Creative Activities & Curriculum for Young Children

12th Edition

Rebecca Howard
Mary Mayesky

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Creative Activities and Curriculum for Young Children, Twelfth Edition
Rebecca Howard and Mary Mayesky

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Cengage
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Dedication

To my family, and to all of the children, families, and colleagues who have enriched my life and my work over the years. ~RH

To Casper, my amazing husband. You have been with me through so many editions, shoring me up in ways too numerous to mention. Thank you for *your* creative touch reflected in the many delightful photos in this edition. I am eternally grateful. ~MM

Contents

Preface

When I was offered the opportunity to contribute to this 12th edition, I was honored and thrilled to be trusted with Dr. Mayesky's work—a text that has been a staple of the field for over forty years. Any book that has sustained an audience, and remained relevant, through 11 editions is, clearly, a work that is profoundly respected and needed.

As I approached the work, my primary goal was not simply to create a "revision" of the book, but to "revision" it—to bring a new set of eyes to the content, along with a different set of experiences and perspective for how this work can continue to be an important and meaningful resource to guide early childhood teachers and caregivers.

Since the first edition, the early childhood field has grown in tremendous ways. There is a heightened respect for, and valuing of, the professionalism of practitioners working with children throughout the early childhood age range of infancy through 3rd grade, including a more recent shift to add grades 4 and 5 to that spectrum, reflecting the licensure range now common in many states. With this growth, we have seen an expanding range of professional development requirements and opportunities, including an increased enrollment in teacher education programs at colleges and universities that focus on the entirety of the early childhood age range. This growth requires some changes in how we think about professional preparation, and the materials that we use to facilitate that process. Pre-service teachers, early career professionals, those with experience who are returning to the classroom for additional licensure or certifications, and caregivers who are dedicated to embracing their professional development, all need resources that move beyond simple activity guides. They need rich information about how activities and experiences inform and reflect the breadth and complexity of child development. This book has served that enhanced function through several of the previous editions and maintains that focus with this new edition.

The intent of this 12th edition is to continue to refine the content in order to provide the greatest clarity and depth that professionals need to be proficient in early childhood environments, and to ensure that the children in their care are being given the greatest opportunity to grow as creative individuals, and as members of a society that depends on innovation to move forward. It is also imperative that these early childhood professionals are willing and able to embrace their own innovative capacities, which is one of the most unique aspects of this work—the consideration of creativity as something that is important not just for children, but for teachers and caregivers as well.

My commitment is that this edition continues the legacy of quality professional development and advocacy for the importance of creativity in our lives that has been the foundation of Dr. Mayesky's work through every previous revision. I hope that the "voice" that I bring to this project, with my background in performing arts and child development, adds a new layer of harmony to an already strong composition.

New/Revised Content and Features

As in all previous editions, this book's foundation is creativity, creative activities, and creative curriculum. As this title continues to be a foundational and valued text in the field of early childhood education, there have been some changes to the content and organization to move the text forward with the evolution of the field.

- **NEW! Picture Books** at the end of most chapters. These are a representative (though certainly not

exhaustive) selection of picture books that can be used as the basis for extended activities or experiences. Children's book publishing has grown in unprecedented ways over the last two decades, and there are now titles available for almost every topic, appropriate for the entire range of infant–5th grade developmental levels, and in a variety of languages, more so than ever before. With the advent of digital technologies that bring distinct advantages to children's learning, but also have the potential to distance children from meaningful interaction with the immediacy of printed books, it is more important than ever to provide a deep connection between cognitive content, engaging activities, and literacy support. Picture books are the perfect creative medium to make that connection.

- **Learning Objectives** at the beginning of each chapter, as in the previous edition, correlate with main chapter headings and show students what they need to know to process and understand the information in the chapter. Learning Objectives are also integrated into the end-of-chapter Summary, so by the time students complete the chapter, they should be able to demonstrate how they can use and apply the knowledge and skills learned in the chapter. These Objectives have been rewritten to reflect a deeper consideration of Bloom's Taxonomy for educators, focusing on the language of higher-order critical thinking**. Feature Boxes** have been streamlined to focus on two types of information: **Think About It** boxes, which include information about brain research, pedagogical perspectives, and developments in the field; and **Spotlight** boxes, which offer examples or strategies for practical classroom application of specific concepts.
- **More thoroughly integrated and detailed coverage of culturally responsive practice** throughout the book.
- **Expanded integration of content** that covers the range of ages and developmental levels from infants through 5th grade.
- **More thorough and inclusive content addressing activities for children with special needs or non-typical development** is integrated throughout.
- **Updates to the application of digital technologies to creativity**, including a greater number of links and references to the vastly expanding resources available to professionals regarding digital technology.
- **Broader integration of the range of arts experiences throughout**, including more robust consideration of performing arts in all chapters in addition to visual/dimensional arts.

Organization

This edition has been streamlined into three parts covering seventeen chapters, which helps to create a more comprehensible flow from theory to application, and to bring it more in line with the progression of typical semester-based coursework.

- Part 1, **Creativity, Aesthetics, Art, and Development**, presents a general discussion of various child development theories as they relate to arts experiences. Included in Part 1 are chapters on creativity, aesthetics, and the application of arts to the developmental areas of Physical-Cognitive Development, Creative Development, and Social-Emotional Development.
- Part 2, **Considerations for Art and Creativity in Early Childhood Program Development—Curriculum, Goals, Strategies, and Materials**, lays the groundwork for turning the theory into practice, with considerations for setting up environments and making connections with classroom activities, along with a general discussion of planning and implementing creative activities. Included in Part 2 are chapters on creative activities and environments, creativity related to play and to technology, and the basics of setting up a program to enhance and promote creativity.
- Part 3, **Creative Activities Throughout the Early Childhood Environment**, brings together the theories and considerations from the previous parts into their practical application through two- and three-dimensional activities, performance activities, and incorporating creative activities into specific content areas of Language, Science, Mathematics, and Social Studies, with attention to cross-curricular applications.

