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## September 2012 Newsletter



At last the trees are covered in blossoms which can only mean one thing – spring is in the air. Since we have been looking at school reports over the past month I have included a discussion on continuous assessment in this newsletter. I welcome your ideas and thoughts too. I have not been at school much this past month as I have spent some time visiting my first granddaughter Eve who is doing very well and now weighs 3.2 kg. (She was born 6 weeks early only weighing 2.0 kg)

### Continuous assessment

As mentioned in my August newsletter I said I would discuss continuous assessment. This form of assessment is a requirement of the CAPS document and is recommended for preschool. There should be no formal 'tests' or a time when you 'test' learners skills.

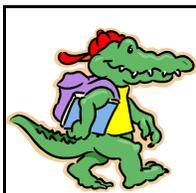
**What is continuous assessment?** Just what it says. You need to be assessing on a continuous basis. What does that mean? It means you have to assess basically all day every day in every activity including routines and outdoor play time.

### New theme - Reptiles

A new theme at last! I have completed the theme manual on reptiles with lots of fun ideas and activities. The theme book can be purchased from Ilette in Pretoria either from the web site using the on line order form or by e mail. All the contact details are in the letterhead at the start of the newsletter.

I can hear you rolling your eyes and thinking hmm I have a big group of learners and I don't think this is easy to implement. The reality is you have to make it happen in whatever way you find achievable and easy to do.

I am going to share some of my own personal ideas which I found to work well and I welcome any ideas from other teachers too.



### New theme out- Reptiles

Next theme under construction:  
The sea and beach

- **Daily assessment sheets**

Draw up a page with blank blocks to be used every day. Either insert the learner's names alphabetically by their first names or have a boy's sheet and a girl's sheet. Mine looks something like this but using a whole page

Date	Monday 25 th August		
Anna	Eric	Karin	Rose
Betty	Grace	Martha	Sarah
David	John	Mary	Willem

I usually have two sets of these sheets and I photo copy them for each day. You could staple a weeks' worth together so they don't get lost.

### Pinterest

My pinterest boards grow daily so please check back regularly for new ideas.

To join Pinterest go to [www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com) or Google it. You can ask to join and they send you an 'invitation' as an e mail and you are on your way to creating your own boards.

**If you have not visited the Pinterest boards please do. There are some fantastic ideas there.**

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

This is the direct link to my boards without having to join Pinterest

As I move between learners I keep these lists handy on a clip board – I like to have two sets so I don't have to walk too far to write on them.



When you make an observation you note it in simple quick short hand.

E.g. you may note that Karin keeps changing the scissors from her left to right hand. This could be that her hand dominance is not decided, it could mean the scissors are of poor quality. So you make a brief note- left to right hand changing with scissors.

**Do not make a 'judgement' statement just yet.**

You walk past Johnny and you hear him counting the cars on the play mat and he rote counts to 8 cars without a mistake so you can note down "rote counts to 8 cars" under Johnny's name.

- **Notebook or observation 'necklace'**

I find it useful to carry a little notebook with me for observations. I punch a hole in the corner, add a pencil on a string and wear it around my neck or in my pocket if I have one. I just note down observations as I see or hear them. It's useful for being outside. If you see a learner trying to throw a ball and he can't you can note this, you see a learner hopping along on one leg, and you note this etc and add this into your observations.

- **Weekly assessment notes**

At the end of the week ( you can do it daily of you get a time each day to do this, but once a week worked for me) I take the weeks notes and write a more professional assessment note in the weekly assessment file.

- **Weekly assessment file**

Here I prefer to use a file rather than a book so when new learners arrive or leave you can add and remove pages when you need to. If you use a book then it's fixed and when learners leave or new ones come your alphabetical sequence is disturbed.

In the file you need one page per learner (don't use the back of the page for another learner)

At the top of each page you have the following

- Learners name
- Age – in years and months
- Date of birth

- Home language
- I then add in any information which may be relevant to the development and learning of the learner

E.g. born premature at 35 weeks. OR Lives with granny who is illiterate

OR lots of family problems and no routines at home.

I date the entry and write a line or two about the learner including aspects such as: was very tearful all week, very aggressive this week, lacked energy, did not want to participate in any art activities etc.

This allows you to see if it's a bad week for the learner or a behaviour problem when it happens often.

**So what do I call a more professional comment?**

E.g. all week you noticed Karin changing her art equipment from her left to her right hand and back again. You can now say "Karin's hand dominance is still undecided." (if you only saw it once then it's not necessary to note it)

You heard Johnny count several times in the week and each time he was accurate. You can now make a comment "Johnny can rote count to 8 accurately"

- **School report writing:**

At the end of the term you should have built up some good detailed observations for each learner which will help you to complete your school reports.

