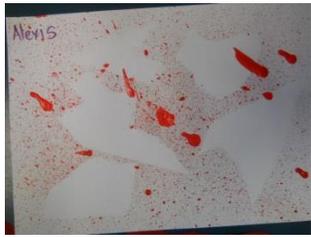
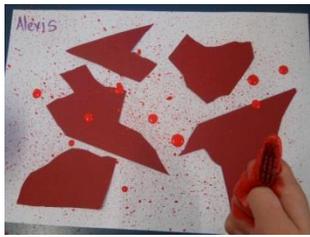
Wax-resist stars

I cut out some stars for the children, they coloured them with wax crayons (dark and all over), painted the whole star with thick black paint (with some dishwasher liquid added to make it stick) and left it to dry. Once dry, they scraped the black paint off and drew patterns on the stars. The wax crayon colours showed through. I used sosatie sticks (kebab) with the points broken off for the children to

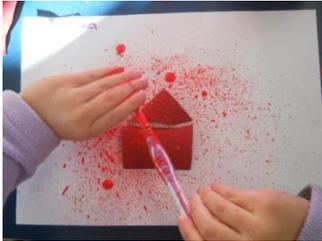
scratch the paint off. I do suggest you have a model star showing the level of colouring in and then the completed one scratched so the children can see where they are going to with the activity.



Splatter painting



The children cut the paper into shapes of their choice. They arranged the shapes on the paper, dipped the toothbrush into the paint, splattered paint on and around the shapes and then carefully removed the shapes to reveal the patterns. One child created a



house shape which was very effective. Splatter painting only works with the older children. The younger children tend to turn the bristles of the brush upwards and splatter their faces. I just give the younger children the

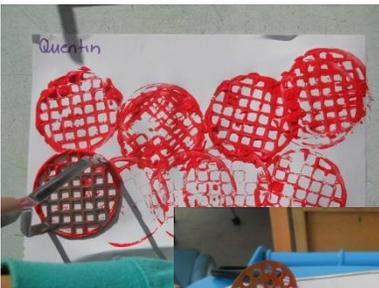


paint brushes to paint with. Using paint pots with lids helps wipe the brush as the child takes it out of the paint pot.

By allowing the children to cut their own shapes you provide a cutting opportunity and some fine motor development at the same time

Printing with potato mashers

For this activity you will need several different kinds of potato mashers. I bought them for a charity shop but you could ask parents for some. The secret to the success of this activity is that the potato masher must be completely flat. Some of them have small rivets which prevent them from making proper contact with the paper. I was interested in how many boys wanted to participate and the discussions that went on while they were printing. I also found they printed nice clear prints. Often they almost 'paint' with the printing items and spoil the prints. (Like the picture to the right!)



The girls thought the red one looked like a waffle and the orange one was a pizza. They decided to print a flower.



Midline crossing



You need to create as many opportunities as possible for midline crossing to happen. The body has an imaginary line down the middle and the children need to be able to cross over this line with ease. When you write across a page and you are right handed you have to cross this midline to begin writing on the left hand side of the page. As you write and you come to the middle of the line you have to cross back over this midline and continue writing to the end of the line. The process is repeated as they move to the next line. The same happens when a child reads a line of print but they cross the midline with their eyes. Children who have trouble crossing their midline will encounter difficulties with reading and writing in primary school. For this printing activity

I placed the printing pad on the left of the page so the right handed child was 'forced' to cross their midline to reach the paint. I have had a situation where I did this and the child constantly moved the printing pad back to the right side of her paper. You may have to go as far as sticking the printing pad to the table with presstick if the child really needs practice and is resisting as it feel uncomfortable for the child.

<http://www.kids-first.com.au/article/crossing-the-midline-helps-kids-learn>

The following article can be found at the link above. There is more information on the site.

The ability to cross the midline reflects the degree of 'bilateral' co-ordination development a child has.

Kids need bilateral skills so that the right and left sides of their brains can communicate.

It's this connection that allows the two sides of the body to move together in coordination to perform a wide variety of learning and leisure tasks like reading, writing, running and riding a bike.

How do you know if a child is having difficulty crossing their midline?

Signs that your child is not able to cross the midline

- Your child switches hands when writing, drawing, painting and colouring
- Your child reverses letters and numbers
- Your child finds it hard to form letters and numbers with a pen or pencil
- Your child writes on the left side of the paper with their left hand and on the right side of the paper with their right hand
- Your child uses different feet to kick a ball
- Your child has difficulty co-ordinating gross motor patterns e.g. crawling, skipping, star-jumps
- Your child has difficulties visually scanning from the dominant to the non-dominant side e.g. reading information on a blackboard

Tips to help your child to develop the ability to cross the midline

These activities are a great way to develop your child's bilateral abilities.

They can be included in daily routines at home or even incorporated into classroom activities at preschool or school.