The reorganization of the content has included the consolidation of some chapters to streamline the flow of the material. Specifically:

- Chapters 1 and 2 from the previous edition (Concept of Creativity; Promoting Creativity) have been combined into Chapter One—Creativity: Theories, Definition, and Importance in the Early Childhood Environment);

- Chapters 3 and 4 from the previous edition (Concept of Aesthetics; Promoting Aesthetic Experiences) have been combined into Chapter Two—Aesthetics: Theories, Definition, and Importance in the Early Childhood Environment;
- Chapters 15, 16, and 17 from the previous edition (Dramatic Play and Puppetry; Creative Movement; Creative Music) have been combined into Chapter 13—Performance Activities: Dramatic Play, Music, and Movement;
- Chapters 21 and 22 from the previous edition (Creative Food Experiences; Creative Social Studies) have been combined into Chapter 17—Creative Social Studies.

Creative Activities and Curriculum for Young Children is written for anyone who is interested in teaching or caring for children from infancy through 5th grade, in a variety of early childhood settings, with a specific focus on enhancing and supporting creativity.

Acknowledgments

From Rebecca Howard (12th Edition): I am sincerely grateful and indebted to the many individuals and organizations that have shaped my practice and my life.

My wife, Dr. Ann Fuehrer, for her support and for the honest and affirming critical eye she offers for my work; and my daughter, Kailian Lu Fuehrer, whose energy, spirit, and encouragement have been a gift of light in my world.

Mary Mayesky, for her original vision, and the dedication and love that she has brought to this tremendous work, creating an invaluable resource that has enhanced the practice of countless teachers and caregivers in the growing community of infant–5th grade professionals.

The staff of the Oxford Early Childhood Center, whose dedication and commitment to excellence helped to provide a high-quality, engaging, dynamic, and responsive environment that gave a solid foundation of learning and love to hundreds of children in their most crucial formative years. Special thanks to Kristen Jacobson for helping to get that program off the ground and grow it into a crucial resource for the community; and LaTricia Hillman, who has taken to heart the lessons she learned at OECC as she administers her own program, where she continues a loving curriculum grounded in an emphasis on creativity.

All of the young children over my long career who have gifted me with their energy, their laughter, their love, and their creativity, and who challenged me to grow as a teacher; and the families of those children, who entrusted me with their care and development.

Numerous colleagues and mentors in the departments of Teacher Education, Educational Leadership, Interdisciplinary Studies, and Theater at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, who have helped to shape my work as an educator over several decades; and all of the students, whose enthusiasm is inspiring and gives me hope for the future of the field.

The staff at 4C for Children in Cincinnati for allowing me to participate in their efforts to provide meaningful professional development opportunities to early childhood caregivers, teachers, administrators, and families.

The entire team at Cengage for the opportunity to add my voice and vision to this work by providing their support, encouragement, and professionalism in service of creating a work that is meaningful, relevant, and an important contribution to the field.

From Mary Mayesky (11th Edition): The author gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the many people who helped bring this eleventh edition into existence: Casper Holroyd for his continued understanding of my need for purposeful work as well as for the many wonderful photos of children; my daughter, Claire M. Holroyd, who never flagged in her enthusiasm as she listened to my ongoing saga of writing adventures; and my stepdaughter, Jane H. Holding, who kept the business humming along keeping my involvement at a minimum.

Gretchen M. Shaffer, director; and the children, staff, and parents at Highland Children's Center.

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A Note of Caution

In all of the activity suggestions in this text, knowledge of the child's developmental level is the most basic guideline for use of any activity. However, in the interest of preventing any undue accidents and spread of infections, a few extra cautions follow.

An important note of caution is necessary regarding the use of containers that have held food in any and all activities with young children. Because of the risk of the spread of salmonella and other food-borne bacteria, it is important that all items that are plastic or Styrofoam, such as egg cartons and trays that have held meat, fish, or poultry, be washed with warm, soapy water, sanitized, and allowed to dry completely before use.

Another important note is regarding the use of balloons and small objects with children under the age of 3. Use of balloons with this age group is not recommended due to the danger of accidental aspiration if the balloon pops while near a child's face. Similarly, the use of any small objects that could fit into a child's mouth must be avoided for children under the age of 3.

Instructor and Student Resources

Additional instructor and student resources for this product are available online. Instructor assets include an Instructor's Manual, PowerPoint® slides, and a test bank powered by Cognero®.

Reviewers

The author and editors at Cengage Learning wish to thank the following reviewers for their time, effort, and thoughtful contributions, which helped to shape the eleventh edition.

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Gulf Coast State College

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Danville Community College

Vanessa Bailey
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Jacqueline Taylor
Greenville Technical College

Pamela Griffin
Ivy Tech Community College

About the Author

Rebecca Howard, Ph.D., is an early childhood consultant, professional development trainer, and university instructor. She holds a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership, M.A. in Theater, is a member of Phi Kappa Phi, and is a faculty member at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, holding a variety of teaching and advising positions since 2000 in Teacher Education, Educational Leadership, Interdisciplinary Studies, and Theater.

