

State of **Play**

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF PLAYGROUP SA

ISSUE 1 2014

CELEBRATING
40 YEARS
OF PLAYGROUP

SAND PLAY
SOLUTIONS

WHY KIDS
NEED NATURE

FLIP OVER FOR
SA KIDS





It's going to **BE BIG!**

A very big welcome to all of our 2014 Playgroup SA members, friends, supporters and Playgroups. This is an exciting year for Playgroup SA, as it is the year that we turn 40! It's truly amazing to think about how this wonderful Playgroup movement in SA has been supported by families across our great state for 40 strong years.

To kick off our year of celebration, we will be holding a Twilight Birthday Playgroup on 28 March. Playgroup SA encourages all Playgroups to become involved throughout the year and we will end it with a big bang at Playgroup @ the Zoo in November. Check out our events and workshops page in this edition for further information.

A big thank you to the many Playgroups who have promptly completed the Playgroup Affiliation process – your packs should now be in the mail (if you haven't already

received them). A reminder to all other Playgroups to affiliate in order to be in the running for the affiliation prizes and enjoy the many benefits of being a Playgroup SA Affiliated Playgroup. For our members, don't forget to complete your membership form and send it in with your competition entry to be eligible to win a great holiday at Tumby Bay, courtesy of Modra's Apartments.

Don't forget that we, Playgroup SA staff, are here to assist you with any Playgroup matter. Our number is toll free – 1800 171 882, so give us a call.

We hope you are looking forward to a wonderful year of fun and play at Playgroup.

Carley Jones
Executive Officer



PLAYING OUTSIDE THE SQUARE

Martina Button finds a special opportunity to observe her children at play in a natural environment.

WORDS MARTINA BUTTON

There I was, sitting on a splintered log bench having a daydream while my children and their cousins were playing at a popular Fleurieu Peninsula playground when it popped into my head! The Personal Development Training I had attended in 2013 where I had the pleasure of meeting the inspiring and good-humoured UK play worker, Marc Armitage.

Mr Armitage is a specialist consultant in the role of 'Children's Play in Learning and Children's Social Worlds', with more than 30 years of experience travelling the world, lecturing, researching and consulting on the importance of the role of play in learning.

Here it was, the perfect opportunity to just be still and observe my children playing in a natural environment without adult interruptions, interpretations or expectations of what or how to play – the opportunity was here to reflect on Marc Armitage's teachings.

Unsurprisingly, I was captivated and amused to witness some of the most creative, experimental and risk taking adventures! Lucky me, I had front row seats to absorb it all.

The creativity and language which was coming out of the mouths and minds of babes was captivating. I was pleasantly transported back to my own childhood and the fond memories of hours spent with my siblings exploring the big

wide world, of our neighbours' front and back yards and of using our creative skills to produce an adventure mission out of absolutely anything!

I turned my attention to all the other little people playing in the playground (their tender ages of around two to four years), nestled in the back corners digging and rolling, ducking and darting, tumbling and laughing, with buoyant attempts to climb, swing, jump, run and even walk.

Occasionally, what can go unnoticed during a day of hard working play, is the actual positions of play. In observing such play time I noticed most of the children were laying and sitting in corners, searching for cover to conceal themselves from the adult world behind big bulky play equipment, low walls and bushes and balancing on the sandpit boundary line while mingling in circles of twos and threes or more. And yet not necessarily physically playing together.

Marc Armitage advocates for creating play environments that include corners and edges, circles and triangles, winding paths with treasures hidden around corners (therefore offering play routes with hiding spots and loose parts to inspire further play), social interaction, problem solving and learning moments. These play spaces can be easily created at Playgroup using furniture, chairs, outdoor equipment, natural materials, blankets, sheets, boxes, etc.

Incorporating baskets, plastic containers and/or creative little treasure boxes filled with feathers, large stones, shells, twigs, plastic animals, strategically placed larger animal statues or pots of balls or string and scarves. These are loose parts for play that spark creativity and language in play. This is learning! This is FUN!

Niki Buchan, another inspiring individual who I admire; among many other insightful concepts on play, speaks about how “Best play is when no adults are around – however in early childhood that is not possible, so it is important that ... adults are not too restrictive or intrusive in children’s play.”

This was evident while I was watching over the children weaving in and out of wiggly wobbly paths (paths not able to be seen by adult eyes where every so often little heads could be seen bobbing up and down to glimpse over and see if their caring adult was still in earshot of their imaginary universe). Away from adult eyes children are satisfied and

“Best play is when no adults are around – however in early childhood that is not possible, so it is important that ... adults are not too restrictive or intrusive in children’s play.”

safe with the knowledge that their caring adult can hear them and yet not necessarily see them.

