



Uniting Church **Playgroup**

Playgroup

Ideas

Term 3, 2011

Compiled by the Children & Family Ministry Team
Uniting Church SA

PLAYGROUP IDEAS — TERM 3, 2011

Dear reader or browser,

We are happy that you have opened this resource; and we hope it will be a help to you in planning a program for your church-based playgroup.

In order to continue producing this kind of resource, we need to hear from you. So please take the time to let us know how you are using the resource and to give us your suggestions for future editions. Send your response — you can use this feedback form if you wish — to **children@sa.uca.org.au**

Thanks, and God's blessings to you and the families you support,

Mary Jo and Melissa

Children and Family Ministry Team

FEEDBACK FORM

Name and location of **your playgroup**

Your name and your role in the playgroup.....

Number and ages of children attending your playgroup

Special features of your playgroup

.....

How many **Playgroup Ideas** documents have you looked at before this?.....

What have you found useful in **Playgroup Ideas**?.....

.....

What improvements can you suggest for **Playgroup Ideas**?

.....

Any other comments?.....

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Term 4, 2011 Here are the themes we expect to be featuring. We'd love your contribution of ideas and suggestions.

A colour: Pink

An animal: Birds

A story: Solomon's wisdom

A machine: Doors and hinges

An occupation: Computer technician

A place: Mall/shopping centre

My body: Arms

A plant: Grains

Seasonal: Advent

Seasonal: Christmas (Angels)

INTRODUCTION

Term 3, 2011, Playgroup Ideas

This resource is designed to help leaders of church-based playgroups in planning their program.

This resource is not a set curriculum; it provides ideas that you may pick and choose from or adapt to your own situation. The themes and activity ideas can fit into whatever format you have established for your playgroup.

A **Uniting Church SA Playgroup Manual** is also available at <http://mnrn.sa.uca.org.au/childrens-ministry/playgroups.html>

The manual is a comprehensive resource that includes: Starting a playgroup, Administration, Safety and property, Leaders and volunteers, Finances, Getting the church involved, Promotion, Frequently asked questions and Useful contacts.

Faith Enrichment Ideas

Playgroups organised by churches and staffed by Christians serve young families in many ways. Their Christian character is shown through the development of caring relationships. Some church-based playgroups also introduce Christian concepts into their program through activities, songs and stories. A playgroup can be an alternative 'church' experience *if* the playgroup provides opportunities for the family to explore the Christian faith.

We respect the view of some churches that playgroup is only pre-evangelical, with a policy not to mention anything 'Christian' unless the topic is brought up by the parent or carer. However, the greatest gift we have to offer people is Jesus. Let's not hide him from those that we care about simply because we are afraid to offend.

The parents and carers who come into the church for playgroup know that the organisers are Christian, so they would find it reasonable to have some appropriate faith discussion or activity. It's important to state in your playgroup information posters and brochures that you do have some Christian content in your playgroup program.

This **Playgroup Ideas Resource** provides a range of Faith Enrichment Ideas related to each topic. Playgroup leaders can use one or more of these suggestions to introduce a faith dimension into the playgroup session in a natural way. You know the families who attend your playgroup, so you can best decide what is appropriate for their situation.

Themes This Term

Week 1	Hair
Week 2	Grandparents
Week 3	Drivers
Week 4	'The Ugly Duckling'
Week 5	Yellow
Week 6	Book Week
Week 7	Fathers Day
Week 8	Skates and skateboards
Week 9	Guinea pigs and hamsters
Week 10	Parks

Note: Throughout this resource the term 'parent' is used for the parent, relative or other carer who brings a child to playgroup.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PAGE

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

TYPICAL DEVELOPMENT MILESTONES

6 Months

Vocalization with intonation
Respond to human voices

1 year

Use one or more words with meaning
Understand simple instructions, if vocal or physical cues are given
Aware of the social value of speech

18 Months

Vocabulary of 5-20 words, chiefly nouns
Repeat a word or phrase often
Follow simple commands

2 years

Vocabulary of 150-300 words, including some prepositions and pronouns
Name familiar objects
Make short sentences
2/3 of what they says is intelligible
Rhythm and fluency often poor
Volume and pitch not controlled

3 years

Vocabulary of 900-1000 words, including verbs and tenses
Handle three word sentences easily
90% of what they say is intelligible
Understand most simple questions dealing with their environment and activities

4 years

Vocabulary continues to grow, adding 1-3 or more words each day.
Name common objects in picture books or magazines
Can repeat words of four syllables
Have vowels, diphthongs and consonants p, b, m, w, n well established
Verbalise as they play and work

For more about language development, see http://www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/development/language_development.html

What a wonderful gift God has given people in language!

Have you ever thought about it? Somehow one person's ideas move to another person. Lungs, vocal chords, mouth, teeth, tongue and lips work together to create a vibration in the air. That sound wave is trapped by the outer ear of another person, vibrates their eardrum, tickles miniscule hairs, and is carried along their nerve cells as electrical impulses to their brain. Their brain then receives, processes and responds to the first person's ideas.

Written language involves hands and eyes creating and interpreting marks on a page that carry meaning from one person to another through light waves bouncing from one place to another.

Language — as a specific system of sounds and symbols with meaning — unifies people who share the same system. It can also isolate people who do not understand the system.

What does this mean for our playgroups?

Young children do not need to know the science of hearing and sight. From infancy they hear language and learn to make sounds. They discover that certain sounds affect the people around them. They connect certain sounds with particular people and things in their world.

Slowly they learn that sounds name things. Certain sounds magically help them connect with other people. Certain sounds give them power: 'No' and 'Mine', for example.

Young children learn language by copying the speakers around them.