She founded the Oxford Early Childhood Center in 1986, and was owner/administrator and lead teacher until the program closed in 2014. While operating OECC, she created the OECC Integrated Curriculum, which was grounded in creativity and culturally responsive practice as foundational pedagogical components of a comprehensive approach to development across domains.

As a professional development consultant and trainer, she has authored and delivered training modules on a range of content topics, including: Creativity Unbound: Integrating Art Throughout the Curriculum; Culturally Responsive, Culturally Proficient: Early Childhood Classroom Practice that Acknowledges, Respects, and Validates Children, Families, and Colleagues; Acting it Out: Dramatic Play and Gender Performance in Early Childhood Environments; Here, There, and Everywhere: Integrating Sensory Activities Throughout the Environment; It's a Musical World: Integrating Music Throughout the Environment; Reading Me, Reading Us: Picture Books That Support Social-Emotional Development and Democratic Like Skills; Learning to Play, Playing to Learn: Intersections of Play, Learning, and Formal

Instruction in Early Childhood Settings; Spirituality, Morality, and Ethics in Early Childhood Settings; and Teaching, Caring, Growing: Defining Your Professional Identity.

She has presented at numerous professional conferences, and has published articles for *Childhood Education* and *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*; authored a chapter on dramatic play and gender performance in the book *Children Under Construction: Play as Curriculum*, edited by Dr. Drew Chappell (2010); and co-edited with Dr. Shirley A. Huston-Findley an anthology of plays titled *Footpaths and Bridges: Voices from the Native American Women Playwrights Archive* (2008). She resides in Oxford, where she works with local non-profits, advocating for childhood literacy, resources for at-risk children and families, and the arts.

Mary Mayesky, Ph.D., is a certified preschool, elementary, and secondary teacher. She is a former professor in the Program in Education at Duke University, former director of the Early Childhood Certification Program, and supervisor of student teachers. She has served as assistant director for programs in the Office of Day Services, Department of Human Resources, State of North Carolina. She is also the former principal of the Mary E. Phillips Magnet School in Raleigh, North Carolina, the first licensed extended day magnet in the Southeast. She has served several terms on the North Carolina Day Care Commission and on the Wake County School Board.

Dr. Mayesky has worked in Head Start, child care, kindergarten, and YWCA early childhood programs and has taught kindergarten through grade 8 in the public schools. She has written extensively for professional journals and for general-circulation magazines in the areas of child development and curriculum design. She is a member of Phi Beta Kappa and was named Woman of the Year in Education by the North Carolina Academy of the YWCA. Her other honors include being named Outstanding Young Educator by the Duke University Research Council, receiving the American Association of School Administrators Research Award, and being nominated for the Duke University Alumni Distinguished Undergraduate Teaching Award. A collection of personal stories about her educational experiences can be found in her book, *Remembering Mrs. O'Donald: Growing, Learning, and Teaching*. Her most recent published appearance was in *Vogue Pattern Magazine*, modeling a dress she made for a wedding, which was chosen for the magazine's *What We're Sewing* section.

A marathon runner, Dr. Mayesky has completed nineteen marathons and received many awards in road races and senior games. She also enjoys studying and teaching yoga, sewing, biking, gardening, and reading on the radio for the blind at the Triangle Radio Reading Service.

Part 1

Creativity, Aesthetics, Art, and Development

Theoretical Basis, Definitions

Part 1 presents a general discussion of various theories relating to child development. Beginning with the concepts of creativity and aesthetics, theories, techniques, basic program components, and the relationship between creativity and development in young children are presented. Part 1 sets the theoretical stage for application of these theories in later parts.

Reflective Questions

After studying this part, you should be able to answer the following questions.

1. What are 3 things I can change in my current teaching strategies to better encourage the development of creativity in young children? Are my teaching practices based on knowledge of the developmental levels of social-emotional, physical/motor, cognitive, and creative expression?
2. How do I encourage the development of a child's aesthetic sense in my classroom environment, lessons, and activities, with a specific example for each?
3. How do my teaching strategies encourage convergent thinking or divergent thinking? How do they support a balance between the two?
4. How do I adapt my teaching to accommodate individual differences to ensure access for all learners? Does my classroom reflect the range of individual differences of the children, including developmental levels, learning styles, and cultural backgrounds?
5. Using the information I have learned about creativity and aesthetics, what are some specific ways I can question my students about creative concepts and ideas?
6. As I plan classroom methods and management systems, how am I specifically keeping in mind the importance of cultivating creativity and the aesthetic sense in children?
7. What am I doing to help young children recognize their own uniqueness, creativity, and aesthetic sense?
8. How will I reflect upon, develop, and utilize my own creativity and aesthetic sense in my planning of curriculum for young children?
9. How will I talk with young children about their art in a way that encourages exploration and experimentation, without imposing judgment based on adult standards of beauty?
10. How will I share with families the importance of providing safe space for the development of a child's creativity and sense of wonder and trust in their own aesthetic judgment? How can I assist them in their understanding of children's development in all domains of creative expression, physical/motor, cognitive, and social-emotional growth?
11. Are the children in my group able to fully develop their physical and cognitive potential through the creative environment and activities that I plan and implement?
12. Am I aware of each child's individual schema? At what levels in the development of art-related skills are the children in my group? Have I planned the environment and activities to fit these levels in a way that encourages and empowers the development of a positive self-concept for every child?
13. What are my strengths and challenges as a teacher in terms of facilitating creative development? How can I use the knowledge and skills I am learning from this material to improve my practice?

