PVA Slime

Posted by Anonymous on Thu, 2016-02-25 09:31

PVA Slime: There was a directive that came out from Education Queensland to all HODs in 2004/2005 regarding students not being permitted to take any slime made at school home. I no longer can find our school's copy of that directive. I guess its lost. Can you advise if this directive is still current?

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PVA Slime

Submitted by sat on 29 February 2016

In Brief

Making slime is a fun activity that demonstrates the scientific principles of creating a polymer.

The most common method for producing slime in school laboratories is by combining polyvinyl

alcohol with sodium tetraborate, which is commonly known as borax.

QLD DET Advice

Science ASSIST has been in contact with the Queensland Department of Education and Training (DET) regarding the issue of students being allowed to take home any slime made at school. They have advised that they have no current state-wide publication about taking borax slime home from school, and it is likely that any advice issued previously would have originated at a local level or have been distributed as local advice following a health and safety incident. QLD DET schools are required to take a risk management approach for granting permission to take material home that is generated as part of the science curriculum.

From both a curriculum-learning and safety perspective, there is no particular benefit in allowing students to take borax slime home. However, if a school determines that it is suitable to allow students to take the slime home, then it is advised to ensure the product is non-toxic.

QLD DET has an established health and safety advisory system that state schools are aware of and are expected to follow when seeking advice with regard to matters like this one. A staff member should contact their school-based health and safety advisor (HSA) for clarification. If the HSA cannot provide information, they should seek advice from the Regional Health and Safety Consultant, see 'Health and safety' tab on the following webpage. https://education.qld.gov.au/initiatives-and-strategies/health-and-wellbeing/workplaces/contacts

Concerns about taking material home from science activities

- There is a possibility that material produced in science experiments may be contaminated with a toxic chemical or biological hazard. Laboratory surfaces and equipment can be a source of contamination from chemical and biological material from previous experiments.
- There is a possibility that material taken home from science experiments may be accidently ingested by a young child or pet.
- There are also concerns that students may take home material that may cause an allergic reaction, either to themselves, someone else in the family, or their friends.

Science ASSIST recommendations

- School and jurisdictional policies should be followed at all times. Some school jurisdictions do not allow any chemicals to be taken home.
- A site-specific risk assessment should be conducted prior to any experiment.
- Safety data sheets should always be consulted for specific precautions and any handling and disposal information for all chemicals being used.
- Cornflour slime should be considered as an alternative method, if it is deemed appropriate for students to take the slime produced home. With careful planning, the activity should be conducted in a location away from the science laboratories using ingredients and equipment that have been purchased specifically for the activity and have not been in general use in the science area, and hence have had no opportunity to be contaminated by other chemicals or biological substances.

- Another option is to provide the students with a cornflour slime recipe to take home, where they can make their own slime safely with their parent's permission.

Additional information

Borax slime

[Edit 30 September 2020] For updated information see Science ASSIST Information Sheet: Making slime using borax and related substances, https://assist.asta.edu.au/resource/4624/science-assist-information-shee...

References

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'Polyvinyl Alcohol Diluted solution', Safety Data Sheet, Chem-Supply website https://www.chemsupply.com.au/documents/PT0761CHF7.pdf (July 2014)

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