



Art, Literacy and Learning

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ART activities are some of the best ways to promote literacy and brain development in early childhood. Early childhood is an especially important time for hands-on, self-directed learning. Art engages children's senses in open-ended play and develops cognitive, social-emotional and multi-sensory skills. Meaningful art experiences provide children with authentic self-expression—the freedom of choice, thought and feeling.

The Synergy Between Art and Literacy

Spatial Relations/Visual Literacy: Art promotes print awareness and the ability to differentiate scribbles, markings and shapes—as well as directionality and position.

Eye/Hand/Brain Coordination: Art promotes the ability to interpret visual information, alter that information and respond to a continuous flow of new information being sent from eye to hand to brain.

Verbal Creativity: Combining literacy and art activities allows children to expand their oral communication skills and learn a wide range of sensory-rich vocabulary words.

Visual Creativity: Combining literacy and art experiences allows children to represent their ideas and feelings visually, and enhances imagination, visual language, and spatial relations skills.

Aesthetics: Combining literacy and art allows children to have daily opportunities for aesthetic expression.

Self-Esteem: Self-esteem is enhanced when children's emerging literacy skills and art explorations are valued and respected.

Developmental Goals of Art

Physical Development

1. Fine-motor development
2. Visual/perceptual development
3. Eye/hand/brain coordination
4. Spatial awareness

Cognitive Development

1. Decision making skills
2. Problem solving skills
3. Cause and effect understanding
4. Non-verbal communication

Social Development

1. Social and oral language skills
2. Sharing materials and taking turns
3. Respect for own work and work of others
4. Multicultural awareness

Emotional Development

1. Independence in making choices
2. Creative self-expression
3. Sensory pleasure and satisfaction
4. Self-esteem



Practical Ideas for Your Classroom

- Create a rich literacy environment by putting books, print materials and writing materials in all areas.
- Organize field trips to libraries and post offices, so children can experience real-world literacy concepts.
- Organize field trips to local artists' studios, and expose children to real artists at work in their community.
- Provide visual stimulation with pictures, photos, art posters and children's art throughout the classroom.
- Combine art and language activities to create books, posters, charts and dramatic play/storytelling props.
- Introduce a wide variety of art experiences, such as construction, collage, drawing, fingerpainting, modeling, outdoor art, group mural painting, watercoloring, printmaking, stitchery, sculpting.



Arts and Crafts Develop Thinking Skills (*Cognitive Development*)

- Problem solving skills are exercised in experimenting with art supplies and observing cause and effect.
- Decision making is constant and continuous in assembling and decorating art and craft projects.
- Spatial relations and visual thinking skills are engaged and strengthened.



Arts and Crafts Develop Feeling Skills (*Emotional Development*)

- Open-ended art helps children communicate their real feelings and potentially have others understand them better.
- Art materials provide sensory stimulation that can be fun and provide pleasure and satisfaction.
- In the event of a crisis in your community, open-ended art provides an outlet to reduce the stress of a trauma.

Arts and Crafts Develop Relating Skills (*Social Development*)

- Art materials are shared in an environment that facilitates social interaction.
- The non-competitive, cooperative environment of the artroom helps children practice social skills.
- Shy or less verbal children often participate more comfortably with others in this cooperative arena.

Arts and Crafts Develop Coordinating Skills (*Sensorimotor Development*)

- Fine motor skills are developed using a wide range of materials, craft accessories and artroom tools.
- Eye-hand coordination prepares children for real-life tasks at school and home.
- Self-esteem is enhanced when a child identifies himself as being “coordinated.”

4) Know that crafts and art develop different skills.

Arts and crafts develop different developmental skills. Art activities develop feeling skills and promote self-expression. Craft activities develop thinking, relating and coordinating skills. These skill arenas overlap, but it is valuable to separate them and understand the difference when you work with children in an art group. This way, as you look in your cabinet and wonder, “What art or craft activity will I provide today?” you can ask yourself what skill you need to focus on: Is it relationship building, self-expression, cognitive skills, coordination? Once you establish this, you can decide whether to select an art activity or a craft activity.

5) Know about the left and right sides of the brain.