The Concept of Creativity

Chapter 1

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Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

- **1-1** Define creativity, and compare and contrast the kinds of creativity.
- **1-2** List three ways in which children and teachers benefit from an environment in which creativity is encouraged.
- **1-3** Discuss the ways creativity has been expressed throughout history, and how that expression influences or is reflected in contemporary life and classroom practice.
- **1-4** Explain the ways in which you, as a professional, will recognize, understand, and respond to characteristics of children who demonstrate a creative disposition, including positive and negative aspects of such characteristics.
- **1-5** Understand the relationship between creative thinking and neural activity.
- **1-6** Recognize the importance of balancing opportunities for divergent and convergent thinking in the curriculum.
- **1-7** Describe the role of play and exploration in promoting creativity.
- **1-8** Explain how curiosity and creativity are directly linked.
- **1-9** Identify strategies you can implement in your classroom practice to help children develop confidence in expressing their creativity.
- **1-10** Employ encouragement and acceptance from adults as a key factor in supporting children's creative development.
- **1-11** Be aware of the strategies available to support creativity for older children, even in settings that emphasize preparation for standardized testing.
- **1-12** Consider not just what questions are asked, but also how those questions are phrased and presented to inspire divergent thinking.
- **1-13** Integrate and apply the knowledge, skills, and willingness to adapt programs and activities to motivate children for creativity.
- **1-14** Develop a solid foundation for understanding the research that supports the need for vibrant arts education that develops creative, innovative, and accomplished students.

Take a few minutes to watch a group of 4-year-old children in action. One child is building a tower out of blocks, then suddenly spots a friend playing with a homemade finger puppet. Both children create puppets, working side-by-side and imagining a dramatic scenario for the puppets as they work. A bit later, this same child is playing with a guinea pig, stroking its fur and tickling its chin, then quickly moves to the art area and begins placing long, wide strokes of color on a piece of paper and getting spots of paint on everything in sight.

A short time later, the child is at the sand table building a sand castle with a high sand tower that keeps falling over, but seems to have discovered something: It is easier to build a tower out of blocks than out of sand, so the activity quickly shifts back to building with wooden blocks. The creative journey has returned to the original inspiration, except that the new block tower does not look anything like the one that began this aesthetic exploration.

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Photo 1-1 Teachers must realize the importance of creativity for all children.

Watching active young children studying and exploring the world around them is exciting. A couple of things become clear almost immediately. First of all, children are full of curiosity. They seem to enjoy investigating and finding out things. Second, they seem quite capable of doing this successfully. They are creative in finding answers to problems that arise from their curiosity. A child can figure out how to reach a needed block that somehow got thrown behind the piano. Another child selects interesting materials to make a finger puppet that is different from all the others. Young children seem to have a natural ability to come up with creative and innovative answers, approaches, and ways to use materials.

All of us who work with young children need to understand creativity within multiple contexts and have the skills to help and encourage children to express their creative natures. We must realize the importance of creativity for both children and teachers (see Photo 1-1). We need to be able to recognize creativity in children and be able to help them nurture a willingness to develop and express this creativity, while also being equally invested in recognizing, exploring, and developing our own creativity on both a personal and professional level.

1-1 What Is Creativity?

Perhaps the most important thing to realize about creativity is that everyone possesses a certain amount of it. Although some people seem to be a little more creative and some a little less, no one is totally lacking in creativity.

Preschoolers often ask parents 100 questions in a single day (Hoefferth, 1998). This behavior reflects the enormous power curiosity has on a child's creativity and motivation to learn in early childhood (Strom & Strom, 2002; Taylor, 2000). Young children tend to be highly open, curious, and creative (see Photo 1-2). Unfortunately, some adults want children to merely conform to adult standards of behavior and aesthetic judgment. For example, Pugsley and Acar (2018) comment on the challenges parents perceive with creative behaviors in children:

> Parenting that provides opportunities for imagination, play, self-expression, and divergent thinking fosters creative thinking and problem solving. . . . On the other hand, supporting creativity may be a challenge for parents as certain creativity traits, such as independence, autonomy, freedom, authenticity, and questioning structure and authority, are difficult to embrace consistently. Therefore, parenting toward some socially acceptable characteristics such as conformity and compliance may be easier to manage and are favored by parents. (Pugsley & Acar, 2018, p. 598)

As these outside pressures increase, the children's environment is diminished in scope and developmental support. They find it less and less rewarding

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Photo 1-2 Children's sense of wonder and delight is evident when they are allowed to be creative.

to express interest in things, to be curious, and to be creative in investigating their world. In order to facilitate environments that foster creative exploration, it is important to have a rich understanding of practices and strategies that encourage children's creativity. The first step in this process is to understand the meaning of the term **creativity**.

There are many meanings for this word:

- A definition by one writer on the subject, May (1975, p. 39), describes creativity as the "process of bringing something new into being."
- Paul Torrance (1970), a pioneer in the study of the creative process, suggests that creativity is the ability to produce something novel, something with the stamp of uniqueness upon it.
- More recently, creativity has been defined as a combination of abilities, skills, motivations, and attitudes (Honig, 2006).

Much like athletic ability, creativity is really a combination of many different abilities, so it is more useful to think of many types of creativities (Ripple, 1999, p. 629). The term *creativity* has many interpretations. Ripple separates the types of creativity as follows:

- **"Capital C" creativity** involves bringing into existence something genuinely new that receives social validation enough to be added to the culture. An example of Capital C creativity is the invention of the lightbulb.
- **"Small c" creativity** involves ideas or products that are new to the person but only to the person. An example of small c creativity is a child's new use of blending finger-paint colors (Ripple, 1999).

