

## Preschool Themes Newsletter – September 2016

Hello Everyone,

Yah Spring is in the air and we are having some lovely warm days to enjoy the outdoors at school. I love this time of the year and the themes that can be presented in the third term. The environment is an ideal place to enhance this learning. As you can see from the pictures below, the children at the school that I teach at have been enjoying some mud play in the newly created mud pit at school! We have also had some late snow and cold winter so we did lots of winter art activities which I have included in this newsletter.



### The outdoor environment as the third teacher

The school that I teach at in New Zealand is focussing on creating an interesting and diverse outdoor learning environment to enhance the concept of the environment as the third teacher. My personal experience of preschools in South Africa and I am generalising here, is that the outdoor environment is often attractive and well laid out but is very static. In NZ this area is frequently being changed, developed and new items and ideas added regularly.

One such activity is mud play and playing in the rain. Now to be honest I know this is great for the children and it's been interesting to observe the play and learning in the mud pit, but oh my goodness it makes a dreadful muddy mess to clean up and all the children have to be washed off and changed. They have introduced waterproof overalls but the mud still manages to get everywhere. So while I think the learning and play opportunity is wonderful I am dubious of whether this is possible or acceptable in SA schools. I would love to hear your feelings about this.



I was observing a group of girls playing in the mud pit. They were throwing quite large rocks into the pool of mud from around the outer edge. At first I wanted to stop them as it was potentially unsafe, but I moved closer and watched as they worked as a group, asking the others to mind out of the way before throwing the rocks into the pool. Once several rocks were in the pool, they walked across them as stepping stones. Several were wobbly so lots of good gross motor and balance skills were being practiced and of course a huge amount of science and maths.



This activity continued for some time until a few of them eventually slipped and fell completely into the mud pit getting covered in mud. Unfortunately I did not have my camera on me at that time.

The boys spent ages throwing mud against a big rock in the pool and throwing plastic wild animals into the mud pool to see the effect of the animal displacing the water and causing a big splash of mud over anyone too close by!



Our children also experience water play all year right through the winter. Being wet doesn't seem to both the children even though I am nearly frozen standing outside on duty.

There seems to be a big drive back to letting children be children and to let them play with dirt and mud and get dirty. I hope you can see the video! Ignore the advert that comes first.

<http://www.newshub.co.nz/tvshows/story/the-research-showing-why-your-kids-should-get-dirty-2016071819#axzz4Ep76L9pp>

## Art activities

### Winter ice and snowflake pictures

This activity is suitable for the younger and older children. The younger children will just do it at a different level perhaps leaving out the paper snowflake part of the activity.

