

State of Play

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF PLAYGROUP SA

ISSUE 4 2013



GREAT
CHRISTMAS
CRAFT IDEAS

EMBRACING
MESSY PLAY

**WHY GROWNUPS
LOVE PLAYGROUP**

FLIP OVER FOR
SA KIDS



Letter from **PLAYGROUP SA**

WOW! Hasn't the year just flown by? Suddenly we find ourselves contemplating Christmas and dreaming of glorious summer holidays. The past few months have whizzed by in a blur of excitement with Children's Week Celebrations including Twilight Playgroup and Outdoor Playgroup as well as the last flurry of Playgroup SA Workshops and Playgroup visits (plus preparations for Christmas Playgroup on 5 December).

What are other Playgroups doing to celebrate the end of the year and Christmas? It would be lovely if Playgroups shared what they did to close the year out. Feel free to send us a photo to be included in our electronic newsletter or Facebook page.

Next year is Playgroup SA's 40th Birthday. It's amazing to think Playgroup SA has been supporting community Playgroups for such a long period of time. It's even more amazing to think that this wonderful community resource has been supporting families and providing opportunities for families and children across our great state for four decades. Stay tuned in the new year for info on how you can help Playgroup and Playgroup SA celebrate 40 years.

Coordinators/Playgroups will soon be receiving their

affiliation forms for 2014. We are doing things slightly differently this year in sending out affiliation forms only (not a pack). Once Playgroup SA receives your completed affiliation and payment, we will then distribute the full affiliation pack. We very much look forward to working with you all again in 2014.

I would like to finish off by thanking all of the staff here at Playgroup SA for their hard work and dedication to the Playgroup movement throughout the year. I would also like to thank the Volunteer Board of Management for their continued support and commitment, but more importantly I would like to thank all of the coordinators and members who make Playgroup in SA such a wonderful, vibrant and fun family activity. A big thank you must also go to the staff at SA Kids for their support and collaboration over the past 12 months.

As this is our last edition of *State of Play* for 2013, we would like to wish you a very merry Christmas, a happy new year and safe holidays. As an extra treat, we've included some Christmas craft activities for Playgroup – see page 8! ●

Carley Jones
Executive Officer, Playgroup SA



A FINE MESS!

Messy play can be the last thing adults feel like, but it makes an enormous contribution to a child's early language and literacy development.

AMANDA BALDWIN, EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR

Anounce 'messy play' and many adults begin to cringe as they think of all that muck and even worse, cleaning up. Messy play can be a highly demanding activity as it requires a great deal of adult supervision (and self-restraint) as we allow our children to make 'mess'. However, despite its chaotic appearance, messy play makes an enormous contribution to your child's early language and literacy development. It is a vital component to children's cognitive processes and developing creativity, and benefits all children's learning.

So, how does playing with gloop, mud pies or play dough lead to communication, language and literacy learning?

It's simple really... messy play acts as a precursor to developing language and literacy skills. It is like the building blocks or foundations for establishing communication and it prepares the hands and fingers for that all important pencil grip and pre-writing activities that are essential literate behaviours.

Messy play provides opportunities for children to speak, take turns and listen when using shared resources. Children use words, actions and gestures to communicate and the relaxed atmosphere of messy play activities encourage children's confidence. According to Duffy (2007), Messy "play provides meaningful opportunities for children to talk through activities, reflect and modify actions, negotiate plans and activities and to take turns in conversation".

Playing with gloop presents a number of fundamental skills that are critical to this development. The simple process of making marks with the material, forming shapes and letters in the substance and ascribing meaning to it all leads to understanding the symbolic nature of written language.

Fine motor skills such as hand-eye coordination and

pincer grip, which are vital skills needed for writing, are practised subconsciously while children play with the gloop. As children further their play, they may begin to tell stories about the gloop and enhance their narrative skills. Their vocabulary is also further developed as they use descriptors to express how the gloop feels and what is happening. Children who may not be familiar with the descriptive language, listen and absorb these words and thus further their own understanding of our language rich world. That's an awful lot of learning from just mixing cornflour and water!