Participating in arts and crafts activities activates both the linear, left hemisphere of the brain and the creative, non-sequential right hemisphere of the brain, helping children develop their full potential. Generally, here is how the two sides of our brain process information:

Left Hemisphere: Logical, Sequential
Activated by reading, math or linear problem solving

Right Hemisphere: Creative, Intuitive
Activated by art, music, dance, drama

6) Know the theory of learning by doing.

Arts and crafts offer children endless opportunities to learn by doing. And they are likely to remember what they learn! Brain researchers tell us that children retain much better when hands-on activities go along with that learning. Children learn:

10% of what they READ	50% of what they HEAR and READ
20% of what they HEAR	70% of what they SAY and
30% of what they SEE	90% of what they DO!

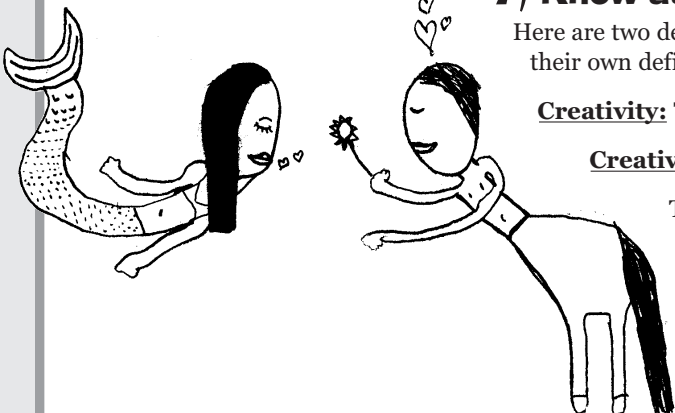
7) Know at least one definition of creativity.

Here are two definitions to start you off. Ask the children to come up with their own definitions, as well.

Creativity: The act of making something new.

Creativity: The art of combining things in a new way.

The potential for creativity—the act of making something new—lives in each of us. Most of us act less and less upon this potential with every passing year. Our own creativity becomes a memory—something we outgrew or lost along the way. If a child grows up believing he is creative, he will have a better chance of finding constructive outlets for creative energy in later years. The child’s creativity will not be just a memory; it will be a valuable personal resource to use every day.





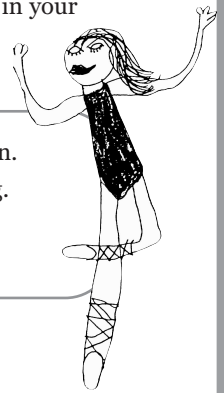
How Art Helps Children Grow

HAVE you ever wondered what it is that makes some arts and crafts programs stand out from the rest? Have you ever wanted to make YOUR program more creative, more exciting and more interesting for you and the children you work with? You don't have to be an art specialist to run an exciting program that children WANT to come to—but it does help to know something about the value of art in child development.

Here are seven good ideas from art educators and developmental specialists that briefly explain what it is about ART that helps children feel good about themselves, helps them grow intellectually, emotionally and socially...and helps them master the world around them. And while you don't have to have an art background to help children feel creative, you DO need an open-minded attitude about the process of creativity and a willingness to explore, discover and learn new things. Since the process of art-making is the process of discovery, let's begin by looking at these seven good things and finding something that might help you in your work—something that perhaps you never thought about before.

7 GOOD THINGS for you to know:

- 1) Know the difference between “arts” and “crafts.”
- 2) Separate the art *process* from the art *product*.
- 3) Know how the arts teach developmental skills.
- 4) Know which skills are developed and how.
- 5) Know about the right side of the brain.
- 6) Know the theory of learning by doing.
- 7) Know how to define creativity.



1) Know the difference between “arts” and “crafts.”

The process of making art and the process of making crafts are related but different activities. Many people think of “arts” and “crafts” as if they are the same thing. However, practice with making a painting and practice with making a birdhouse show us that arts and crafts are really quite different activities. While art is an open-ended, or “unstructured,” activity, crafts are goal-oriented, or “structured.” In the above example, painting is an art activity, and the birdhouse is a craft activity. A good arts and crafts program provides both art and craft activities and allows children to explore and learn from both.

