

LEARNING TO TEACH



BY MISS COLEEN

Becoming a Preschool Teacher

Putting together a preschool lesson plan day after day, week after week, for an entire school year can be very exhausting. A teacher always has to be thinking not only, about the educational aspects of the plans, but also the age of the students and the stage of development each student is growing through. Young children are fun to teach, but lessons have to be very flexible because each day is different and brings new challenges. Children of this age have very short attention spans and can become easily bored. Lessons have to be the perfect mixture of fun and education. If you are a teacher that is looking for some help writing lessons for your young students, you are not alone. Nothing can prepare you for how unpredictable young children can be and how soon your lessons and all that you have planned can be forgotten!

Luckily, there are several basic tools that will help you put together a preschool lesson plan that will not only be educational and fun, but can actually mix the two together! In fact, that is the first basic tool: Anytime a teacher can find a way to mix fun and education together, he or she is making the educational process more enriching for the students. Young children respond well to activities that are lead into with open questions, include a mixture of music and rhyme, and are “hands on”. So, you are free to do just about anything as long as you approach it through organized and thoughtful lessons.

Sing Your Cares Away

Music is powerful and persuasive. It touches one’s emotion, motivation, creativity and relaxation. It has the soothing effect that can calm our mental nerves. It inspires us to do something new and productive. It gives us ideas. It lulls us to sleep. The list is definitely endless. Music is also for everyone. It invades almost anything and everything. It adds to the atmosphere of almost any setting. Various races and continents also enjoy distinctive music. Young and old alike take pleasure in it.



Children’s music can give the classroom a magical experience. Words and tunes are often simple, nonsensical, play a game or tell a story. Student’s can play roles with it. For a moment, they can be a pretty princess with a castle or a dashing knight in shining armor. They can simultaneously play musical instruments. They can dance and sing.

Even at the very young age music is entertaining to children. By exposing them to music, they develop their sense of adventure and discovery. Aside from that, they become knowledgeable about music lyrics. This can help develop basic languages skills while exposing them to tone, beat and rhythm.

Here are some lesson ideas for making music with your preschool class or your own preschoolers at home. These are very simple, and will introduce your preschooler to listening and thinking about music.

These activities will help your preschoolers learn:

- To listen for the difference between loud sounds and soft sounds
- To identifying how sounds are the same or different
- To use their own voices to create music in different ways

Now, onto the fun!

1. What's making that sound? Look around your home or classroom and collect items like crayons, balls, pencils, blocks, and other small items. Put one item in a small box and shake it around. Ask your preschooler what they think is in the box. Does it make a soft or a loud sound? Several small boxes could be kept as instruments for the next music activity!
2. Make your own rock band! Go outside and collect rocks of different sizes. Your preschoolers might even enjoy helping you with this. Then pick up various rocks and bang them together, one pair at a time. Ask your preschoolers if they can tell you if the sounds the different rocks make are the same or different. If they are different, how are they different?
3. No talking allowed! Play a game with your preschoolers where they have to talk to each other by singing their words instead of speaking. For some reason, this game reminds me of a scene in the movie Finding Nemo, where Dory was "talking" to the whale. If your preschoolers are familiar with the movie, you might use that as an example of how to sing words instead of speak them.

Children's music treats developmental delays and learning disabilities by drawing out movements. It develops self-awareness which can easily be manifested. Examples of these movements are gripping the beater, tapping a triangle, or playing cymbals and drums. Studies have proven that children with developmental delays and learning disabilities like Down's syndrome respond to music. Thus, exposure to music can boost response and expression. As a result, individual expressions and talents like singing and dancing can be discovered.

The relationship between children's music and movement cannot be overemphasized. The rhythm of music creates the ideal stimulus that results to coordinated movements. These movements lead to repetition which is a mode of child learning.

Stimulation of cognitive abilities leads to multi-sensory development. This contributes to the ability of a child to retain information and be attentive to detail. As a result, the child becomes confident and clever.

Children's music can also develop the child's social skills. Usually, musical experiences are done in groups. Participants can sing in unison or one after the other. With this process, everyone is encouraged to participate thus participants eventually become closer.

* Children's music can be so powerful that it can develop both the intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of a child. It simultaneously augments functional abilities at the same time the expressive and creative capacities of a child.