Most Australian playgroups use standard Australian English language. For most of our parents, this is their own language, and the language they use with their children in their homes. For these families, playgroup is about expanding children's experiences and providing language to reflect and interpret those experiences.

Playgroup leaders need to choose carefully the language they use with parents and children. As much as possible, they need to model respectful, 'correct' speech, avoiding impolite, sexist or denigrating expressions, being sparing in their use of slang and avoiding swearing.

In speaking with children, playgroup leaders must also speak clearly and keep their language simple, their sentences short and their instructions limited. All the while, observing children's response to gauge if the message needs to be modified or repeated.

Some of our playgroup families use languages other than English in their homes. Unless the playgroup is set up specifically to cater for another language group, an English language playgroup will help the child (and parent) acclimatise to an English-speaking culture. On the other hand, in a multi-cultural society it is good for all children to recognise that there are other language systems; that these are valid and important to the people who use them. Children can learn some words in languages other than English as they learn to respect the culture the language represents.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

MUSIC

Many songs we suggest are from Play School. Many parents are already familiar with them and this helps with the sing-a-long! Play School CD's are available at the ABC stores and often at department stores.



Musical Fun

This pack includes **Oomba Baroomba** and **There's a Bear in There**.

Price \$14.95 ABC Shop

Sing-A-Long Songs

Price: \$9.95 ABC Shop

Double Pack

This pack includes **Play School Favourites** and **Hullaballoo**

Price: \$14.95 ABC Shop

The New Useful Book has the sheet music to many popular songs and activities arranged by themes. It is 'a very useful book'!

Price: \$19.95 ABC Shop

STORY BOOKS

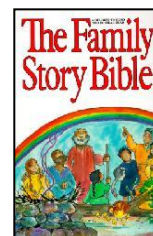
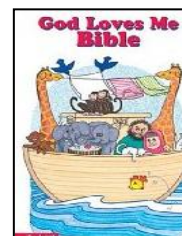
We suggest a variety of story books to fit with the theme of each week. You can use whatever books suit your group and are available on your bookshelf or from the local library.

BIBLE STORY BOOKS

We recommend that you have a children's story Bible.

These two are especially good for young children:

- *God Loves Me Bible* (Candle Books)
- *The Ralph Milton Family Story Bible*



MediaCom is a good source for Children's Bibles and other resources.

Website: <http://www.mediacom.org.au> — for Online orders and browsing

Visit: 14 Eton Rd, Keswick 5035, South Australia

Phone toll free: 1-800-811-311

Email: admin@mediacom.org.au

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Ideas are seldom truly original. Some of the same ideas are available from many different sources. The ideas in this resource may have their origin in a whole range of personal experience, observation, printed resources or electronic resources. They have been filtered through memory and modified to meet specific needs. Some poetry has been included where the 'original writer' is unknown.

We have not knowingly breached copyright, but if you are the originator of any material in Playgroup Ideas, please notify us so that we can give you credit in the future.

HAIR

Hair care for littlies involves regular washing (shampoo), daily tidying (with comb and/or brush), sometimes styling, and occasional cuts.

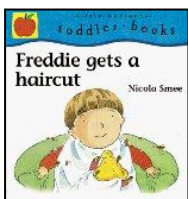
ACTIVITY IDEAS

- Playgroup hair salon:** First haircut by a hairdresser can be a traumatic event for some young children. Set up your own hair salon that children can visit in the more familiar atmosphere of playgroup. Have a chair, a table and a mirror at the appropriate height. Parents (or a trusted volunteer) help the child sit in the chair, and they wrap a towel around the child's neck. Parents comb their child's hair and then look in the mirror with the child and point out how nice they look when their hair is tidy. Parents may also cut a single strand of the child's hair to show that it does not hurt. This exercise may also be an opportunity to check children's hair and scalp for problems that need professional attention. Make it a hygienic operation by using a clean new comb for each child, look for inexpensive multi packs at a cheap shop. Write each child's name on their own comb. Use the same comb for . . .
- Comb Kazoo:** Children can make a simple musical instrument by folding a piece of waxproof paper over a comb. To play the comb, put it on your mouth and hum so the paper vibrates. One of your leaders should experiment with this before the session to be prepared to demonstrate and help children (and parents) with the technique. You could organise a comb band and play some familiar songs.
- Feel my hair:** In groups of two or three families, encourage children and parents to feel one another's hair and describe how it feels: smooth, kinky, soft, hard, bouncy, spikey . . . Groups may also talk about the different colours of people's hair. Try to organise groups so that different hair types are represented in each group. This is a good time to talk about pulling (rather than feeling) hair, and why we should not do it and that some people don't even like to have others touch their hair.
- Hair styling:** If you have access to hair styling dolls, have them available for children to play with.
- Long, longer, longest:** Divide children into two groups: long hair and short hair. Within the groups compare hair lengths. Use terms like 'Kyle's hair is shorter than Ben's hair.' 'Mia's hair is longer than Nora's hair.' You can then discover who has the longest hair and the shortest hair at playgroup.
- What's in my hair:** A leader puts something (ribbon, pencil, rubber spider) in their hair and invites a child to check and see 'What's in my hair?' When the child has found and identified the item, sing:

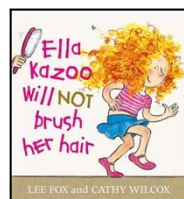
There's a spider in my hair, in my hair; there's a spider in my hair, in my hair.
 There's a spider in my hair, but I don't really care. There's a spider in my hair, in my hair, in my hair.
 (tune: Be careful little hands)



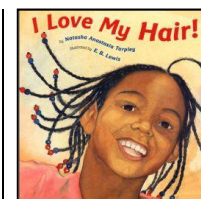
BOOKS TO SHARE Find books in your local library or parents' collections about hair, eg



Freddie gets a haircut
by Nicola Smeed



Ella Kazoo will not bursh her hair
by Lee Fox and Cathy Wilcox



I Love My Hair!
by Natasha Anastasia Tarpley

NURSERY RHYMES AND SONGS

- Hands on shoulders, hands on knees. Hands behind you if you please.
 Touch your shoulders, now your nose, now your hair and now your toes.
 Hands up high in the air, down at your sides, and touch your hair.
 Hands up high as before; now, clap your hands, one, two, three, four!

FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

- Key faith concept:** God made every detail of our bodies.
- Talk about:** The hair on our head is made up of lots and lots of tiny little hairs. God loves you so much he even cares about every one of your hairs.
- Wonder:** I wonder why God cares about us.
- Pray:** Thank you, God, for loving us and giving us hair. Amen.
- Bible verse:** God counts every hair on your head! (Luke 12:7)

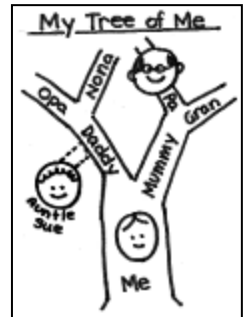
GRANDPARENTS

Ask each family to bring a grandparent or an older neighbour or friend. Alternatively, extend a special invitation to older people in your congregation to join in this playgroup session. If any family is without a grandparent on the day, a playgroup volunteer should ask for the privilege of being grandma/grandpa for the day.

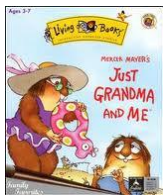
Ask 'grandparents' to bring a photo or memento of their childhood.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

- **Family Trees: (1)** Look at trees to get the idea of several branches attached to one tree trunk.
(2) Parents work with their own children to talk about and draw 'My Tree of Me'. Start with the tree trunk as 'me'. Add branches for parents. Add branches to the parent-branches for grandparents.
(3) Label each branch with the name the child uses for the person. Each person present (child, parent, grandparent) draws a picture of their face in the appropriate spot on the tree. Each family configuration will be different.
- **A family story:** Grandparents show their grandchild mementos of their childhood and tell a brief family story related to the memento. Children draw a picture of the memento or story on a piece of paper (approx 8 X 12 cm). (This will be inserted into a 'Thank you card' for the grandparent.)
- **Old fashioned games:** In groups of two or three families, grandparents teach and play a simple game they remember from their childhood.
- **Formalities: (1)** Gather in a circle, parents and children sitting on the floor. Provide chairs for grandparents who might find this challenging. Leader welcomes grandparents.
(2) Each child stands and introduces their own grandparent, and tells something about them, eg 'This is my grandma. She works in a bank.' or 'This is my pa. He has a boat.'
(3) Pick up on different terms for grandparents used in different language groups. After each introduction the whole group could respond 'G'day, Nona (or whatever term the child uses)'.
(4) Ask each child to hug their Grandparent while you help them to pray: 'Thank you, God, for my grandma/grandpa. He/she is very special. Amen.'
(5) Children can then take their grandparents to . . .
- **Grandparent tea party:** Have a table set up as nicely as possible where 'grandparents' can have a quiet cuppa while children have a snack in their usual way.



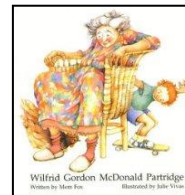
BOOKS TO SHARE Find stories in your local library or in parents' collections about grandparents, eg



Just Grandma and Me
by Mercer Mayer



Just Grandpa and Me
by Mercer Mayer



Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge
by Mem Fox

NURSERY RHYMES AND SONGS

- These are grandma's spectacles, (make circles around eyes with fingers) . . . Grandpa's spectacles
 This is grandma's hat. (use both hands and cup on head) . . . Grandpa's hat
 This is the way she folds her hands, (fold hands) . . . he folds his arms (fold arms across chest)
 And puts them on her lap. (put hands in lap) . . . And THAT IS THAT! (Nod head down sharply)
- Talk about some things that grandmas/grandpas do. Mime what they do as you sing:
 Did you ever see a grandma (grandpa), a grandma, a grandma (Tune: Did you ever see a lassie?)
 Did you ever see a grandma go this way and that.
 Go this way and that way; go this way and that way.
 Did you ever see a grandma go this way and that?

FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

- **Key faith concept:** God gives us grandparents.
- **Wonder:** I wonder why God gives us grandparents.
- **Bible verse:** Grandchildren are like a crown to older people. (Proverbs 17:6)

At the end of the session, children give grandparents a thank-you card, see Appendix.