Craft Activities:

- Are product-oriented
- Engage cognitive skills and problem solving
- Require specific materials and instructions

Art Activities:

- Are process-oriented
- Engage imagination and feelings
- Use basic supplies and open-ended instruction

2) Separate the process of art from the product of art.

Children enjoy both the process and the product of art. One of the main goals of your enrichment program should be to help children experience the joy of creativity and the satisfaction of mastery; both concepts relate to the process of art. But while adults focus on the process of art, school-aged children are often concerned with the product. They want their project to look good—and be worthy of admiration. So it's important to keep both the process and the product in mind when you run an art activity. You can do this by providing a variety of art materials that are stimulating, age appropriate and easy to be successful with—and by providing just the right amount of instruction and inspiration.

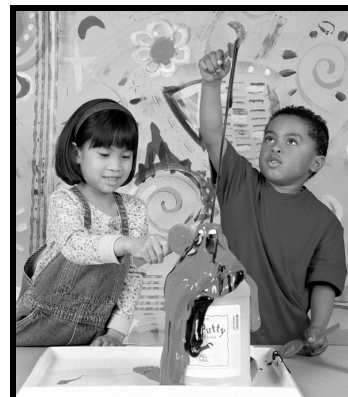
3) Know how arts and crafts help children reach developmental goals.

In *Childhood and Society*, Erik Erikson wrote that the developmental goals of school-age children fall into four main categories: cognitive, emotional, social and sensorimotor. In order to become healthy, happy and productive teenagers (and later healthy, happy and productive adults) children from 5–12 years old must have lots of experience and repeated practice with tasks in each of these four areas. Arts and crafts help children experience and practice their skills in all four of these areas. How?



How Art Impacts Learning

By Anna Reyner, MA Registered Art Therapist
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What makes ART such a great teaching tool?

Art engages children's senses in open ended play and develops Cognitive, Social, Emotional and Sensory-Motor skills. Art is a cooperative learning experience that provides pleasure, challenge, and mastery. Through art, children learn complex thinking skills and master many developmental tasks.

Art materials range from the simplest to the most complex. Young children can explore dozens of non-toxic art materials directly with their hands or with dozens of different painting and clay tools. Older children can select art materials that offer greater complexity and challenge. Art manufacturers provide an exciting range of tools to work with. Tree branches, shells, sponges, found objects or simple kitchen tools can easily become art accessories as well. Each art material and accessory provides different skill development and has the potential for new discoveries. A creative classroom offers a wide range of art materials and tools for exploration and learning.

The chart below is an Activity Analysis of 12 common art experiences. Each art experience is "broken down" or analyzed to determine what primary cognitive, social, emotional and sensory-motor outcomes it most facilitates. While these areas certainly do overlap, this chart outlines one main skills developed within each domain. Use it as a starting point for analyzing other art ideas, including your own "all time favorites."

Activity Analysis of 12 Common Art Ideas

Art Activity	Activity Analysis			
This Art Activity teaches.....	These Developmental Skills			
	Cognitive	Social	Emotional	Sensory-Motor
Open Ended Drawing	planning & adapting	impulse control	individuality	fine motor skills
Easel Painting	decision making	works independently	self expression	fine & gross motor skills
Bioputty	cause and effect understanding	take turns	stress release	tactile stimulation
Handmade Art Journal	creative thinking	shares art and stories	self expression	eye-hand-brain coordination
Crayon Resist Picture	cause and effect understanding	focuses	sensory pleasure	spatial relations
Collage	plans, predicts, adapts actions	shares materials	makes choices	visual discrimination
Group Murals	large scale planning	group cooperation	adapts to group	gross motor / sweeps paint
Scrap Wood Sculptures	divergent thinking	shares materials	flexibility	small motor grasp
Craft Stick Picture Frames	spatial relations skills	makes giveaway gift	self discipline	responds to structure
Paper Mache	problem solving	delays gratification	sensory implosion	sensory integration
BioColor Ornaments	follows multi-step directions	makes giveaway gift	makes choices	works in 3-dimensions
Watercolor Coffee Filters	cause and effect understanding	impulse control	emotional release	controls fluid materials

Integrating Art into Literacy, Science & Math

Art is an outstanding tool for teaching, not only for teaching developmental skills but also for teaching academic subjects such as math, science, and literacy. The most effective learning takes place when children have a hands-on learning experience. When children study any learning content, they learn best and retain knowledge longer if they do an art activity to reinforce their learning. This information has been recognized and used by good teachers since the time of Confucius, when he said: "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand."