- Threading beads, cutting and pasting, folding paper
- Placing finger puppets on one hand and encouraging your child to remove the puppets with the opposite hand
- Banging blocks or percussion instruments together in their midline
- Playing Twister
- Playing Simon Says
- Playing Animal Walks i.e. crab crawl, frog jump, bunny hop
- Making streamer or ribbon circles and patterns in front of their midline (use two hands together or one in each hand)
- Marching games using their arms and legs
- Drawing or writing on a horizontal surface i.e. chalk board, mirror, white board
- Placing stickers or scrunchies on one arm and encouraging your child to remove them with the opposite hand

There are many good articles on the internet to read up about midline crossing and activities to develop and practice this skill. It's an area of child development

<http://www.ot-mom-learning-activities.com/crossing-the-midline.html>

Paint centre

We recently got a new painting station at school. It allows 8 children to paint and draw at the same time, the paper is held in a clip and the paint pots are safe in the tray below. The only thing I don't like is that you have to mix up 4 sets of paint for each side and it's quite a waste. It's a good idea to offer painting at different levels and angles. The best paint for this activity is the ready mixed thick paint otherwise the paint tends to run down the paper. A fold up clothes drying rack is ideal for hanging wet paintings (in the right corner of the right photo!) It's also on wheels so it's easy to move around. This one was hand made but I am sure you can buy one.



Happy teaching

Regards Karin



What is “Crossing the Midline”?

<http://nspt4kids.com/parenting/help-your-child-develop-the-crossing-the-midline-skill/>

By the age of 3 or 4 years old, a child should have mastered the bilateral skill (using both sides of the body together) called “crossing the midline”. This is the ability to move one hand, foot, or eye into the space of the other hand, foot or eye. We cross midline when we scratch an elbow, cross our ankles, and read left to right. Crossing the midline of your body helps build pathways in the brain and is an important prerequisite skill required for the appropriate development of various motor and cognitive skills. Children who have difficulty crossing the body’s midline often have trouble with skills such as reading, writing, completing self-care skills and participating in sports & physical activities. These skills require a type of coordination that comes from experience with “cross-lateral motion,” which is movement involving the left arm and right leg, or the right arm and left leg at the same time.

Establishing a “worker hand” and a “helper hand” is a sign that the brain is maturing and lateralization is occurring, and is strongly correlated with the ability to cross the midline. Both sides of the brain need to talk to each other for the “worker hand” and the “helper hand” to work together and complement each other. Coordinating both sides of the body can be difficult for the child who avoids crossing midline. Often, these children have not yet established a hand preference, sometimes using their left and sometimes using their right to draw, color, write, eat, and throw.

Effects on children who do not develop the Bilateral Skill:

Furthermore, when a child has difficulty crossing midline, it can affect his/her ability to read. While the child is moving his/her eyes from left to right across the page, the eyes will stop at midline to blink and refocus; however, when this happens, the child will very frequently lose his/her place on the line and become confused as to where they left off. It also affects handwriting, as diagonal lines cross the midline, and the child may need to stop in the middle of the page to switch hands when writing from left to right. Many self-care and daily living skills require crossing midline. For example, perfecting the skill of putting socks or shoes on requires one hand to cross over to the other side of the body.

Children who have difficulty crossing midline may appear ambidextrous because they are often observed using both hands, but they actually have a hidden neuroprocessing issue. Both sides of their brains are not communicating, resulting in decreased coordination, decreased motor control of movements and difficulties achieving higher level skills. Often, these children end up with two unskilled hands.

Activities to help develop the ability to Cross the Midline:

To help develop efficient crossing of the midline, provide children with a variety of two-handed (bilateral) activities. Try some of the below activities to help build more pathways in the brain and to develop the ability to cross the midline, improve coordination, and improve overall functional performance on a daily basis.

Right Brain/Left Brain Teasers-

- a. Pop bubbles with only one hand (they will have to reach across their body to pop the bubbles floating on the opposite side).
- b. Reach for bean bags, balls, stuffed animals, or other objects across midline, then throwing at a target.
- c. Draw large figure eights (the infinity sign or an 8 turned on its side) on paper, on the floor with a finger, in the air with a finger, or drive a matchbox car around a figure eight pattern.

- d. Let the child play with sand, scooping sand from one side of the body and putting it into a bucket on the opposite side of the body without switching hands.
- e. Let the child pretend to drive a car with a ball in his/her hands to use as a steering wheel and encourage the crossing of his/her arms as he/she turns the ‘steering wheel’ Or...In order to make this similar in style to most of the others—Pretend to drive a car with a ball in both hands to use as a steering wheel and cross both arms while turning the “steering wheel”.
- f. Play flashlight tag. In a dimmed room, lie on your backs and have the child follow your flashlight beam projected on the wall with his own flashlight.
- g. Touch the opposite elbow and knee.
- h. Cross one foot over the other while walking sideways.
- i. Do “grapevine” walks.
- j. Knee Slap Walk- Walk around raising each knee while touching/slapping it with the opposite hand (or elbow). Change it to a skip while touching the opposite knee as it comes up.
- k. Windmills-Stand with feet spread apart and arms extended out to the sides. Bend over at waist and tap right hand to left foot. Stand back up and then bend and tap left hand to right foot.
- l. Point your left finger out and put your right thumb up. Switch them, and switch, and switch, and switch...
- m. Hold your nose, then cross the other hand over and grab your opposite ear. Slap your thighs and switch your hands...switch, slap, switch, slap...
- n. Write your name in the air while rotating your foot in a circle clockwise.
- o. Wash the car and make sure the arms cross midline while scrubbing.