Niki has a special interest in supporting children in recognising the benefits of risk taking. She says: “It comes down to respecting and trusting that children are capable and competent little individuals. I feel that the role of the adult is to raise awareness of hazards that children might not be able to identify or might not realise the severity of but still allow children to work things out for themselves. If we don’t allow children to continue to do this from a very early age they will not be able to self risk assess as they get older with possibly disastrous consequences. Even a baby just starting to walk is able to self risk assess and some babies are naturally more cautious, just as some toddlers and adults are.”

On a personal level, I completely agree with Niki’s ideas around children and self assessing risk awareness. I like to think I embrace this style of parenting with my own children (well, most of the time), however, in child friendly environments such as Playgroups, schools and kindys, it is important to use risk assessments and follow organisational regulations to ensure all bases are covered when it comes to the safety of children and their families. There is, though, always opportunity for education surrounding risk

awareness that can be raised in discussion with parents and caregivers at a Playgroup. Ask families what their boundaries are at home with their children around play and risk. How do they support their child’s explorations of the world without too much interference or interpretation? What age should children start exploring risk and self assessment?

To sum it up, take time to think and ‘play outside the square’. Create play spaces that encourage spontaneity, opportunity, imagination and fun! All these elements evoke the learning pathways children need for future adventures.

Personally, I enjoy making time to consciously throw myself into a sitting position and quietly watch over the skills and expertise of the children around me playing, appreciating and respecting their commitment to their work – this is their craft to master at their own pace and as adults, it is our responsibility to ensure the possibilities of play are made available, encouraged and nourished.

Attempt to make your play spaces curvy and shaped, scout around for natural materials that already exist at your Playgroup; trees, twigs, bushes, pot plants, logs, leaves, stones and so on, and use them as treasures. Position larger items as partitions to change square play spaces into triangles or circles and therefore invite communal interactions between children (as well as great hiding spots with surprises).

And finally, another helpful hint is to follow the research and inspirational learning that come from incredible educators such as Marc Armitage and Niki Buchan (just to name a couple). ●

To learn more about Marc Armitage check out www.marc-armitage.eu. Niki Buchan is a senior educational consultant originally from South Africa who has worked internationally with young children in naturalistic, sensorial and experiential environments for 30 years. Niki now works for Inspired EC in Australia and is passionate about Naturalistic Learning. To learn more about Niki Buchan check out www.preciouschildhood.blogspot.com.au

Martina Button is Playgroup SA’s Playgroups in Schools (PinS) project officer.

IT'S OUR 40TH BIRTHDAY!



In 2014 we're celebrating 40 years of providing young children and their parents and carers with a place to connect with each other and learn through play! For four decades, Playgroup SA has been an integral part of family life – offering babies, toddlers and young children a wide variety of early learning experiences and mums, dads, grandparents and caregivers an environment to share ideas, valuable information and parenting advice. ●

Want to know where your local Playgroup is? We have more than 300 affiliated Playgroups across SA.

Call us on free call 1800 171 882 or email info@playgroupsa.com.au for a detailed list of Playgroups in your area.

Can we pweease go?

Being a toddler isn't easy...
learn from the experts!



Friday 21st to
Sunday 23rd March 2014
Adelaide Showground, Wayville

free ticket

VALUED AT \$15

- Loads of free entertainment, including Sesame Street's Elmo and Friends live on stage, animal farm and more
- Hundreds of brands
- Expert tips and advice
- Free Car Restraint check in your vehicle
- And so much more!



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pbexpo.com.au/adelaide/2014-tickets

DESERT DREAMING

Siobhan Evans discusses the magical activity of sand play.

Playing with sand can be such a satisfying activity for children at home and at Playgroup. Through scooping, pouring and moulding sand, children develop their fine motor skills and actions such as digging and raking to develop their gross motor skills.

Sand play also helps pre-school age children to understand concepts important for maths and science learning and it allows babies to sit with their carers and experience the texture, temperature, movement and other sensory characteristics of sand.

Babies love having their toes placed in the sand. Let them experience wet and dry sand, and sand being poured through a funnel onto their fingers and toes. Toddlers can practice pouring from one container to another or moulding wet sand with plastic cups or containers.

Sand play equipment

Give children plenty of opportunity to use their hands and then try introducing some of the following objects

gradually – try not to offer too many at one time, which can be confusing.