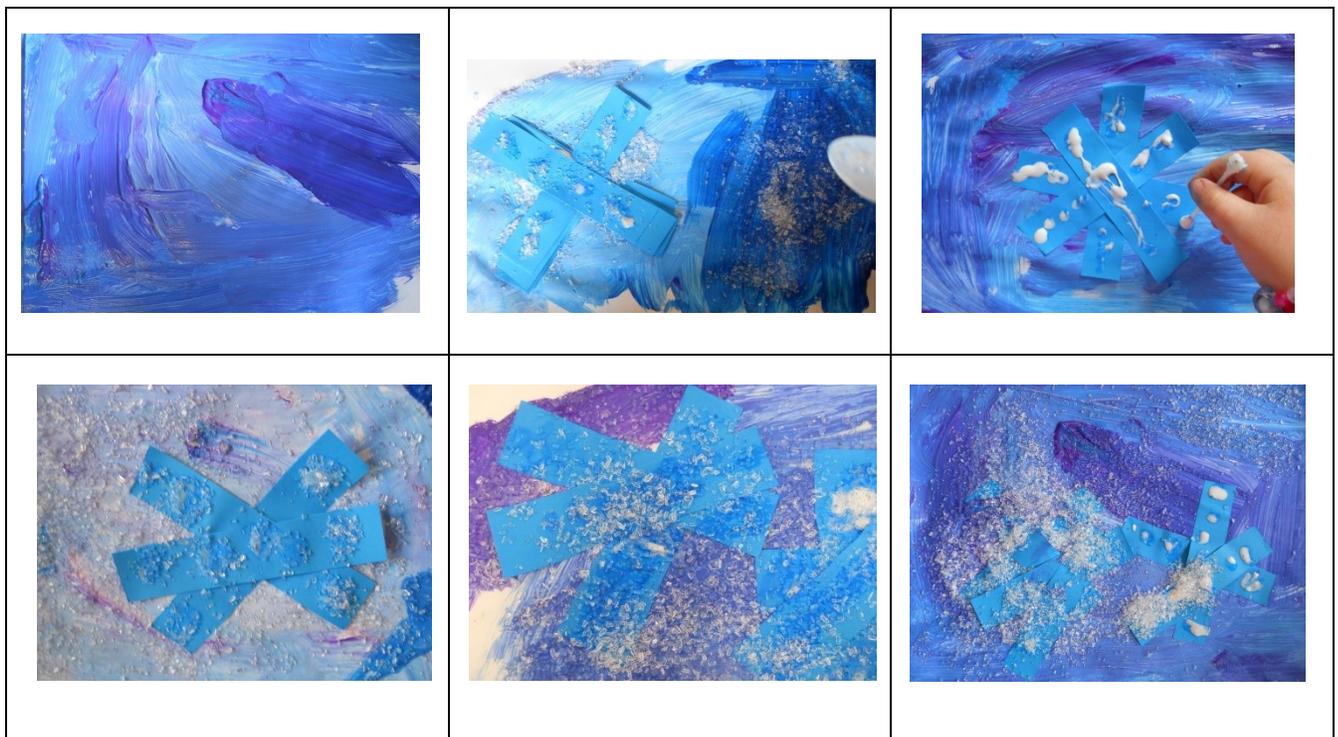
I used Epsom salts to create the ice shine on the paint. I am not sure where else you would purchase it in SA but chemists sell it and some places that sell cleaning products may also sell it. If you can't access Epsom salts use coarse or regular salt. Try looking for kitchen salt. It's coarser than table salt but not as coarse as dishwasher salt. They all dry shiny and shimmery like ice.

#### Materials:

- Paper – white A4
- Paint – blue, white, purple on flat paint trays such as ice cream lids
- Glue and glue brushes
- Epsom salts or clear glitter/white glitter
- Earbuds and white paint
- Paper – Blue cut into strips about 1cm x 9 cm

#### Method:

The child paints the paper using the blue, white and purple paint to create a blue background of various colours. Encourage the child to paint most of the paper. Using the blue paper strips the child places a blob of glue in the centre and pastes the snowflake piece to the background. Add more snowflake pieces until you have used 3 pieces to create a snowflake. Make a second snowflake. Paint dots of glue or white paint on the blue snowflake using the earbuds to paint with. Carefully sprinkle Epsom salts or coarse salt over the picture to look like ice. Shake off the excess.



## Notes:

- If you can't get Epsom salts use kitchen salt although it doesn't give quite the same effect. The sparkle appears when the painting dries
- This activity gets a bit messy with the Epsom salts all over the table
- Ration the Epsom salts otherwise the children with little self-control will use it all!
- For your younger children give them each a little lid of Epsom salts as their quota
- I added glue to the background paint so the Epsom salt adhered better
- The painting is a bit heavy so dry them flat
- It seemed better to paint blobs of glue on the snowflake instead of paint but either is fine
- The younger children struggled to make snowflakes. Let them collage the blue strips.



## Winter trees with snow

This activity can easily be adapted to a spring or summer tree by using pink for a blossom tree and green for a summer tree.