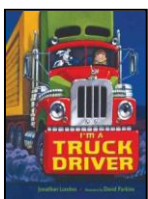
DRIVERS

ACTIVITIES

- **Guest:** Invite someone who works as a driver. This could be a taxi driver to a train driver, a courier, a long haul carter. . . The driver visits playgroup and talks to children about what they do and how what they do helps people. They might also talk about important road rules they have to obey. It would be good if they have photos to share of their vehicle and them at work with it.
- **Visit the vehicle:** If possible the guest brings their vehicle to playgroup and invite children with parents to visit the vehicle, sit in the driver's seat, and hold the steering wheel. Consider duty of care issues.
- **Driving my truck:** Mark out a road in your playgroup space. Provide several simple trucks (see below). Children can wear their carton trucks and walk around the road. It may be fun to have a figure 8 track, with give way signs or traffic lights at the intersection so children can deal safely with other drivers or make choices about what direction to go.
- **Cardboard carton truck/van/bus:** Provide a cardboard carton for each child. Parents fold the flaps to the inside of the carton to make it sturdier. They cut four slits (two near the top of each long side of the carton). Tie rope or cloth tape through the slits to go over children's shoulders. Children decorate the outside of their truck as they wish. They may glue on round paper wheels, colour the truck with crayons, write a name on the truck and/or add other details.
- **Play with trucks:** Provide toy cars, trucks, busses, a floor mat with roads marked on it, etc that children can play with as they choose.
- **Hide and Seek:** Put out several different toy cars and trucks on a table. Children hide their eyes (or turn around) while a parent removes one item. Children look and try to tell which vehicle is missing. Continue until no more items are left.
- **Be a bus:** A leader acts as bus driver and walks around the playgroup area. Parents and children can 'hail' the bus by holding out their arm. The driver stops by these people and asks, 'Do you want to get on my bus?' The first person to get on holds the driver's hand. Second person holds first person's other hand, and so on. Get as many people on board the bus as you can and meander around the area. The driver may ask people where they want to get off and take them to their destinations.
- **Noises:** Talk with children about noises drivers (and children) should be aware of. It would be great if you could use a recording of these so children can hear the actual sounds; otherwise, mimic them as best you can. Consider what these noises sound like and what they mean: vehicle backing up, emergency vehicle siren, honking horn.



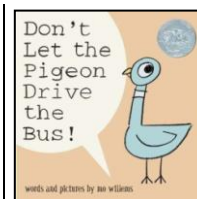
BOOKS TO SHARE Find books in your local library or parents' collections about drivers, eg



I'm a truck driver
by Jonathan
London &
David Parkins



Bus Driver
by Susan
Barraclough
from the 'When
I'm at Work' series



Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus
by Mo Willems

NURSERY RHYMES AND SONGS

- The wheels on the truck/van/bus go round and round.
- *Hold hands with palms turned out and move them from side to side as you say:*
The window wipers are busy in the rain.
They swing clup, clup and swing clup, clup.
Back and forth again.

FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

- **Key faith concept:** God gives us people who help us.
- **Talk about** what drivers do to move people and goods from place to place.
- **Wonder:** I wonder why God gives us people who help us.
- **Pray:** Thank you, God, for people who help us (insert children's ideas), and for drivers. Amen.
- **Bible verse:** God says: I will be with you wherever you go. (Joshua 1:9)

'THE UGLY DUCKLING'

There are some rather adult concepts embedded in Hans Christian Anderson's fairy tale 'The Ugly Duckling'. For playgroup age children concentrate on the contrast between loved/accepted/happy and unloved/left out/sad.

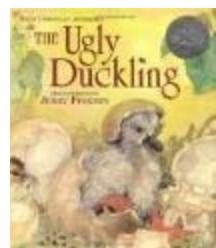
Something to bring: Ask any families who have rubber duck bath toys to bring them to playgroup.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

- **Story telling:** Present the story in one or more different ways. Tell it in your own words, possibly using a 'beautiful swan' puppet as a puppet/prop. Read it from a children's book. Story-reading can be a whole group activity, or a small group activity or each parent can read it to their child alone.
- **Video:** If you have access to Internet, these are both on YouTube and worth considering:
 - the 1939 wordless Walt Disney version. This is rather long for young children, but emotions are so clearly demonstrated that it is a wonderful opportunity to look at the action and talk about: How do you think the duck feels? How can you tell how it feels?
 - Danny Kaye's musical version in the film 'Hans Christian Anderson'. While this is aimed at older children, playgroup children will be captivated by the 'click, get out of town/the best in town' phrase. Kaye's interaction with a sick child may be a talking point for some groups.
- **Talk about:** Why was the 'ugly duckling' special to the mother swan? What did the mother swan do to show the little duckling was special to her? Encourage parents to give their own child a hug and tell them: 'You are beautiful to me because . . .'
- **Act out the story:** Children can use their own rubber ducks to act out the story.
- **Ducks, swans and other water fowl:** Display either pictures or figurines of various kinds of birds. Parents help their children name the kinds of birds, arrange them by colour or size, count them. If your pictures allow it, look at mothers and babies of each kind of bird. Talk about: What are birds? How are they different from other animals? (feathers) Most birds fly. Some can swim.
- **Duck paddle:** Ducks and swans move on the water by kicking their legs. Parents hold their children, lying face down on their arms. Children can paddle — faster, slower, harder, gentler.
- **A beautiful swan:** Although native Australian ducks are brown and swans are black, most illustrated versions of this story feature yellow ducklings and white swans. Follow that convention and make a swan from a small white paper plate or bowl. Parents help children draw on two large eyes. Cut a beak (see appendix) from orange paper and glue it in the centre of the face. Children glue feathers around the face. To turn the face into a puppet, parents attach a second plate or bowl to the back of the face. Staple around the edges — sides and top, leaving the bottom open so children can put their hands inside. Make sure all staples are fully closed and there are no sharp points.
- **Hand shadow swans:** Use a strong light (eg torch) aimed at a plain white background. Parents and children can make swan-shaped shadows and other shadows. Stand between the light source and the background, bend and position fingers and hands in front of the light; watch the shapes on the wall. See if you can make the swan move and flap its wings.



BOOKS TO SHARE: Find fairy tale collection books in your local library or parents' collections or single story books of 'The Ugly Duckling'. One of the best is this Caldecott Honor Book from Jerry Pinkney.



NURSERY RHYMES AND SONGS

- Five little ducks went out to play (counting down song) — use rubber duckies
- All things bright and beautiful.

FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

- **Key faith concept:** God loves you no matter who you are or what you look like.
- **Wonder:** I wonder why God made so many different kinds of people and animals.
- **Prayer:** Thank you, Jesus for loving us. Thank you for parents who love us and take care of us. Amen.
- **Bible verse:** Everything God made is good. (1 Timothy 4:4)

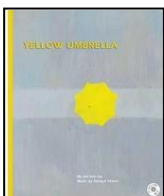
YELLOW

Encourage leaders, parents and children to wear something yellow. As children arrive, ask each child to tell you about the yellow item they are wearing. If any child is not wearing yellow, tie a yellow ribbon on their wrist. In fact, you might give everyone a yellow ribbon so no one is excluded.

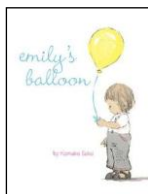
ACTIVITY IDEAS

- **Yellow brick road:** In the Wizard of Oz, Dorothy walks along a 'yellow brick road'. Use a yellow rope to mark out a meandering path around your play space. Children hold hands in twos and threes to skip (or walk or crawl) along the road. You might play a recording of the 'yellow brick road' song during this activity. The road might lead to one of the other activities.
- **Lemon stamps:** Mix yellow tempera paint with water and put in shallow foam meat trays. Cut yellow lemons in half. Children dip the cut end of the lemon in paint and print it onto paper. Repeat to make a design of their choice.
- **☺ Yellow balloons:** Give each child a yellow balloon. Parents can write the child's name on the uninflated balloon with texta. As parents blow up the balloon, children watch what happens to their name. Parents and children play with their balloons, eg sit facing one another and pat the balloon back and forth, or parents bat the balloon into the air and children try to catch it.
- **Pick the yellow:** Display a number of collections of items. Each collection has something that is yellow and several that are other colours, eg a vase of flowers; a bowl of fruit and vegetables (include yellow bananas), a string of various coloured beads, a pile of books, a collection of soft toys, a box of crayons. Children with their parents look at the various collections. Children pick the yellow item and talk about it.
- **Yellow snack:** Serve yellow food on yellow plates or serviettes. Possibilities include: pineapple chunks, corn, corn chips, yellow cake, biscuits with yellow icing. Lemon cordial as a drink.
- **Yellow pages:** Children and parents browse through Yellow Pages telephone directory. Find ads with pictures and guess what kind of business they are promoting. Find the 'let your fingers do the walking' logo and encourage children to walk their fingers from one picture to another.

BOOKS TO SHARE Find books in your local library or parents' collections about yellow, eg



Yellow Umbrella
by Jae Soo Liu
and Dong Il Sheen
From Korea



Emily's Balloon
by Komako Sakai



My Yellow Book
Kathy Knowles
one of a series
of 'colour'
books from OSU
Children's
Library Fund

NURSERY SONGS AND GAMES

- **I see something** (tune of Old McDonald)
I see something that is yellow. Do you see it too?
I see something that is yellow. Hop there if you do.
With a hop, hop here, and a hop, hop there.
Hurry up! Hop it up! Hop as fast as you dare.
I see something that is yellow. Do you see it too?
- **Yellow clothes song** (Tune: If you're Happy and You Know It)
If there's yellow on your t-shirt stand up quick, (X2)
If there's yellow on your t-shirt (X2)
If there's yellow on your t-shirt stand up quick! (Change items of clothing and actions.)

FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

- **Key faith concept:** God made a colourful world.
- **Activity:** If children make lemon prints, write the faith concept or verse on them to take home.
- **Wonder:** I wonder why God made so many colours.
- **Pray:** Thank you, God, for the beautiful world full of colours. Amen.
- **Bible verse:** God made the world and everything in it. (Acts 17:24, adapted)

BOOKS

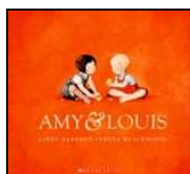
You can link this session with Children's Book Week, 20–26 August, 2011.

SOMETHING TO BRING: Ask each child to bring their favourite book in a paper bag.

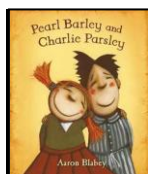
ACTIVITY IDEAS

- **Great big book:** Turn the entrance to your playgroup into a giant book so that children walk into or through the book as they enter. Do this in any way you can given your physical situation, creativity and time. You could use two sides of a large cardboard carton (eg from an appliance).
- **Guest:** Invite a librarian to visit playgroup and talk to the children about what they do and why they enjoy what they do. They might bring along a variety of books and show children some of the kinds of books they have in the library: fiction (stories)/non-fiction (facts/information), big/ small, heavy/light, all writing/pictures, English/other languages.
The librarian may also explain how children should handle and take care of books.
The guest may have suggestions about other activities and may take a greater role in the session.
- **Playgroup book:** Make a book about your own playgroup. Give each child a proforma sheet (see Appendix). Parents help their child complete their own page for the book. Parents write as children dictate their responses. If any of your parents have trouble reading and writing, a playgroup volunteer assists as unobtrusively as possible. Children make their own pictures with coloured pencils. Or take photos of the child and parent that children can glue onto the page. Assemble the pages in a display book with as many plastic sleeves as you have children in playgroup.
Encourage parents and children to look through their own book at this session and future sessions.
- **Sorting books:** place a variety of books on a low table or mat. Children sort the books by colour, size, subject matter (as shown on cover), etc. They may arrange them largest to smallest. Parents and children look at book covers to see if they can tell what the book is about.
- **The tickle book:** Children pretend to be books. At the leader's instructions, the children-books: stand close together like books on the shelf, come down from the shelf and lay on the floor like books on a table. Parents open their child's arms (pages) to read. At this point parents discover, 'it's a tickle book' and tickle their own child's exposed tummy. Parents then shut the children's arms (pages) when the story is finished, and help them stand on the bookshelf again.
- **Sharing books:** In groups of two families, look at the 'favourite' book each child has brought. Parents can read both books to both children. Children who know their book off by heart can help their parent read it.
- **Book bags:** Children decorate paper bags (their own or bags you supply). Children choose three or four crayons of their favourite colours. Parents fasten the crayons together tightly with rubber bands, keeping the writing tips all level. Children hold the fist-full of crayons and make swirls or any other pattern. Parents write '(Child's name)'s Favourite Book'.
- **Snack:** Whatever snack you provide, have a recipe book that shows how the snack is made. Let children look at the recipe (and others in the book) as they finish eating.