Art & Literacy

Art activities are a great way to promote literacy and language development. Children who draw pictures about stories they have read improve their reading comprehension, story understanding and motivation to read new materials they have not seen before. (Critical Links). Art tools provide early learners with pre-writing experiences, as they grasp tools that later help them hold a pencil for writing. Art develops expressive

Art teaches these literacy concepts:

Art Activity	Art Process	Literacy Concept
Group Murals	Children select mural theme then paint one large artwork cooperatively	Self expression, narrative story development
Open Ended Drawing	Child works within boundaries of paper, organizing content and composition	Spatial relations
Easel Painting	Child uses gross motor skills to sweep brush and control fluid materials	Visual literacy
Handmade Art Journal	Using papers and collage create journal cover, pages and binding.	Book knowledge and appreciation

Art & Science

Art and science go hand in hand. Artists materials have scientific properties or physical attributes, many of which undergo a “change of state” when mixed with other art materials or left to dry. Science concepts taught during Preschool years include 1) Cause and effect 2) Properties of Materials 3) Changes of State. (Kilmer, S.J. 1995) These concepts are all easily explored with art materials. In later years, science standards include an “Investigation and Experimentation” category that also readily adapts to art. You can also add a science component to any art activity by taking out magnifiers and describing physical attributes, by using your five senses to experience a clay or paint, or by predicting what will happen when combining different art materials – such as crayon resist or BioPutty. Do you think the paint will cover the crayon? Do you think the BioColor will become slippery putty? Why or why not? What is your prediction, or hypothesis? Science involves keen observation and inspires curiosity and questions.

Art teaches these science concepts:

Art Activity	Art Process	Science Concept
Watercolor Coffee Filter	Drops of liquid color expand, absorb, evaporate (dry) on porous material	Change of State
Crayon Resist Drawing	Wax crayon (solid) resists Watercolor (Liquid). Materials repel each other. Wax is “insoluble” to liquid.	Properties of Materials
"BioPutty"	Liquid BioColor mixes with BioPutty solution and changes to solid. Molecules in BioColor bond with molecules in solution.	Cause & Effect
Paper Mache	Torn paper & paper mache paste layered onto a fixed form dry and conform to that same shape. Absorbent, soluble materials transform into a solid layer.	Change of State

Art & Math

Art can be thought about in a mathematical way. In early years children work with simple collage materials and beads which can teach them numbers, positive and negative space, classification, and sequencing and pattern recognition. Tangrams can be introduced, and art journals can become creative number or shape books. Older children create drawings, paintings and 3-D models of more complex geometry forms as well as tessellations, fractals and Fibonacci numbers. “Math is not just about numbers, formulas and logic, math is also about structure, symmetry, shape and beauty,” says University of Colorado math professor Carla Farsi. “Conversely, art is not only about emotion, color and aesthetics, but also about rhythm, patterns and problem solving.”

Art teaches these math concepts:

Art Activity	Art Process	Math Concept
Collage	Glue paper and collage materials onto paper in composition of your choice	Sequencing, rhythm, pattern
Scrap Wood Sculptures	Glue wood scraps together to create abstract 3-D sculpture, dry then paint.	Pattern, volume, classification
Craft Stick Picture Frames	Place craft sticks into square or rectangle, glue corners, dry then paint.	Shape, structure
BioColor Ornaments	Open clear ornament and sprinkle inside both sides with BioColor shimmer powder, followed by. 3-4 colors BioColor. Close and shake. Dry & hang.	Volume, symmetry

Conclusion

There's so much learning that takes place as a child creates art. Not only do children development eye-hand coordination, but their brain connects to their visual and motor development in ways that help children master real life skills. Art develops our imaginations and helps us discover new ways to process information. The problem solving, critical thinking, planning and adaptation inherent in art making is much more complex than most people realize. The myriad of art materials, and recycled objects that are used in art provide new and different learning as they introduce new problems to solve and new challenges to creative thinking.