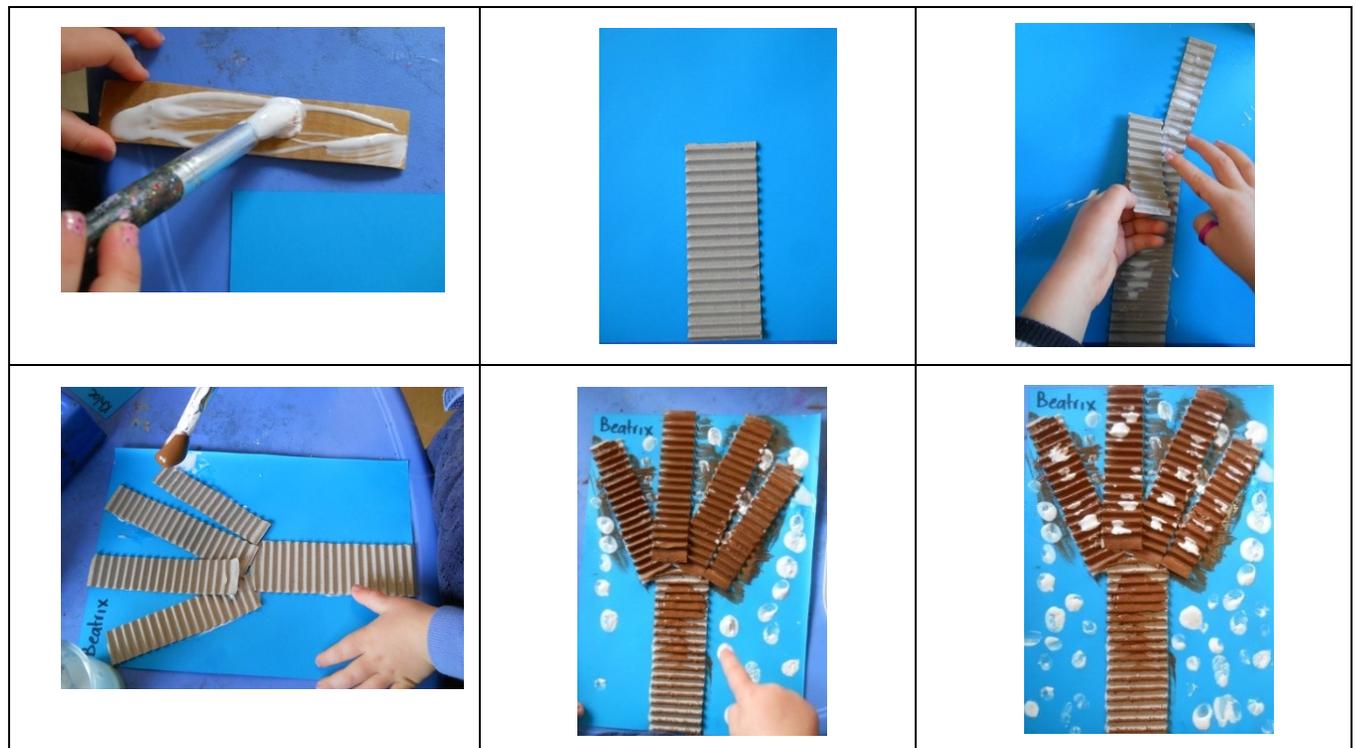
## Materials:

- Paper – blue so the snow will show
- Corrugated cardboard or brown paper /lightweight card or use toilet rolls
- Glue and glue brushes
- White and brown paint
- Flat lids for the white paint
- Optional: Silver glitter to add to the white paint



## Method:

The teacher cuts the cardboard into suitable sizes for the tree trunks and branches. Place the trunks in one container and the branches in another. The child selects a tree trunk and pastes the trunk to the bottom of paper. It's best to paste the glue to the smooth back side of the corrugated cardboard and to put the glue on the cardboard as opposed to the paper. Select some branches and paste. Paint the tree brown taking care to only paint the tree. Using one finger, dip the finger into the white paint and make finger printed snowflakes. Encourage the child to print some falling snow and snow on the ground.