BOOKS TO SHARE Find well-loved books in your local library or parents' collections. You might find these recent Books of the Year for Early Childhood:



Amy & Louis
by Libby Gleeson



Pearl Barley and Charlie Parsley
by Aaron Blabey



How to Heal a Broken Wing
by Bob Graham

NURSERY RHYMES AND SONGS

Children look through a book of Nursery Rhymes and Songs and choose some to sing or say.

FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

- **Key faith concept:** The Bible is the book of God.
- **Talk about** the Bible, as God's special book.
- **Wonder:** I wonder why God gave us this special book.
- **Pray:** Thank you, God, for books that are fun and help us learn about our world, about ourselves, about other people and about you. Amen.
- **Bible verse:** [The Bible is] written down so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. (John 20:30,31)

FATHERS DAY

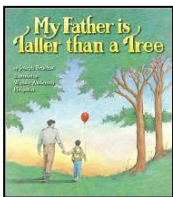
Fathers Day is 4 September in 2011.

Fathers Day can be problematic for some families, and therefore for the playgroups that cater for those families. But Fathers Day is a fact of life in our culture. For families where there are no dads or where dads are serving overseas or where dads are abusive, playgroup has an opportunity to help them cope with the hype around Fathers' Day in a positive, healthy way. At the same time, playgroup can help children appreciate the fathers and other male adults who are a part of their lives.

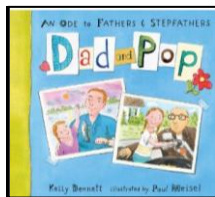
ACTIVITY IDEAS

- A card for a special man in my life:** Prepare a surface from which children can make a rubbing. From quarter sheets of medium sandpaper cut simple shapes, eg a car shape, a love heart, a smiley face, the letters 'D-A-D'. Glue the cutout shapes onto sturdy A-5 cardboard. Children choose a design, a crayon and a piece of coloured paper (A-5). Lay the child's paper over the sandpaper design, and clip the paper to the cardboard. The child uses the side of a crayon to rub over the paper and watch the design emerge. Using a glue stick, fasten the child's rubbing to the front of a blank card. Child and parent decide who the card is for and what message they want to write inside. Provide envelopes for the cards.
- Playing family:** Set out a playhouse or a special area with dolls and household equipment and encourage children to play house/family. What does the man do at home? What do other people in the family do?
- Dress up like a dad:** Provide an assortment of men's clothing (including uniform items) and encourage children to 'dress up like a dad'. Talk about what men wear to work or to sports or to a party, etc. Parents help children name the clothing items and practice dressing skills: buttons, snaps, zippers, legs in trousers, arms in sleeves, etc. A full-length mirror will make this more fun.
- Like father, like child:** Use pictures (see the 'My love' book) of animal and human fathers and children. Parents and children look at the pairs and talk about how children are like their fathers.
- Shave like a dad:** You may do this in a bathroom, or in your regular space. You will need a mirror and a basin of water set at a height suitable for children, paper towel and foaming shaving cream. Cut child-safe razors from soft-ish plastic containers. Use the bend between the container base and side as the bend between the razor blade and handle. Improvise the best shape you can manage. Parents squirt shaving cream onto their child's hand. Talk about how it feels: hot or cold? soft or hard? wet or dry? Children smear the shaving cream onto their face. Check in the mirror to see how they look. They use their plastic razors to scrape off the shaving cream. Then finish wiping their face and the razor with a paper towel.

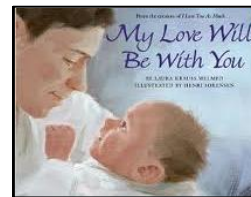
STORIES TO SHARE Find books in your local library or parents' collections about dads, eg



My Father is Taller than a Tree by Joseph Bruchac



Dad and Pop, an ode to fathers and step-fathers, by Kelly Bennett



My Love Will Be with You by Laura Krauss Melmed

SONGS TO SING

- Fathers Day, Fathers Day (tune: This old man) is a very special day. Here's a great big hug and lots of kisses too. Each one says that I love you!
- Remember the Cotties Cordial jingle? 'My dad picks the fruit that goes to Cotties to make the cordial that I like best'. Try using the concept and the tune to make up songs for your kids' dads.

FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

- Read or tell:** a child-friendly version of the parable of two sons (Matthew 21:28-31)
- Talk about:** God created all kinds of families. All families are different. Dads can be important parts of a family.
- Wonder:** I wonder why God gave us fathers. I wonder how God wants us to treat our fathers.
- Pray:** Thank you, God, for families and for dads. Amen.
- Bible Verse:** Respect your father and your mother. (Exodus 20:12, Good News Bible)

SKATES AND SKATEBOARDS

SOMETHING TO BRING: Ask families where there are older children to bring along skateboards (that your children can sit on and be pushed around) and skates (that your children can look at). There may be some duty of care issues to consider in the following suggestions.