Aside from entertainment and therapy, children's music is also a special kind of education. It develops the cognitive skills of children. Exposure to music stimulates learning about colors, numbers, shapes and parts of the body. As a consequence, though may not be the primary goal, it increases the child's intelligence. I use music this way in my classroom. Below are some of my songs from themes throughout the year. Learn to sing with your children. You will never forget the experience!

The Alphabet and Counting

(tunes: Twinkle Twinkle Little Star and Ten Little Indians)

A B C D
E F G
H I J K
L M N O P
Q R S
T U V
W X Y and Z

Now we know our ABC's
Help us with our counting please.
One little, two little, three little fingers
Four little, five little, six little fingers
Seven little, eight little, nine little fingers
Ten fingers to help us count!



Little Caterpillar (tune: Itsy Bitsy Spider)

The little caterpillar crawled up into a tree
Turned into a chrysalis and slept so quietly
He slept a dozen days and didn't make a sound
And he dreamed of his new life
When he could fly around.



Bug Body (tune: Head Shoulders Knees and Toes)

Head thorax abdomen
Head thorax abdomen
Six legs two antennas with eyes and sometimes wings
Head thorax abdomen



Head thorax abdomen
Head thorax abdomen

Six legs two antennas with eyes and sometimes wings
Head thorax abdomen

Be Creative!

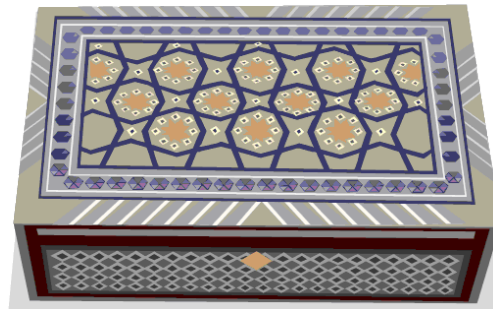
Can you draw a straight line? Most adults don't consider themselves artistic. Parents do, however, worry about their toddler's art abilities. As a child care provider for the past 28 years, I've had many discussions with parents about how their toddler is doing as far as getting ready for preschool or kindergarten. They worry a lot about the final product of their toddler's art projects. I try to explain to them that art is not just knowing how to draw a flower or a puppy, or whether or not little Donnie colors in the lines. Little children need to experience self-expression and the "doing of art" more than having a page from a coloring book to hang on the refrigerator.

When a two-year old puts his chubby little hand in a tub of finger paint and happily smears all of the colors together on the paper or



when he makes yet another “snowman” out of play-doh, he’s creating. Granted, he will certainly tell you that his painting is his dad’s truck even though you “can’t see it.” The important thing to remember is that by allowing our little boys and girls to experience art in their own way, we let them show us how they see the world around them, how they feel and think.

I always enjoy art time with my toddler and preschool age groups. Yes, they can make a mess, but they just wiggle with excitement when I take out the “surprise box” of supplies! I put all my items for the day's lesson in a box. As I explain an activity, I take each item out of the box. I take time to explain the lesson and remind children to always ask for help. I’ve found that activities are most effective when they are preplanned and have set goals.



Art is important for toddlers because of the way it makes young children feel special and good about themselves. When your toddler finishes a magazine cut-out collage and holds up his masterpiece to you with that beaming smile doesn’t that make you feel good about both of you? While engaging in simple art projects, that same toddler is not only learning to take pride in his accomplishments, but also to think and refine his hand-eye coordination and physical skills. Through art, children learn to identify colors, cause-and-effect, shapes, problem solving, sharing and cooperation among many other skills.

Parents must remember to ask toddlers or preschoolers questions about their projects that will make them think about what they’ve made rather than ask them “What is that?” For example, “Dustin, tell Mommy about your painting.” Dustin will start to talk about his work or anything else he feels is important at the time! This also shows your child that you are interested in what he thinks and aren’t just confused about what you see! Make sure to hang the art work up in a prominent place in your home so the entire family can enjoy it.

Art experiences are a major part of a toddler’s daily activities. They have grown enough to grasp objects and tear paper and hold crayons and brushes. Naturally they are thrilled with the anticipation of a new art project, and most importantly, with the quality time spent with the important adults in their lives.

Tried, but True!

There is a classic art medium, invented by two brothers in 1955, that still captures the imaginations of our preschool children and youngsters alike. That product is: Play Doh.