The following definition may help the student understand the concept of creativity better. Creativity is a way of thinking, acting, communicating, or making a product, idea, or process that is original for the individual. A person does not have to be the first one in the world to produce something for it to be considered a creative act. Creativity can be found anywhere—at home or school as easily as in art or science. Creativity goes beyond possession and use of artistic or musical talent. Creativity is evidenced not only in music, art, and writing but also throughout the curriculum, in science, social studies, and other areas. (See Figure 1-1, Creativity Checklist.) As Paul Torrance puts it, "Creativity is an infinite phenomenon. A person can be creative in an endless number of ways" (1971).

Take a moment to reflect on how you perceive or demonstrate your own creativity by reading the list below.

Creative Approach to Life—Do I . . . ?

- ☐ Have challenging interests
- ☐ Enjoy self-enriching activities
- ☐ Experience satisfaction with tangible results
- ☐ Have a playful spirit
- ☐ Am inspired to set new goals each time I achieve a goal
- ☐ Enjoy learning about different cultures and their aesthetic and creative processes and products
- ☐ Stay mentally flexible to help me gain new insights
- ☐ Pursue creative interests in different ways
- ☐ Enjoy participating in activities planned by others
- ☐ Actively seek self-enriching activities
- ☐ Experience personal achievement and meaningful involvement in a group or community
- ☐ Use my time effectively to develop my own interests
- ☐ Stay involved in life

Figure 1-1 Creativity checklist.

Fox and Schirrmacher encourage us to think of "creativity as an attitude, not an aptitude" (2015, p. 7). Rather than a defined and culturally valued set of artistic skills, such as the ability to paint a realistic portrait, or compose a complex musical work, creativity is a characteristic that determines how a person views the world, focusing on possibilities instead of worrying about right or wrong answers. They note that:

Children demonstrate a creative attitude when they:

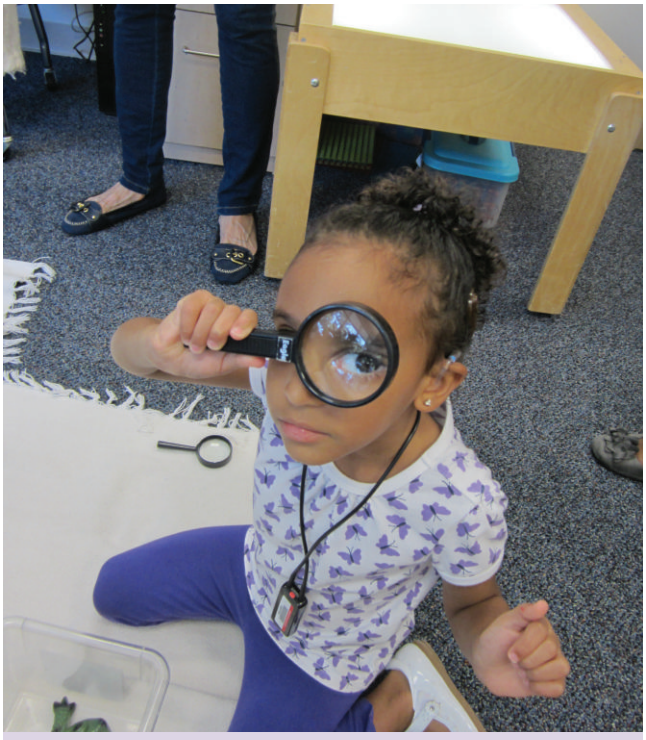
- try out new ideas and different ways of doing things.
- push boundaries and explore possibilities.
- manipulate and transform ideas and materials.
- take things apart and put them back together in different ways.
- physically play with objects.
- imagine, engage in fantasy, or just daydream.
- solve problems to try to figure things out.
- ask questions or challenge accepted ways of thinking or acting (Fox & Schirrmacher, 2015).

1-1a The Creative Process and Research on Definitions of Creativity

When someone is creating something, the activity usually consists of two parts. The first part has to do with originality—the discovery of an idea, plan, or answer. The second part has to do with working out, proving, and making certain that the idea or answer works or is possible. The first part—discovering—involves using imagination, playing with ideas, and exploring (see Photo 1-3). The second part—process—involves using learned skills, evaluating, and testing.

According to Piirto (2004), *creativity* as a scientific term has its roots in psychology. Other researchers believe that what constitutes creativity has not been defined or featured in a clear and unambiguous way (Glavenu & Kaufman, 2019; Ferrari, Cachia, & Punie, 2009). Also, the nature and definitions of creativity vary across cultures (Starko, 2003) and seem to be value- and culture-specific (Craft 2005).

Researchers Kampylis and Valtanen reviewed 42 explicit definitions and 120 collations (a familiar grouping of words used to convey a meaning, that is, *creative thinking*) of creativity from 1953 to 2009 (Kampylis & Valtanen, 2010). They state that the noun *creativity* itself is not only relatively new and fashionable but also confusing, even misunderstood. They found that the noun *creativity* first appeared in printed form in 1875. It derives from the Latin *creare* which means, "to beget, give birth to," and subsequently borrowed from the Medieval Latin *creativus* (Merriam-Webster, 2021).



Casper Holroyd

Photo 1-3 Creativity involves questioning and exploring.