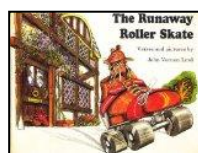
ACTIVITY IDEAS

- **Visitor:** Invite a person who is involved in some form of roller sport to visit your session. The visitor may talk with children about their skating experiences and or about skating safety. The visitor may demonstrate their skill and/or (if appropriate) give children a ride as they skate around the playgroup area, or a nearby corridor or path. Let children examine the skates and safety gear.
- **Skate display:** Set up a display of various kinds of skates and skateboards. These may be too heavy or unsafe for children to handle, so adults do the handling, children do the looking and directing. What do all these items have? (wheels) How many wheels does each item have? Are they side-by side or in-line? Group items by type, size or colour.
You could add to the display some similar, but non-wheeled items (a hiking boot, a body board) and ask children to tell how they are the same as and different from the skates.
- **Paper plate skating:** Give each child two paper plates. They put one foot on each plate and use them as skates. Their feet must stay on the plates in order to move the plates around on the floor. Try skating with the paper plate skates on different floor surfaces to see which works best for them.
- **Ride a skateboard:** Children sit on a skateboard and are pushed around by parents. Consider attaching a rope so the skateboard can be pulled. If you can organise child size wrist guards, knee, elbow pads, and helmet, have the children wear them as they ride to reinforce the message that this can be a dangerous sport and riders need to be careful.
Alternatively, children can give toys a ride on the skateboard.
- **Wheels:** Help children discover what wheels are and how they operate. Have several wheels to examine. Note that all wheels are round. And all wheels turn around an axle in the middle. The axle is much smaller than the wheel.
Parents help children make a simple wheel from a cardboard disk (ie those sold for holding Christmas candles with the centre already marked) and a plastic drinking straw. Stick the straw (axle through the centre hole in the disk. Turn the straw and see the disk go round and round. Add another disk to make a two wheel vehicle children can roll along the floor.
- **Make-and-eat skateboard:** Parents help children make skateboards from available edible ingredients, eg: use a banana: cut off ends and four slices. Attach the wheels (slices) to the banana base using peanut butter, or use a rectangular biscuit (eg Marie) and four small round biscuits or lollies. Attach wheels to the board with icing. Wash hands before starting and use a plate or paper towel as a work surface.

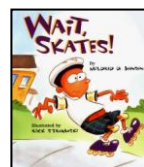
BOOKS TO SHARE Find books in your local library or parents' collections about roller sports eg



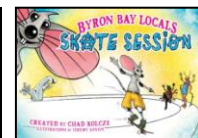
Skating on Sand
by Libby Gleeson



The Runaway Roller Skate
by John Vernon Lord



Wait, Skates!
by Mildred D. Johnson



Byron Bay Locals Skate Session
by Chad Kolcze

SONGS AND RHYMES

- The wheels on the skates go round and round.

FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

- **Key faith concept:** God loves us and keeps us safe.
- **Talk about** the many ways we can go from place to place.
- **Wonder:** I wonder why God wants us to be safe when we go from place to place.
- **Pray:** Thank you, God, for skates and other fun ways to go from place to place. And thank you for keeping us safe. Amen.
- **Bible verse:** God says: I will be with you wherever you go. (Joshua 1:9)

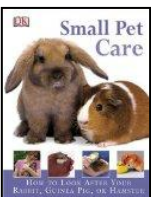
GUINEA PIGS/HAMSTERS

This session will focus on a guest pet, either a guinea pig or a hamster. Adapt the ideas to suit the pet.

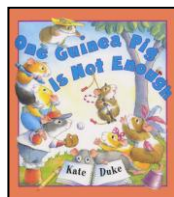
ACTIVITY IDEAS

- **Guest pet:** The owner of a guinea pig or hamster brings their pet for a visit to playgroup. They tell the children about the pet and how they care for it. If possible, children hold the animal and/or feed it. If there is more than one animal, encourage children to count them.
- **Hop like a hamster:** Encourage children to observe how the pet moves around and to copy their hopping movements. You might have children in pairs race like hamsters.
- **Animal sounds:** Encourage children to observe the noise (or lack of noise) made by the guinea pig. Using pictures (or a picture book) of various animals. Parents with their children go through several animal pictures, saying: 'Dogs go "woof, woof"', 'Pigs go "oink, oink"', chicks go "cheep, cheep"', 'But guinea pigs go . . . ('squeek' or no sound, just wiggle noses like a guinea pig)'.
Older children use crayons to colour the guinea pig and glue strips of paper as a cage around it.
- **Guinea pig picture:** Encourage children to observe the colouring of the pet. Then they make a picture of the animal. Give the child a copy of the picture (Appendix). Have available a supply of small pieces of tissue paper in appropriate colours. Children scrunch up the tissue paper pieces, dip them in glue (in a shallow meat tray), and stick them onto the animal picture. A fun alternative to tissue paper is lint from clothes driers.
- **Hamster snack:** For a snack, children can sample some of the things a hamster eats. Note that the usual diet of dried nuts and seeds may not be appropriate for young children. But you could provide plain cereal flakes and small pieces of raw apples, seedless grapes, carrots, broccoli and parsley.
- **Hamster dance:** If you have access to internet, play the 'Hamster Dance' and encourage children to dance along (<http://www.webhamster.com/>). Be prepared for an attack of giggles.
- **My pet:** Children tell a leader about any pet they have in their home. How is it like a guinea pig? How is it different from a guinea pig?
- **Activity centre:** Guinea pigs and hamsters like to have toys in their cages that they can climb and play on. Make up a play area for children using any toys or improvised apparatus you have available.

BOOKS TO SHARE Find stories in your library or in parents' collections about guinea pigs or hamsters, eg



Small Pet Care
from Dorling
Kindersley
(Non fiction)



One Guinea Pig Is Not Enough
by Kate Duke
A counting book.



The **Hannibal series**, published by Ladybird in the 1970's, feature the adventures of a hamster. In each book Hannibal escapes from his cage and goes adventuring.