"Mud is a fantastic, top quality, higher brain function activity that fosters children's language and literacy development and best yet, it's free from your backyard."

Similar learning occurs when children engage in mud play. Yes, believe it or not, glorious mud is a fantastic, top quality, higher brain function activity that fosters children's language and literacy development and best yet, it's free from your backyard.

For example, when children are playing mud pies and make a birthday cake with candles they are not only demonstrating a greater understanding of our cultural practices, but also using symbolic representation to express their knowledge. Twigs, bark chips and grass form the role of candles or cake decorations. This meaning the 'making' is pivotal to children's understandings of context and language

behaviour. As they sing the birthday song, or share the 'cake' with others, they are communicating and building on their speech patterns. Some children may also count the number of candles which leads to the exploration of a variety of mathematical concepts and numeracy related themes. Who would've thought that mud play would be so valuable to their child's development?

Some common and fantastic messy play recipes frequently used by playgroups include slime, play dough, gloop, bubble mix and various types of paint – microwave puff paint, crystal salt goop paint, coloured ice cube paint and flavoured finger paint. ●

Playgroup SA runs a 2.5 hour workshop all about Messy Play. 2014 dates are scheduled for 3 April and 7 August. For more information on Messy Play Workshop or any other Courses and Workshops, contact Playgroup SA on 1800 171 882.

Make your own **gloop**

Gradually add two cups of water to a packet of cornflour (preferably in play tub or bucket) until it is smooth and runny enough to dribble off of your hands. You can add food colouring or glitter for fun.

Let the children play with the gloop and experiment with the consistency and texture of it. Play with plastic toys or animals in the gloop and/or little toy bugs and insects to hide in the liquid.



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A man with a surprised expression is holding a toddler in a forest. The toddler is wearing a white bonnet and blue overalls, holding a stick and looking up. The background is a sunlit forest with trees and foliage.

ADULTS LOVE **PLAYGROUP TOO**

The benefits of Playgroup for children are well known. For adults, Playgroup can offer support, ideas and new friendships.

CARLEY JONES, PLAYGROUP SA

Sitting at home with a young child and wishing you had another adult to talk to? Craving adult conversation and stimulation? Ready to look at something other than the four walls of your home?

Well, have we got a solution for you – attend a Playgroup! Here at Playgroup SA we frequently get asked about the benefits of Playgroup. Most parents only think about the benefits for their child/children when considering Playgroup. Child benefits such as a chance to socialise with other children, build positive relationships with children and adults, experience play opportunities and skills development are real and important. However, what many parents don't consider are the vast benefits for the grownups of the family.

For parents or carers, Playgroup can be a way of breaking down isolation barriers in providing a safe environment where parents can engage in adult conversation. Adults can have contact and socialise with other adults and discuss the issues they face in raising children. Playgroup parents gain advice, support, tips and snippets of knowledge from their peers. Playgroup can reinforce that you, as parents and carers, are not alone and you are doing a great job in raising these delightful, if sometimes challenging, young personalities.

Playgroup is a valuable opportunity for parents and carers to establish locally based peer support networks. It's a vital way for families to be connected with their local community. The annual Playgroup SA Member Survey indicates that through attending Playgroup within their local community, parents and carers gain knowledge on what services are best suited to families, what kindergartens and schools are in the area and even what hairdressers provide child friendly services.

Playgroup also provides parents and carers with a designated time and space to interact, play and strengthen relationships with their children. This is done without the

pressure of being at home and watching your children paint, for example, worried it's going to get spread on the carpet or up the walls. It's a chance to run around playing Cowboys and Indians without worrying about the beeping washing machine, the phone constantly ringing or the unmade beds calling.

Playgroup is about quality time, time to share in your child's joy at feeling the wind in their hair as they race down the slippery dip, get their hands all sticky at the pasting table and delight in making friends with other children. And it often stimulates your child enough for them to require a rest when they arrive home too.

Are you new to an area also? Don't know a single person in your local community? Then heading along to your local Playgroup is a great way of meeting local families. It's a fantastic way to ease into life in your new community, breaking the isolation of being home alone without the support of family or friends and, more importantly, it's an opportunity to gain valuable knowledge on what services are available within your community.

