

Play clay gives lesson plan a hand

Grade school teachers often face the problem of keeping the same subjects fresh year after year. With all the instant gratification supplied by television and video games, it's often difficult to keep the children interested.

For your next lesson plan, why not involve the whole class in a project that emphasizes imagination, teamwork and the tactile experience? Play Clay is one way to encourage students to create something with their hands. It's an easy to prepare, non-toxic clay medium that goes easy on the classroom budget, and you can use it for a variety of subjects. Here is the basic recipe: 2 cups Arm and Hammer

pure baking soda (1 lb. package); 1 cup cornstarch; 1/4 cups cold water.

1. Mix dry ingredients in a saucepan and add water. Stir constantly while cooking over medium heat. When the mixture is the consistency of wet mashed potatoes, turn out on a plate and cover with a damp cloth.

2. When the Play Clay is cool, pat smooth. Store unused portions in an airtight plastic bag or container. This makes about two cups of Play Clay.

Children can mold Play Clay in their hands, or roll it out to 1/4 inch and use cardboard shapes as a cutting guide.

Design should dry overnight.

Or, you can shorten the drying time by heating objects in a pre-heated 350 F oven for 15 minutes. If not fully dry, continue to dry in five minute increments.

After they have hardened, creations can be decorated easily by painting them with water colors, poster paints, nail polish or colored felt tip pens. Coat the figure with clear varnish or nail polish and they will last for years.

Once Play Clay is prepared, you can incorporate it into any number of lesson plans:

*For science projects, students can build volcanoes, peninsulas, and a variety of geographical formations.

*When history period rolls

around, have the youngsters create a timeline for American Independence, designing the key events in the American Revolution, from the Boston Tea Party to the Inauguration of George Washington.

*Looking for a new twist on an old arithmetic aid? Have the students build their own abacus with Play Clay beads and use it to demonstrate the fundamentals of math.

Think of what you and the students can do if you put your heads together! And you will help promote classroom spirit by encouraging all the work towards a common goal.

Play Clay is fun for people of all ages.



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Poinsetta care

For a lot of people, Christmas wouldn't be complete without including a poinsetta in the holiday decorations. Poinsettias are available at many retail outlets in early December. Selecting the best plant possible helps insure that the poinsetta will provide many weeks of holiday enjoyment.

Poinsettias come in colors ranging from white to pink to red, and combinations of these colors.

The colored part of the plant is not the flower. The actual flower is a small round pea-shaped structure located in the center of the colored leaves or bracts.

Plants that do not have the flower are either past their prime or have experienced some type of shock that caused the flowers to drop.

Besides having the flowers still on the plant, a desirable plant should have leaves all the way to the surface of the pot and bracts that are well-formed and completely colored.

Protect the poinsetta from

extreme changes in temperature on the way home.

A poinsetta taken from a warm store into a freezing temperature outdoors, and then taken home in a cool car, may drop its leaves within just a few days.

After getting the plant home, place it in an area where it will receive maximum light and won't be exposed to drafts.

Water only when the surface of the soil appears dry and then thoroughly enough that the water will drain out the bottom of the pot. Discard excess water as soon as the pot has finished draining. To maintain leaf color, fertilizer can be added to the water at every other watering.

The change of environment from the greenhouse to the store to home will often cause bract color to lighten and the leaves and bracts to drop. This is called epinasty and is a normal reaction.

Plants exhibiting extreme epinasty in the store should probably be avoided. After the plants have become adapted to the home, they will recover to a certain extent.

Building blocks or preschool consumer education

Can young children, as early as the preschool years, begin to learn and understand consumer economics concepts?

Recently there has been an increasing interest in the consumer socialization of young children. It has been suggested, for example, that public policy should be aimed at protecting the young child from TV advertising, because the child has no awareness, understanding or distrust of television advertising. At the same time, a plea has been made that more should be done to prepare the child for effective interaction with the marketplace. How we respond to statements of "protect or prepare" will depend in some measure on our beliefs of how young children learn and develop.

One point of view holds that preschoolers are not yet able to reason adequately, and that the concept they form of the world

are not yet valid representations of real things. If an attractive TV comic character suggests a certain product is good to eat, or exciting to play with, that is good enough for the preschooler. Young children are persuaded by the fantasy of advertisements, by the color, shape and attractive packaging of products. They will willingly accept anything and everything. These views are often based on Piaget's description of the preschool child as a pre-schooler as a pre-conceptual thinker. While providing children with experiences in the marketplace is to be encouraged, this view holds that these merely voyages of exploration and that little gain can be expected from teaching children consumer concepts and skills during the early years.