NURSERY RHYMES AND SONGS

- Counting song to the tune of Ten Little Indians.
One little, two little, three little hamsters.
Four little, five little, six little hamsters.
Seven little, eight little, nine little hamsters.
Ten little hamsters on a wheel! (or ten little Guinea pigs squeal)

- All things bright and beautiful

FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

- **Key faith concept:** God made guinea pigs/hamsters.
- **Wonder:** I wonder why God made guinea pigs/hamsters.
- **Pray:** Thank you, God, for giving us cute animals like guinea pigs/hamsters. Amen.
- **Bible verse:** Everything God created is good. (1 Timothy 4:4)

PARKS

You may want to hold your playgroup in a park for this session. In that case:

- Let parents know your plans, and exactly when and where to meet. If the park is close to your regular meeting place, perhaps you can walk to the park. Otherwise make sure everyone has transportation to the park.
- Ask parents to dress their children (and themselves) appropriately.
- Choose a park area that is safe for your children. That includes shade from sun and undercover area in case of rain. Don't forget to take your first aid kit and mobile phone with you — just in case.

Your session could be as simple as a playgroup picnic at which parents supervise their own children on play equipment in the park and you join together for a shared snack. Alternatively you may plan some games and activities children can do in open spaces in the park.

You can also have a playgroup session about parks in your usual venue, using some of these activities.

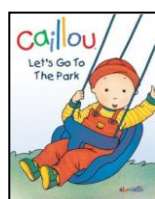
ACTIVITY IDEAS

- **Dream park:** Children build up a park in a sand tray placing in trees, equipment, etc that they would like to have in their dream park. Provide sticks, leaves, stones, pop sticks and paper and plenty of scrap materials children and parents can use to make the park.
- **Parks on a map:** Look at a map (street directory page) of your community. Help children find the green shapes that mark the parks. Parents might also show children on the map the location of their house, playgroup and any other sites children visit regularly.
- **Our visit to a park:** In groups of two families, tell one another about your best visit to a park.
- **A cumulative story:** Sit in a circle. A leader begins the story by saying: '[Name of a child] is going to the park. He/she's going to . . .'. The child named calls out something they would do at a park, eg 'swing'. The leader repeats the first part of the story 'Simon is going to the park. He's going to swing.' Then gives another child a clue to add to the story: 'And Chelsea is going to the park. She's going to . . .'. Leader begins again. Repeating the two parts of the story, then giving the clue for another child to add to the story. Keep going as long as you can.
- **Playing in a park:** If you have any park-like equipment let children play on it as they wish. Parents and children play simple rolling, bouncing, and catching ball games with 'beach' balls.
- **Picnic snack:** Serve a snack as you would at a picnic in the park. If you ordinarily sit at tables, sit on a blanket or plastic cloth. Have finger food in plastic containers to share.
- **The swing:** Have a swing of some sort: child size or doll size. As children swing themselves or a doll, a parent can read the first verse of Robert Louis Stevenson's poem 'The Swing'.

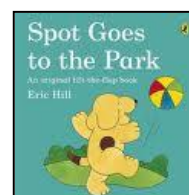
BOOKS TO SHARE Find books in your local library or parents' collections about parks, eg



At the Park
by Salina Yoon



Let's Go to the Park
a **Caillou** book
from Chouette
Publishing



Spot Goes to the Park
by Eric Hill

SONGS AND RHYMES

- Play a recording of 'The Teddy Bear's Picnic', while children work on their dream park, or help children sing along with the song. Note: a woods is a kind of park.

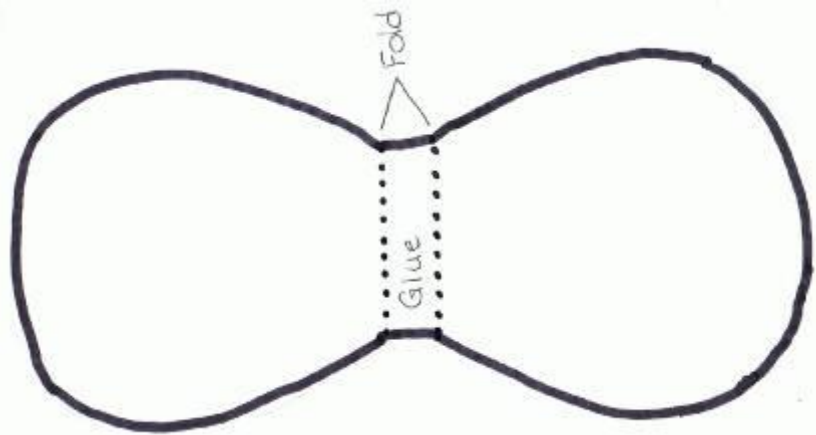
FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

- **Key faith concept:** God loves us and keeps us safe.
- **Talk about** the many places we go and how God keeps us safe.
- **Wonder:** I wonder how God wants us to take care of parks and other play spaces.
- **Pray:** Thank you, God, for places to play like parks and playgrounds and backyards. Amen.
- **Bible verse:** God says: I will be with you wherever you go. (Joshua 1:9)

APPENDIX

Ugly duckling puppet

Pattern for the bill, cut from orange paper.



Guinea pig picture



MY PLAYGROUP

My name is _____

I am _____ (years/months) old

I come to playgroup with _____

This is what we look like when we come to playgroup:

Here are some things I like to do at playgroup:

My favourite book is _____

Name of playgroup

Date _____



**Grandchildren are like a crown
to older people.
(Proverbs 17:6)**



Dear _____

Thank you for coming
to playgroup today
and telling me your story.

Love from

(your little crown)

Paste child's
picture here.