- Old kitchen utensils and spoons.
- Tea pots, jugs, various shaped containers and measuring cups.
- Toy wheelbarrow.
- Natural objects such as twigs, shells, leaves, flowers and non-choking sized pebbles.
- Funnels, strainers and sieves.
- Plastic rakes and spades.
- Toy cars, trucks and so on.
- Similar items used for water play.

Sand play without a sand pit

When it's more appropriate to do inside activities or if you do not have a sandpit, a temporary sandpit can be made using:

- Baby bath.
- Blow up pool.



WORDS SIOBHAN EVANS

- Water trough or shell sandpit.
- Mound of sand on a tarp.
- Uprturned table.

A great deal of sand is not needed – a bucket of borrowed sand should suffice. Just think on a smaller scale – for example, use spoons instead of shovels.

Ideas for sand play

- Sing songs with actions while playing in the sand, e.g., Pat-a-Cake, Pat-a-Cake.
- Add different textured sand or coloured sand for children to play with and mix.
- Introduce a small amount of water to sand play to provide children with new opportunities for exploration and discovery through their play – comparison of wet sand versus dry sand, variations in textures, weight and how the sand is handled when wet.
- Place a sheet of plastic into a hollow in the sandpit and make a small pond. Then introduce toy boats to play with or transform the area into a geographical landscape with mountains, lakes and so on.
- Bury 'fossils' such as plastic dinosaurs and toy eggs and

allow your junior palaeontologists to use their hands and plastic spades to search for them, dig them up and identify them.

- Engage children in making their own sand pit toys, e.g., cut down funnels and moulds using clean plastic recycled bottles, pieces of wood or blocks used for road ways and ramps, toilet rolls as tunnels or funnels, etc.

Sand pit care

- Ensure the sand pit is raked regularly and checked for any dangerous objects.
- Cover the pit when not in use to keep the sand clean.
- Always supervise your children when playing with water.

Young children gain a great deal of enjoyment from playing in sand. Be creative and consider your child's interests to assist in coming up with endless ideas for sandpit fun. ●

Siobhan Evans is Playgroup SA's communications coordinator. This article was adapted from a Playgroup Queensland resource.



WALLPAPER PASTE GLUE

Ingredients

- 1 dessertspoon of wallpaper paste (non toxic and fungicide free)
- 1 ¼ cups water

Method

1. Place wallpaper paste into bowl.
2. Add water and stir well.

Variation: Add Aquadhere to wallpaper paste glue to increase sticking quality.

Extension idea: Why not use a large piece of bark or another natural object as the base for your collage.

Article courtesy of Playgroup Queensland.

ACTIVITY FOR HOME AND PLAYGROUP

MAKE A NATURAL COLLAGE

Nature can be a wonderful source of collage materials. Some materials you may like to collect for nature collages include:

- Bark.
- Feathers.
- Flowers.
- Pebbles.
- Seeds.
- Shells.
- Leaves.
- Twigs.
- Gumnuts.

Why not go for a walk together to collect materials for the nature collage? Involve the children in sorting the materials and separating them into different containers, as this is great for development of mathematical and scientific understandings, and fun. Avoid toxic materials or items small enough to pose a choking hazard. ●

Instructions

1. Start with a small range of materials. The children will enjoy making their natural collage creations by gluing the collected items to a base board (use a glue that will stick to avoid frustration, such as Aquadhere).
2. Place the glue in small containers so that the children can apply it with brushes (brushes with small handles are best – preferably wooden handles). Young children may be more interested in what they can do with the glue brush rather than the collage as a finished product.
3. Encourage creativity through encouraging the children to come up with their own ideas rather than getting them to copy something or follow a set pattern.



PLAYGROUP SA COORDINATOR'S CHECKLIST

What is the role of a Playgroup SA Coordinator?

The role of the coordinator is to aid in the facilitation of play and to ensure safe play spaces are prepared for children of all ages (0-5years; babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers) at Playgroup.

A Coordinator's role is to encourage families to help and support the week-to-week running of Playgroup with fruit-time/reading stories/song time/set-up and pack-up, maintaining activity stations and welcoming new families. Building a family friendly and inclusive philosophy is ideal for a successful Playgroup. Constructing a Playgroup Committee is another effective strategy to help create a successful cohesive Playgroup.