A child's own variation



A different perspective



A three year old

**Notes:**

- Some children smeared the white paint instead of printing so remind them to print
- Remind the children to put the glue on the smooth side of the cardboard. It doesn't stick well on the other side
- The younger children struggled to make a tree shape. Let them paste the card and print around it



**Painting – Wool resist pictures**

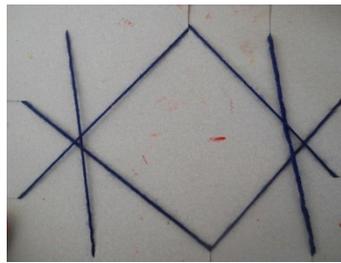
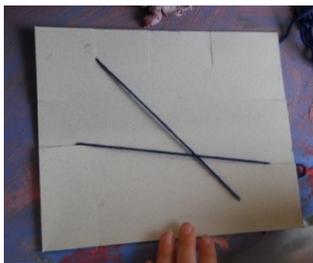
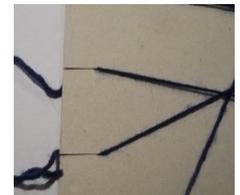
**Materials:**

- Wool – thicker works best although I used thinner wool in these pictures – cut into 20-30 cm pieces
- Cereal boxes or similar cardboard
- Paint – three colours that blend to make new colours. White works on the grey card.
- Sponge brushes – dishwashing sponges cut into pieces placed in a washing peg. (Paint brushes disturb the wool)
- Flat paint container



**Method:**

The teacher cuts 2-3 slits in each side of the cardboard. The child secures one piece of wool in the slit, gently pulls the wool and secures the wool in another slit of their choice making sure the wool is pulled taught but doesn't bend the cardboard. Once all the slits have a piece of wool in them, the child paints the cardboard painting on the wool and taking care not to move the wool too much. Once the painting is dry the wool is carefully removed leaving white lines where the wool was. Encourage the child to dab the paint on the wool – more an up and down action rather than painting.



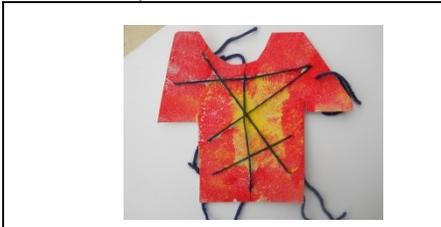


**Notes:**

- Don't make the cardboard too big. The children struggle to pull the wool across the cardboard
- Some children may need help inserting the wool initially but they soon get the hang of it
- Some children used too much paint and caused the wool to move. This resulted in unclear lines when the wool was removed
- These paintings take a while to dry
- The cardboard can be cut into various shapes – shirts, sheep, geometric shapes



**Other shapes**



Some of the children struggled with securing the wool to start with. This lesson provided a good opportunity for the more capable children to assist and buddy with those who were struggling.



**Drawing and painting – Mittens with colour resist painting**

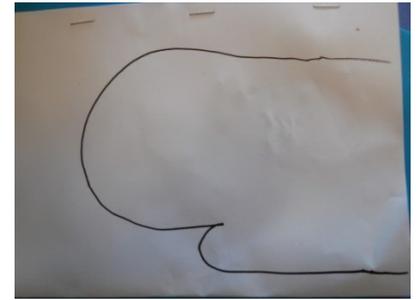
**Materials:**

- Paper –White A4
- Stapler - Teacher
- White and yellow wax crayons (or multi-coloured)
- Food colouring or school dye – any colour diluted
- Paint brushes
- Black crayon or koki pen



**Method:**

The teacher folds the paper in half and staples the top and sides closed leaving one short side open to put their hand in as a mitten. The child places their hand on the paper and the teacher draws a mitten shape around the hand. The child draws patterns and pictures using the wax crayons. Encourage the child to press hard and to draw enough before painting over the drawing. For older children encourage them to make writing patterns. The child paints over the wax crayon drawing using diluted food colouring or school dye. NOTE: Test the strength of the dilution before setting out this activity buy doing some drawing and painting over it. If the food colouring is too strong and dark the crayon markings will not show through. Too much water and it's washy.



**Notes:**

- Encourage the children to paint the whole mitten and none of the surrounding paper
- Show the children how to wipe the paint brush to prevent the paper getting too wet
- Place the food colouring in secure containers to prevent them being knocked over. Don't over fill!
- Prepare the stapled packets ahead of time
- Extend the activity by offering paper and crayons to do free drawing and colour wash



**Extension of colour-resist drawing and painting with lids**

Some of the children asked to draw their own pictures. I offered them a plastic lid to draw a starter circle. Here are some of the art works



Happy teaching  
Regards Karin