Their analysis and comparisons of the collected definitions reveal that creativity researchers' and theorists' definitions of creativity generally all have the following key components:

1. Creativity is a key ability of individual(s) (person).
2. Creativity presumes an intentional activity (process).
3. The creative process occurs in a specific context (environment).
4. The creative process entails the generation of products (tangible or intangible). These creative product(s) must be novel (original, unconventional) and appropriate (valuable, useful) to some extent, at least for the creative individual(s) (Kampylis & Valtanen, 2010, p. 198).

These key components are commonly summarized and referred to in the literature as the 4Ps of creativity: person, process, press, and product (Richards, 1999). In working with young children, learn to recognize opportunities to see young children involved in all of the 4Ps of creativity, as well as in the key components of creativity as described in the research.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, a researcher on the creative process, describes it as one that normally takes five steps (1997, p. 79).

1. Preparation—Becoming curious about interesting ideas or questions.
2. Incubation—Ideas churn around below the threshold of consciousness, subconsciously making connections.
3. Insight—When an understanding is realized. The "aha" moment when the puzzle starts to fall together.
4. Evaluation—Deciding if the insight is valuable and worth pursuing.
5. Elaboration—Translating the insight into its final work. This is the physical realization of the idea or question.

These stages spiral continuously as the individual pursues the problem. Creativity in Csikszentmihalyi's theory is not linear (Csikszentmihaly, 2008). Creativity is about capturing those moments that make life

worth living. Creativity's objective is to offer an understanding of what leads to these moments, whether it's the excitement of the artist at the easel or the scientist in the lab, so that knowledge can be used to enrich people's lives.

1-1b Thought Processes and Creativity

Two kinds of thinking produce solutions to problems: convergent thinking and divergent thinking. **Convergent thinking** emphasizes a linear process that usually results in a single answer or solution to a question or problem. **Divergent thinking** embraces a variety of approaches and possibilities that can result in many answers to a single problem.

For example, if a child is asked to count the number of fish in an aquarium, there is only one correct answer. This is a question that leads children to convergent thinking. On the other hand, if a child is asked to make pictures of fish in the aquarium, many "correct" examples can be created. Questions such as this encourage divergent rather than convergent thinking. Creativity requires both divergent and convergent thinking. Consequently, the teacher's challenge is to avoid replacing one with the other. de Vries and Lubart (2017) consider the importance of the interplay between convergent and divergent thinking as a necessary aspect of scientific creativity. The challenge for educators is to learn to recognize, facilitate, and support this interplay to enhance creativity in classroom practices and activities.

In working with young children, the focus should be on the process—that is, developing and generating original ideas. This focus on the process encourages the integration of exploration and creativity across the curriculum instead of being confined to art and music activities (see Photo 1-4).

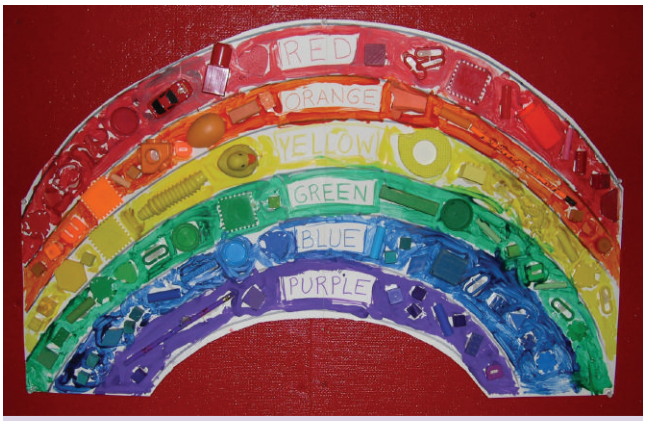


Photo 1-4 Creativity occurs across the curriculum.

1-1c Creativity and Older Children

With older children, creativity tends to involve greater emphasis on the criterion of high-quality, original products or solutions than it does for young children. The development of creative products emerges later in the child's development. An example of this is seen in fourth- and fifth-grade science fair projects. It becomes very apparent that some projects focus on generating innovative and divergent approaches to problems, rather than a convergent illustration of an existing process or product. For example, one student creates and tests a new chair design, while another student investigates which commercial cleaning product works best on stains. Both are valid projects that have value in a scientific sense, and both may involve equal amounts of effort and engagement, but one demonstrates a greater emphasis on creativity and innovation.

It is crucial to continue to support and encourage children's creativity well into pre-adolescence and beyond. It is not uncommon at the middle elementary level for teachers to identify their main instructional goals as helping children build cognitive and social skills. But the great engine that drives innovation and invention in society comes from people whose creativity was kept alive throughout early and middle childhood. Research suggests that, as children move up through the grades, the increased emphasis on "testable" skills has a demonstrable impact on measures of creativity. However, this research also suggests that suppressed creativity may be recoverable through classroom practices that encourage and support innovation and divergent thinking (Beghetto, 2019).

1-1d Variety and Creativity

A certain kind of creativity allows people to express themselves in a way that makes others listen and appreciate what they hear. Some creative abilities enable people to discover new meaning in things that others had not understood before, or to have insight into the creative process itself (see Table 1-1).

Table 1-1 Creativity quotes.

The following are some quotes to inspire you in your creative endeavors as teachers of young children.

- "I'm always thinking about creating. My future starts when I wake up every morning. Every day I find something creative to do with my life."—Miles Davis.
- "I found that I could say things with colors and shapes that I couldn't say any other way—things I had no words for."—Georgia O'Keeffe.
- "You combine hard work, creativity, and self-determination, and things start to happen."—Sophia Amoruso.
- "The scientist needs an artistically creative imagination."—Max Planck.
- "When creativity comes to you for some good reason, be thankful. That's all you have to do."—Yoko Ono.
- "When I say be creative, I don't mean that you should all go and become great painters and great poets. I simply mean let your life be a painting, let your life be a poem."—Osho.
- "You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the you have."—Maya Angelou.
- "I go wherever my creativity takes me."—Lil Wayne.
- "Creativity comes from looking for the unexpected and stepping outside your own experience."—Masaru Ibuka.
- "Creativity is contagious. Pass it on."—Albert Einstein.