An alternative view states that structured learning experiences can help the young child to understand relatively simple con-

sumer concepts. From my work with young children, I have come to believe that it is important to introduce concepts in carefully structured sequences. The young child can learn new concepts as long as they are illustrated by many concrete examples, reintroduced on different occasions and in different situations, and the child is given time to practice them. Structured sequences can also be used to apply the concepts in practical situations.

How can we teach consumer economic concepts to young children?

The method that I have used successfully with preschoolers is a two-stage process. (1) Directly teach a number of related general concepts associated with basic ideas drawn from a real-life marketplace situation (e.g., store money, products, choice). (2) Follow this initial learning with activities which provide

other examples of the basic ideas, and which invite children to apply these ideas in solving simple problems. These general ideas are the "building blocks of preschool consumer education."

The important characteristics of the "building blocks" are: 1. They provide a fundamental, simplified picture of how the marketplace operates. 2. They are organized so as to be understandable to preschool children. 3. They provide a necessary foundation for future learning.

The sequence of instruction helps children learn and organize concepts in a meaningful fashion.

Organize from general to particular allows us to highlight and teach related basic concepts, to demonstrate their relationships to teach basic information processing skills. Such organization helps preschoolers to focus on important characteristics of concepts (e.g., store) and skills (e.g., choosing) at a time when they are very naive in this respect.

What part can parents play in helping their preschool children learn consumer economics concepts?

Parents share with their preschool children many and varied marketplace experiences such as watching TV together and going shopping. Each time the child is allowed to buy a product there is an opportunity for parents to help in the pros and cons of choice and cost (can the product be afforded), and in the buying procedure which involves a money transaction. If parents are aware of the method of instruction used in school they can become very much a part of that learning process. Of course, it is important for the teacher to inform parents of the teaching methods used, and to suggest ways in which parents can use a similar approach with their children in more informal way.



Spilyay Tymoo photo by Leno-Baker

Suggestions and examples were on display at the Ho-Ho-Ho-Homemade workshop held earlier this month at the 4-H center. The gifts shown were all that could be made at home by children as well as adults.

Kids and car safety

During the holidays, children spend a lot of time in the car, going shopping or visiting relatives. And hopefully each kid will be sitting in an approved car restraint system.

Most people worry about diseases of childhood, without realizing that automobile accidents are the number one killer of children. Parents are responsible for protecting children at all times and we take this re-

sponsibility on the playground and in a variety of places, but very often we neglect to do it in the automobile. One of the rules that we always advocate is that the car does not move until everyone's restrained.

A year-old Oregon law requires motorists to provide restraint systems for all children under age five who weigh less than forty pounds—a sensible and safe idea.

Making perfect ham

Bake a fully cooked or canned ham, following package directions for temperature and timing. About 30 to 45 minutes before end of cooking, remove ham from oven. Arrange Orange Peel Poinsetta Garnish on ham:

secure with toothpick halves. Brush with or spoon on Yuletide Orange Glaze. Continue baking 30 to 45 minutes longer; brush occasionally with remaining glaze. Remove toothpicks before serving. Poinsetta garnish will cling to ham.

Orange peel poinsetta garnish

Score peel of one large sun-kist navel orange lengthwise into quarters; remove peel with fingers. With kitchen shears or paring knife, cut each quarter peel into two petal shapes. From one orange, also cut one length-

wise strip for stem. Use five to six petals for flower and two and three for leaves. After arranging and securing flower on ham, attach a maraschino or candied cherry half with toothpick for center of flower

Oranges, lemons for gift-giving

Fresh navel oranges, lemons, grapefruit, and tangerines make perfect gifts, either presented by themselves or combined with other items found in the household section of your local supermarket. These special homemade gifts and decorations are practical as well as edible... and help to make the holiday season more memorable.

Fresh citrus fruits, with their

bold colors, lend themselves to festive holiday centerpieces. Fill any attractive basket with an assortment of navel oranges, lemons, tangerines, and grapefruit. Tuck in some Christmas greenery and a few wire-stemmed green, ball-shaped ornaments. Tie on a colorful ribbon and enjoy the compliments. If you prefer, wrap the basket of fruit in cellophane, top it with a bow, and give it as a gift.