Facing some tough behaviour issues at home with your toddler? Not sure what else to try in settling your infant to sleep? Struggling with a fussy eater? A Playgroup can be a source of great benefit for carers or parents. Playgroup parents will openly discuss the issues they have faced on their parenting journey and share tips, advice and support for dealing with the issues and phases. Who else is better for parents and carers to talk to than a network of peers who have experienced exactly what they are experiencing?

Playgroups are non-judgemental environments – perfect for making friends, connecting with others and gaining sound advice from peers. Most of all, Playgroup is fun! ●

To find out about Playgroups in and around your area contact Playgroup SA on free call 1800 171 882.



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A PLAYGROUP CHRISTMAS



Looking for some ideas to get into the spirit of Christmas? Here is a fantastic collection of art, craft and festive activities from Playgroup SA.

Christmas is a Christian festival which celebrates the birth of Jesus. It has also become a special time for families and friends to get together to share cards and gifts, food, love and peace. Did you know that long ago, people would put money in boxes when they visited church? On the day after Christmas they would open the boxes and give the money to the poor, hence the term Boxing Day.

Useful tips!

- Tip 1. Before introducing Christmas activities at Playgroup it is a good idea to chat with families about what they would like to do in terms of celebrating the season, songs and activities, to avoid offending anyone.
- Tip 2. Using recycled materials for craft activities is cheap and easy.

Christmas decoration ideas to make at home or playgroup

When planning for Christmas art and craft experiences, it's easier to decide on a theme first. For example, Santa and Elves, Penguins, Stockings, Nativity, Christmas Trees, etc.

Here are some easy Christmas decoration craft ideas:

- Paper Chains: Make paper chains with coloured paper to decorate the room or a tree outside.
- Paper plate wreath: Cut out the middle of a paper plate. Decorate the ring with either collage materials, paint and/or leaves.
- Cardboard Roll Angels: Cut a paper doily in half and stick to the back of the cardboard roll. Use a pipe cleaner as a halo and attach to the top. On the front of the angel draw a face with textas.
- Christmas Placemat: Decorate a piece of A4 card with old Christmas cards and laminate or cover in contact to use as a placemat.
- Christmas Bon Bons: Cover a cardboard roll in crepe paper and tie off one end with ribbon. Fill the bon bon with treats of your choice. Tie off the other end with ribbon. You can also buy crackers that go into the bon bon at craft shops if you want the 'bang' effect.
- Tree Decorations: Paint pinecones to use as tree decorations.
- Christmas Tree: Make a Christmas tree out of paper

plates. Paint/decorate the plates and display them on the wall in a tree shape. Alternatively, make little individual hanging Christmas trees using different sized paddle pop sticks.

Here's a list of Christmas gifts to make at Playgroup

- Make Christmas baskets to hold special treats. These could be in the shape of a tree, Father Christmas or just decorate a small box.
- Make your own Christmas cards or gift tags.
- Make Christmas stockings to hang up at home. Cut a stocking shape out of card and staple the edges together leaving the top open. Decorate the outside of your stocking.
- Make your own wrapping paper – paint or print on a large piece of paper. You can wrap up your family's presents with your paper.
- Make Christmas bags or boxes by decorating paper bags or small cardboard boxes. Use them to put your gifts in for Christmas day.

Healthy party food ideas for Playgroup

Playgroup SA encourages playgroups to celebrate special occasions such as children's birthdays, end of term breakups and other significant days. While special food is one way to help celebrate it is not the only way for families to mark significant occasions. Some healthy food ideas to include at your Playgroup break up could include:

- Fruit (fruit salad, fruit kebabs, fruit jelly cups)
- Frozen yoghurt
- Scones or pikelets
- Mini quiches
- Fruit mince pies
- Christmas pudding

Finally, don't forget to write your letters to Santa! ●

Playgroup SA will hold a special Christmas Playgroup on Thursday 5 December. For more information or to RSVP contact Playgroup SA on 1800 171 882.



WATER PLAY FUN!