Creativity changes at different levels of development. Most people have ideas about what creativity is in adulthood, but what might we look for in a young child? Effective teachers recognize that early creativity is an integral part of the developmental process. For young children, one critical criterion for creative potential is originality (Tegano, Moran, & Sawyers, 1991). How do we, as teachers of young children, understand the processes that lead to original thinking?

TeachSource Video

Infants and Toddlers: Creativity

1. Using the information in your text, discuss the pros and cons of this teacher's modeling of clay bird nests to the group of toddlers.
2. Give examples of convergent and divergent questions the teachers used in this activity.

1-1e Originality

Originality can be seen in a kindergarten classroom where children are making collages from pieces of torn tissue paper. A child experimenting with the material leads to the discovery of a way to make three-dimensional bumps in the collage. This discovery of the three-dimensional aspect is a form of originality. Though making three-dimensional collages is certainly not a new idea in a kindergarten classroom, it is an *original* idea for that particular child at that particular time. Consider another kindergarten classroom where the children are embellishing full-size outlines of their bodies. Most children are adding hair, faces, and clothes to their outlines, while one child is making an internal drawing of a skeleton. This drawing of that individual child's skeleton is an original idea for that child at that time.

THINK ABOUT IT

Creative Thinking and Brain Hemispheres: Hard/Soft Thinking

"Hard" and "soft" thinking are terms often associated with creativity, and they reflect the neurological processes associated with different hemispheres of the brain. Research suggests that the right side of the brain is visual and processes information in an intuitive and simultaneous way, looking first at the whole picture and then at the details (soft thinking). The other hemisphere—the left brain—is verbal and processes information in an analytical and sequential way, looking first at the pieces and then putting them together to get the whole picture (hard thinking) (Heilman, 2005).

The right side of the brain is often associated with characteristics such as intuition, imagination, emotions, feelings, and artistic creativity. The left side is usually associated with planning and organizing, logic, analytical thinking, and deduction. The right side of the brain is sometimes referred to as the "artist," whereas the left side is regarded as the "judge." The following chart presents the differences between hard and soft thinking (Robinson 2010).

Hard Thinking	Soft Thinking
Certain	Doubtful
Close down	Open up
One right answer	Many right answers
Exact	Approximate
Fast	Slow
Black and white	Many shades of gray
Analysis	Hunches
Logic	Intuition
Differences and categories	Similarities and connections
Rational	Dreamlike
Precise	Diffuse
Serious	Playful

It can be argued that creative thinking is a process involving both hard and soft thinking and that it is important to know when each is appropriate. Every person has a "judge" and an "artist," and both are required to be creative (Robinson, 2001). Even those who are very creative and thrive on spontaneity and uncertainty also need to seek order and be analytical to be successful. It is now believed that the most powerful creative thinking occurs when the left and right sides of the brain combine (Robinson, 2010).

1-1f Process over Product

Let's return to the child with the three-dimensional collage as an illustration of the importance of the **process over product** philosophy in an environment that encourages creativity. The teacher's observation of the *process* that leads to originality (exploration and experimentation with the materials) is more valuable than any *judgment of the product* (the three-dimensional bump may have been imperfect and collapsed in the end). (See Photo 1-5.) Remember that, for young children, the process that leads to originality is the focus of creative potential, rather than an end product that is judged by adult aesthetic standards.

Early childhood classrooms are full of examples of the process of original thinking. We see complex dramas unfold as children act out scenes of their own design, discover clever block-building solutions, and

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Photo 1-5 The process that leads to originality is the focus of creative potential.

demonstrate unique interpersonal problem-solving (Tegano et al., 1991).

1-2 Importance of Creativity: Benefits for Teachers and Children

Creativity is the mainspring of innovation and progress in most civilizations. Great inventions, scientific discoveries, the pushing back of frontiers, and all forms of artistic expression—painting, literature, music, drama—have depended on creative thinking. It is not an overstatement to characterize the progress of civilizations as the result of creative thinking and innovation. Our inherent creativity contributes to the very quality of our lives.

The rapid changes of our present age require that problems be tackled creatively (Lubart, 2018). It is difficult to foretell exactly what knowledge will be necessary to solve future problems creatively. What young children are learning now will eventually become mostly obsolete. Even as we continue to learn throughout life, we also realize that knowledge alone is no guarantee that future problems will be met effectively. A strong creative ability is one tool to prepare us as individuals to meet the changes, challenges, and opportunities of the future.

Most children naturally want to express themselves openly. They want to bring out new ideas and have new experiences. As noted by Lowenfeld and Brittain, "If it were possible for children to develop without any interference from the outside world, no special stimulation for their creative work would be necessary. All children would use their deeply rooted creative impulses without inhibition, confident in their own means of expression" (1987, p. 7).