Herbs good for indoor gardening

Indoor gardeners with a flair for the unusual may want to try raising a herb garden this winter. A sunny window still can easily be transformed into a herbal mini-garden.

Basil, chevil, savory and thyme can be grown in small flower pots or a window box, and snipped as needed to add the finishing touch to a sauce, soup or salad.

Basil can be planted from seed and will germinate in about 12 days. Chevil germinate from seed in 12 to 14 days. Other herbs, such as thyme, are best started from an already grow-

ing plant, and chives should be started from a clump of bulbs.

Sage, lemon balm and rosemary can be grown from stem cuttings. Take the latest growth or the upper part of older stems. Cut them into three or four sections, making sure each section contains leaves or leaf buds near the upper end. Insert one-half to two-thirds of their length into a box or bowl filled with four or five inches of clean moist sand.

Roots should develop in two weeks, and within four to six weeks the cuttings should be ready to pot.

Citrus decorations, gifts

Here's a gift with a lot of punch! Fill a large glass pitcher with brightly colored fresh lemons. Tie a bow of red and white striped ribbon around the handle and attach two artificial poinsetta flowers. Secure a recipe card for Hot Spiced Lemon-Appleade or your favorite hot lemon punch. This gift is sure to warm up the hearts of those who receive it.

Hot-spiced Lemon-Appleade

- 2 cups water
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp. ground nutmeg
- 1/4 tsp. ground allspice
- 2 cups apple juice or cider
- 1/2 cup fresh squeezed lemon juice

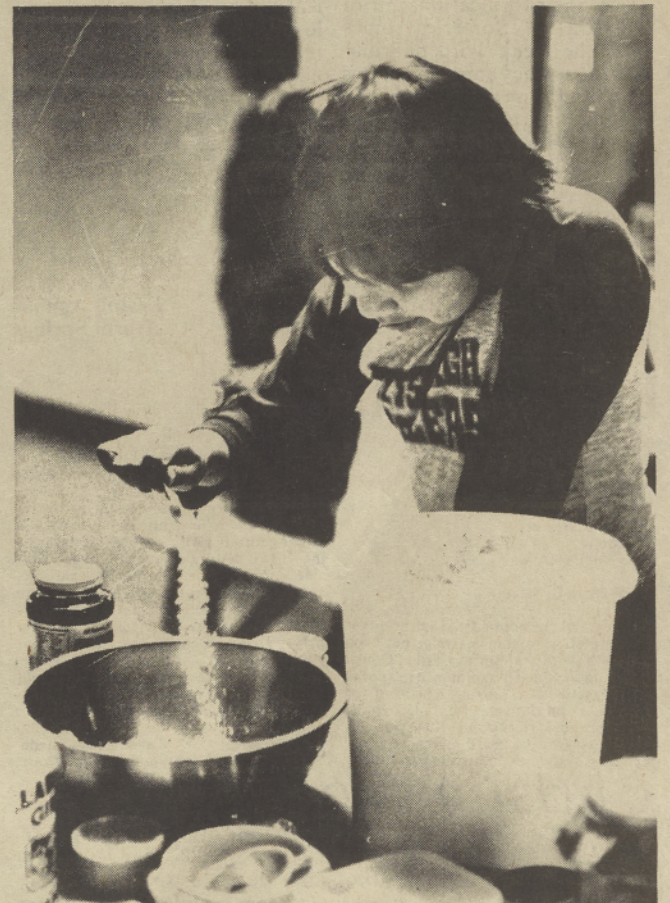
In saucepan, combine water, sugar and spices. Bring to boil; simmer ten minutes. Add juices; heat. Makes about four cups.

Gift idea

Yuletide orange glaze

- Grated peel of one fresh orange
- 1/2 cup fresh squeezed orange juice
- 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/4 cup light corn syrup
- 1/8 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/8 tsp. ground nutmeg

In small saucepan combine all ingredients. Bring to boil; reduce heat. Simmer ten minutes, stirring occasionally. Makes 3/4 cup.



Spilyay Tymoo photo by Leno-Baker

Getting into the holiday spirit of gift giving, Jake Coochise adds spices to the recipe for a holiday bread. Jake is a member of the 4-H cooking club.