In the lead up to summer in the International Year of Water Cooperation, it's an ideal time to celebrate water and cool down at Playgroup.

Water play is an important activity for children at Playgroup, as it can foster physical, social-emotional, and cognitive development. It's also great fun and keeps young ones from overheating during those long summer days.

There are so many water activities that you can try at playgroup (or home), but this is our pick of the best:

Bathing the dolls

Wash the plastic dolls at Playgroup in an old baby bath. Have props such as towels, empty hand soap containers, face washers and even a rubber ducky.

Here is the sea

Place assorted sea creature figurines, shells and even some sand into a water trough. Children can explore ocean themes.

Coloured water experimentation

Add a few drops of food colouring to the water tray.

Add a few funnels, measuring cups, egg whisks and any other interesting containers/jugs. Add new colours if interest wanes.

Antarctica discovery

Freeze blocks of ice in old ice cream containers and add to a shallow water-lined tray. Add penguin, seal and whale figurines and discover what life might be like in Antarctica. Or use dinosaur figurines and play Ice Age.

Paint the fence

Place a small amount of water into child sized buckets and add paint brushes. Explain to the children that the fence/cubby/side of the building needs re-painting with the magic paint pots. They'll be busy for hours!

Children have a natural attraction to water and as such they must be vigilantly supervised at all times. Playgroup SA recommends that parents/carers remain close to children when they are playing around water. Use 'touch supervision' – this means having an adult within arm's length of each child. ●

Member Benefits 2013

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about Professional
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Playgroup SA Family Membership:

Why should I become a Playgroup SA Member?

Along with 4,500 other South Australian family members, enjoy the following Playgroup SA Membership benefits:

- A membership card that is also the Australian Baby Card (valued at \$30) offering you hundreds of discounts online and from numerous South Australian based businesses.
- An electronic version of *Totline*, the national member Magazine, four times a year. An excellent communication tool for activity ideas, upcoming events, competitions and general information for families and people working in the early childhood / children's services sector. As well as as a state based magazine.
- A copy of our state based publication, the 2-in-1 *State of Play / SA Kids Magazine*. This magazine includes practical, local information about raising children, as well as original articles by experienced journalists, childhood professionals and parents. The magazine covers all stages from pregnancy to the teenage years and *State of Play* is specifically targeted to families with 0-5 year olds.
- Subscription to *ePlayNEWS*, Playgroup SA's state based membership newsletter (if an email address is provided) which is distributed six times per year.
- Discounted entry to Playgroup SA events including Playgroup @ the Zoo.
- Discounted prices to courses including Senior Accredited First Aid and Child Safe Environments.
- Discounted Playgroup SA workshops including, Messy Play, Physical Play, Christmas craft and more. Comprehensive public liability & personal accident insurance whilst you and your children are attending an affiliated playgroup or playgroup activity anywhere in SA.
- FREE tickets to the Pregnancy, Baby & Children's Expo (distributed via playgroups).
- FREE upgrade to Full Association Membership; This level of membership entitles you to voting rights at Playgroup SA's Annual General Meeting and Special General Meetings and to stand for election on the Board of Management.
- The right to attend as many affiliated playgroups as you wish!



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We hope to see you at Playgroup in 2013!

PLAYGROUP SA

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Thursday 4 September 2014

PRESCHOOL WORKSHOP

Thursday 8 May 2014

MESSY PLAY WORKSHOP

Thursday 3 April 2014

Thursday 7 August 2014

CHRISTMAS CRAFT WORKSHOP

Thursday 6 November 2014

ACCREDITED SENIOR FIRST AID COURSE

Thursday 27 March 2014

Thursday 18 September 2014

CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

(Mandated Notification Training)

Thursday 6 March 2014

Thursday 19 June 2014

Thursday 11 September 2014

Thursday 13 November 2014

COORDINATORS WORKSHOP

Tuesday 18 March 2014

Thursday 15 May 2014

Wednesday 13 August 2014

Thursday 16 October 2014

For more information about Playgroup SA workshops and courses or to make a booking contact Playgroup SA on 1800 171 882.



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