Playgroup Coordinator Checklist:

- Fill in and return Playgroup Affiliation Form with payment
- Complete and return Police Check Paperwork to PGSA
- Playgroup Charter displayed at Playgroup
- Family Membership Forms & Benefits information available for families
- Provide families with a 'Welcome' flyer (fact sheet about Playgroup)

Playgroup Guide will assist with the following:

- Determine a suitable day & time for Playgroup (Expressions of Interest notice)
- Promote your Playgroup
- Resource your Playgroup

- Ensure you have a best practice for money handling
- Form a committee of Playgroup supporters (optional)
- Plan Policies & Guidelines
- Plan Play Spaces
- Playgroup Routine
- Safety & Playgroup Checklist

As a Playgroup Coordinator ensure you have:

- Enrolled in Playgroup SA's Workshops
- Enrolled in Playgroup SA's Child Safe Environments Training
- Be aware of Playgroup SA events
- Contact Playgroup SA Support & Development team to arrange a Playgroup visit
- Inform new families that first two visits to Playgroup are free
- PGSA Membership forms filled out and returned on second Playgroup visit
- Accident or Injury Report Forms
- Excursion Forms
- Playgroup family Sign In/Attendance Record Sheet

End of term:

- Return Attendance Record Sheet at the end of each term to Playgroup SA via post, email or fax

The above Coordinator's checklist is a guide. Playgroup SA can provide support for all Coordinators with each item on the checklist. Please call or email Playgroup SA for further support and advice.

Support

Access to Playgroup SA's Support and Development Officers in person, via email and/or telephone. These workers can provide you with useful resources and materials, Playgroup activities, ideas and more.

Publications



Four editions per year of our state based publication, the 2-in-1 *State of Play / SA Kids Magazine*. Includes practical, local information about raising children, as well as original articles by experienced journalists, childhood professionals and parents. This mag covers all stages from pregnancy to the teenage years and *State of Play* is specifically targeted to families with 0-5 year olds.
AND

ePlayNEWS

Subscription to *ePlayNEWS*, Playgroup SA's state based membership newsletter (if an email address is provided) which is distributed six times per year.

Insurance

Comprehensive public liability & personal accident insurance whilst you and your children are attending an Affiliated Playgroup or Playgroup activity anywhere in rural or metro South Australia.

Playgroup SA Member Benefits

Along with 4,000 other South Australian family members, enjoy these Playgroup SA Membership benefits!

Events

Discounted entry into Playgroup SA events including Playgroup @ the Zoo and free special event Playgroups such as Easter, Christmas and Book Week Playgroups.

FREE tickets to the Pregnancy, Baby & Children's Expo (distributed via playgroups).

ABC Card

A Playgroup 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.



Training

Discounted Playgroup SA workshops including, Messy Play, Physical Play, Christmas craft and more.

Discounted prices on Accredited Training Courses including Senior First Aid and Child Safe Environments.

Membership

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.

AND the right to attend as many Affiliated Playgroups as you wish!

WHAT'S ON 2014

PLAYGROUP SA EVENTS 2014

Twilight Birthday Party: Playgroup

(Playgroup SA celebrating 40 Years)

Friday 28 March 2014

5pm to 7pm

Easter Playgroup

Thursday 10 April 2014

Book Week Playgroup

Thursday 21 August 2014

PLAYGROUP @ THE ZOO

Friday 7 November 2014

Christmas Playgroup

Thursday 4 December 2014

PLAYGROUP WORKSHOPS 2014

Coordinators Workshop

Tuesday 18 March 2014

Thursday 15 May 2014

Wednesday 13 August 2014

Thursday 16 October 2014

Messy Play Workshop

Thursday 3 April 2014

Thursday 7 August 2014

CRÈCHE AVAILABLE
for Playgroup Workshops (not accredited courses)

PLAYGROUP WORKSHOPS

Playgroup SA Members & Coordinators

\$10 inc GST;

Non Playgroup SA Members

\$35 inc GST

For all enrolments and/or enquiries, please contact Playgroup SA on 1800 171 882

Make and Play Workshop

Thursday 13 March 2014

Thursday 4 September 2014

Preschool Workshop

Thursday 8 May 2014

Christmas Craft Workshop

Thursday 6 November 2014

ACCREDITED COURSES 2014

Enquire to Playgroup SA for Accredited Course costs

Child Safe Environments (Mandated Notification Training)

Thursday 6 March 2014

Thursday 19 June 2014

Thursday 11 September 2014

Thursday 13 November 2014

Accredited Senior First Aid Course

Thursday 27 March 2014

Thursday 18 September 2014

Performing CPR

Available on request