**Useful thoughts on assessment and observations**

- **Be careful to use acceptable comments** when observing learners as you never know who may look at them e.g you may be tempted to write Johnny is driving me crazy today OR Johnny is being a real whinger today.. It would be safer to say Johnny's behaviour is very challenging today or be more specific and say Johnny doesn't seem able to settle to any activity today.

- You need to be disciplined and do assessment daily and weekly



- Using the block sheets allows you to notice which learners are not being observed. Some learners are just so easy going you don't really notice them. If there are empty blocks you may need to make a better effort to observe those learners too
- Observe and comment in all situations and across all developmental areas including health and routines.
- Understand and know what assessment is needed for your school report. Make sure you create opportunities to gather information to be able to complete these assessment criteria. There is nothing more frustrating when you are trying to complete school reports and quite frankly you have no idea if the learner meets the criteria or not.

Continuous assessment is a challenge even for experienced teachers!  
As they say practice makes perfect....

**I have attached a child development checklist which you can purchase. I have not seen the guide myself.**

### Spin art

I saw this idea on Pinterest

(<http://casamarias.blogspot.co.nz/2012/03/spin-art-in-motionpart-one.html>) and I could not wait

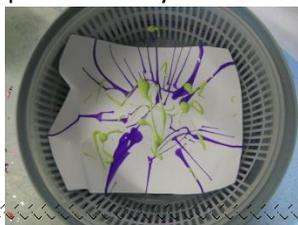


to try it out. I managed to get some salad spinners (The ones used to dry your lettuce leaves when you have washed them) from a 2<sup>nd</sup> hand shop. Ask your parents as they often have one but are not using it. I washed mine and it came quite clean so if you are happy to have a bit of paint on yours go ahead and use it. The



children placed an A5 paper into the salad spinner,

dropped blobs of paint onto the paper, turned the handle to make it spin and then opened it for the end product. They just loved the activity and the end product. They all wanted to make several so if you



had a few spinners it would be better.



Some children chose to take a print of their spin art which I thought was very effective

Some children struggled to

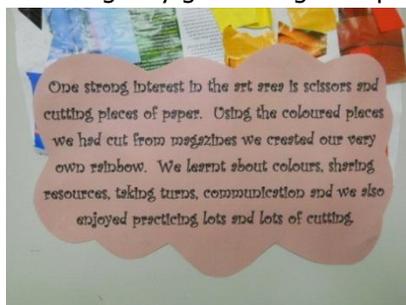
turn the handle to make the spinner spin, so others helped them. Great for a co-operative learning opportunity (Buddy system)



**Note:** Small paper plates would work well  
Set out three colours that blend well together  
Make sure the paint is not too thick and can be dripped easily

### Paper tearing to create rainbows

Many younger children struggle to cut paper with scissors. We created this rainbow from magazine paper torn by the younger children and arranged by the teacher to create a rainbow. The same concept can be used to create a spring tree using only green magazine pages.



In the school I work at in New Zealand the teachers communicate with the parents through displays. Photos of the children

tearing the paper are on the left side and the outcomes and learning are on the right hand side.

### Fun with paint and collage

Children enjoy painting boxes and pasting collage materials to their boxes. The younger children particularly like the freedom of this activity. Don't be tempted to structure it too much – the outcome is to enjoy painting and to have a sensory experience.



### Some Olympic art activities – great for a theme on sport



The Olympic flame, colouring our Olympic medal and our own Olympic flags



### My Fiji preschool visit

I recently had a holiday in Fiji where we had a preschool close to our hotel so I decided to pay them a visit and have a Fiji preschool experience. I was warmly welcomed at the school. Fiji has many similarities to South Africa including a high unemployment rate and lack of government support for preschools. Resources and art materials are very scarce so the teachers have to be very resourceful and make the best of the environment they teach in. The group is multicultural and they have an inclusive education policy with a Downs Syndrome child in the group. I had a most enjoyable morning with the children.

### Painting and printing with sponges on bottles



I bought some inexpensive washing up sponges and cut them into 3 pieces. I tied them to the top of an empty water (or juice) bottle. The children used these as paint brushes. Some children chose to print shapes with them. Once we had

completed the activity I removed the sponges to wash them and placed the plastic bottles into the sand and water tray as they would be too cumbersome to store.



Happy teaching  
Regards Karin