Originally a wallpaper cleaner invented by brothers Noah W. McVicker and Joseph S. McVicker, Play Doh was introduced to schools in the Cincinnati area in 1955 because McVicker's sister-in-law asked for a safe alternative to modeling clay. Play Doh was an instant hit and soon the McVicker brothers formed Rainbow Crafts Company to produce and sell their product. Additionally, the brothers showcased their "modeling clay" at a National Education Convention and the word spread to the big department stores, Macy's and Marshall Field's. Soon after, Play Doh was a national favorite.

Advertising played a crucial role in the success of Play Doh. Captain Kangaroo, a very popular educator of young children at the time, endorsed Play Doh. So did Miss Frances from the Ding Dong School, another popular children's television show. In 1960, a character named Play-Doh-Pete, a young boy with a beret was introduced to the advertising campaign. Additionally, the Fun Factory Accessory Playset was added to the product line, which allowed children to squeeze the material into interesting shapes and molds, furthering sales and development of the product.

In 1980 Play Doh expanded its palette to include eight colors, some that glowed in the dark and even some that were scented. It is estimated that more than two billion cans of Play Doh have been sold since 1956 and the total amount of Play Doh manufactured since then would weigh more than 700 million pounds.

The ingredients for Play Doh, to this day, remain a closely guarded secret. But it is primarily made up of a mixture of water, wheat flour, deodorized kerosene (or some other petroleum distillate-to provide the smooth texture), salt, a drying agent such as borax (which deters mold), an alum-based hardening agent, colorings and perfume.

Kids all over the world still enjoy Play Doh (it is sold in more than 6000 stores and over 75 countries worldwide) and children can even celebrate National Play Doh Day on September 18th. Some products never go out of style and Play Doh will always have young minds to enlighten and entertain.

I have added my basic play dough recipes below. As a teacher, I use play dough in themes throughout the year. Children learn through all their senses. Hands on not only involves touch, but it helps a child learn to deal with textures. Rainy days are a great time to make a batch of play dough.

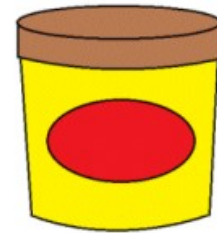
I have two basic rules:

- Play dough stays at the table
- Play dough you are working with stays on a tray

Play Dough Recipe

What you need:

1 cup cornstarch
2 cup salt
1 teaspoon alum
1 and 1/3 cup cold water
food coloring or liquid water colors
mixing bowl
sauce pan
wooden spoon



What you do:

1. Measure 1 cup salt, cornstarch and alum with 2/3 cup water in bowl. Add coloring, mix and set aside.
2. Measure 1 cup salt and 2/3 cup water in a pan and bring to a boil.
3. Add salt mixture to bowl, mix with a spoon and knead when cool enough to touch.
4. Store in airtight container.

This dough can be colored to match a theme or project. It can also be dried and painted. Store unused dough in an air tight container.

Uncooked Dough Recipe

What you need:

1 cup flour
2 cups salt
1 tbs. cream of tartar
2 tbs. oil
1 cup water
food coloring or liquid water colors
Mixing bowl and spoon

What you do:

1. Measure flour, salt and cream of tartar into bowl and stir together until mixed well.
2. Mix oil, water and coloring together in a cup.
3. Pour liquids into dry ingredients and mix.
4. Knead and store in airtight containers.
5. Dough is soft and can be used again or allowed to dry.

Reading and Children

Teachers can feel uneasy reading to their children. It could be for numerous different reasons. Perhaps they don't take to reading themselves. Possibly their reading skills are not the best. Or maybe they feel like they have to produce comical faces and make sounds unnatural to them in order to read a little one's book. So, for fear of embarrassment, they want to skip the reading assignment.

There are numerous ways to share books with your class. Your reading skills do not have to be top notch. Just the times spent as a group or one-on-one will make a difference to them. The closeness and sharing of stories will pay off for the whole year.

You need to read to your class at least once a day. You need to radiate an excitement about reading a story together so that the children think of reading as fun. There are a few ways to make reading fun. You can talk or sing about the pictures in the book. You don't have to read it word for word. Occasionally it is more intriguing to add your own twist to a story or talk about how you feel about the characters in the book.

Start every story by pointing out the author and illustrator of a book. Briefly talk about their part in making the book. Ask questions about the pictures in the book. Let children create their own take on the story. They may see the pictures speaking to them a bit differently than what the words depict. Write these dictations down and put them together as a classroom book. This will open up a vast dialogue and a chance for you to elaborate on things in the pictures and assist your child in discovering the world in which we live.

Show your children the cover of the book and let them recite to you what they believe the book is about. If they are too young to do so, point out certain items in the pictures to help them learn the names of the characters that might be in the pages that follow.

Have a class library and allow them time to read to themselves. This will help them interact with the book and get familiar with how books are laid out. *Scholastic* is a good place to start. They offer a wide range of books, prices and programs to help start a preschool library.

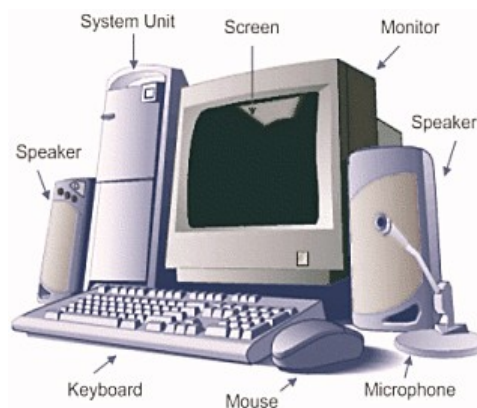


Children have a short attention span, so don't get discouraged if they lose interest before you are finished reading the book. Try again at another time with another book.

Remember to have fun when you read, and your class will pick up on this positive reinforcement of reading.

Children Love Computers

A great way to teach young children is through the use of computers. Computers patiently give the same answer again and again. You can implement this tool by providing them with computerized lessons or at least lessons that have been well organized for you, as the teacher, on a computer. Any time children see how useful a computer can be in any classroom environment you are actually teaching them important lessons about how the world works. If the children get to interact with the computer at all that is even better. The point is that computers can make the lessons easier for a teacher to teach and more meaningful for the students as well.

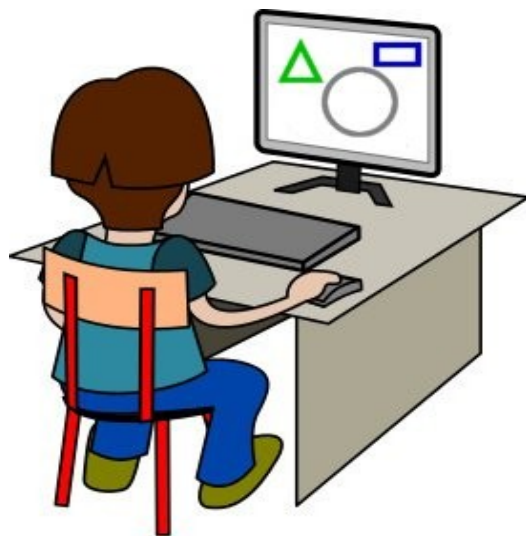


There are many different computer programs that teachers can use to help prepare their lessons. Some of the programs are basically a blank form or program that will allow you to put all your information into the program and then the lessons are created for you in an easy to read format. Other preschool lesson

plan programs offer fully prepared lessons for the students. These are great programs because the teacher basically needs to turn on the computer and guide his or her students along, all the hard work has been done and the teachers can enjoy teaching again. Other programs are a combination of the two, with fully prepared lesson plans as well as tools that will enable you to use them as you see fit.

Reader Rabbit and *JumpStart* are two companies that offer prepared lessons for children on the computer. A teacher should scaffold lessons to the age and/or grade of the child. Some programs track the progress of children who sign in with their name. I prefer children to work in groups of two while at the computer and often skip this program enhancement.

If children are to use a computer in a classroom, setting up a proper area for the computer is very important.



<---- Screen at eye level

<---- Elbow bent 90° can reach keyboard and mouse

<---- Feet flat on the floor

The computer is also there for the teacher! A wise teacher knows that there are many other teachers willing to share what they have found to be successful activities in their classrooms. Use a search engine like *Google* to find even more ideas and items to add to your lesson plans and classroom.

Time to Get Started

These few basic tools will add to any classroom a sense of awareness and fun. Singing, reading, and hands on activities integrated with the technology of the computer will make your classroom a place where learning is enjoyable. Start today by searching the web and adding these ideas to your lesson plans. As your class uses these new ideas, write a brief note on the back of your plans indicating if the new projects were enjoyed or did not work. Maybe you will think of something that could have helped or even have a new idea. Next year these notes will be priceless!

Here's to a better teaching experience!

Miss Coleen