Children enjoy creativity and benefit from it in many ways, including the following:

- Learning to feel good about themselves
- Learning to seek many answers to a problem
- Developing their potential to think
- Developing their individuality
- Developing new skills

Teachers also benefit from encouraging creativity, in such ways as the following:

- Being able to provide for more and greater variety in the program
- Learning to recognize children for their unique skills
- Being able to develop closer relationships with children
- Reducing and more effectively managing behavior problems
- Being better prepared to expand on standardized curricula to address external evaluation

1-3 Creativity throughout History and across Cultures

The human desire to be creative has been present throughout history in all communities. From the existence of prehistoric cave paintings, we can see that human beings have made their mark using the materials available to them. The desire to represent and share experiences with others—for example, through art, music, and dance—seems to be a basic human characteristic that has been recognized as a creative impulse throughout history (Runco & Albert, 2010).

Creation stories passed on by religious and cultural groups reflect this same creative desire. A number of these use the imagery of human creativity to represent divine creativity. For example, the clay of the potter is used as the raw material of creation—the Creator molds and sculpts the clay to create human beings. One Chinese story of creation describes how Numa, the mother goddess, created people from the river mud to ease her loneliness. Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions describe God creating people from the dust of the ground. In Greek mythology, Prometheus uses clay to make little images of the gods (Duffy, 2010). One creation story from the Anishinaabe tells of the Trickster Nanabozho breathing life into a small mound of soil to miraculously create his island and his world.

All of these foundational creation stories emphasize the desire to create, the pleasure in creating, and the sense of ownership toward the created. This same sense of pleasure and satisfaction derived from the creative process is apparent in many human experiences, whether it is finding a new solution to a problem, preparing a special meal, or completing a challenging assignment.

An example of creativity embedded in cultural ritual and tradition is the Jingle Dress Dance. The Jingle Dress Dance, a frequent sight at Native American pow wows, began in the early 20th century when an Ojibwe girl grew ill, and her grandfather dreamed that his spirit guides told him that dancing in the jingle dress would heal her. She recovered, and the dance became a valued component of culture and spiritual tradition in many Ojibwe communities. The Jingle Dress Dance underscores the basic tenet of human desire to represent and share our joys and struggles through creative actions,

as evident in diverse cultures throughout history. Over time, the beauty and power of the dance spread to other Native nations and communities, ultimately becoming an integral part of Native gatherings. You can learn more about the function of this artistic and creative expression in contemporary Native families in Cynthia L. Smith's book *Jingle Dancer*, a picture book for ages 4–8 that presents the story of a young girl who learns about the history and symbolism of the dance as she collects the "jingles" for her dress from family members.

Traditional definitions of creativity have suggested that it is a broadly applicable cognitive ability that is consistent across cultures (Guilford, 1950). More recent definitions and theoretical approaches challenge this construct, asserting that creativity is "bonded by time, domain, and culture" (Niu, 2019, p. 448). For example, Niu notes that comparisons of the literature on creativity from Western cultures (Europe and North America) and Eastern cultures (Asia) suggest that, even though there are similarities between them in terms of an emphasis on a process that is "original, imaginative, intelligent, and independent," there is also a noticeable difference that is grounded in the "different worldviews held by the two cultures, namely individualism vs. collectivism." Niu further explains:

> Whereas the Western conception places greater emphasis on personal characteristics of a creator at the present time, the Eastern understanindg places greater emphasis on the social contribution of a creative individual and more value on the linkage between current and past in the development of creative products. (p. 448)

1-4 Characteristics of Creative Children

Paul Torrance, a noted expert on creativity in children, has frequently emphasized that the kind of behavior teachers identify as desirable in children does not always coincide with characteristics associated with the creative personality. For example, teachers who think they value uniqueness may find that when a child has spilled their milk because they tried an original method of holding the cup with their teeth, they don't like creative exploration as much as they thought they did.

This lack of conformity can be inconvenient, but it is important for all of us who work with young children to realize that some creative individuals possess character traits that aren't always easy to appreciate. Some of these challenging qualities include stubbornness, faultfinding tendencies, the appearance of haughtiness and self-satisfaction, and apparent discontent (Torrance, 1962). Yet it is easy to see that stubbornness might be a valuable quality when carrying through a new idea, or that finding fault and being discontented could result in questioning and analyzing a situation before coming up with suggestions for improving it.

Researchers acknowledge that we do not know at present the degree to which these challenging attitudes lie at the root of creativity or are influenced by the reactions of teachers, peers, and families as the child matures. Torrance also found that creative children possess many positive qualities, such as determination, curiosity, intuition, a willingness to take risks, a preference for complex ideas, and a sense of humor.

Acknowledging some of the possible challenges of encouraging creativity in children is important so that teachers will not subtly reject or discourage creative responses out of failure to recognize the positive side of such behavior. Ideally, understanding creativity will result in increased acceptance and valuing of creativity in young children (see Photo 1-6). Acceptance is vitally important because it encourages children to develop their creativity further. This need to facilitate environments that

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Photo 1-6 Basic to creativity is a warm acceptance of each child's individuality.

support creative development is noted by Viktor Lowenfeld and W. Lambert Brittain, who state, "We should not be troubled about motivating children for creative behavior; what we should be aware of are the psychological and physical restrictions that the environment places on children to inhibit their own natural curiosity and exploratory behavior" (1987).

1-5 Creativity and the Human Brain

Highly creative thinkers are often stereotyped as dreamers or absent-minded professor types who struggle with deadlines and completing projects. Although these behaviors are often negatively viewed by a society that emphasizes productivity and efficiency, these behaviors may actually be expressions of low levels of neural activity in the brain, which are essential to the creative process.

Studies involving EEG brain scans suggest that low brain arousal seems necessary for the initial (ideation) stage of the creative process, especially for those who are considered highly creative (Haier & Jung, 2008; Martindale & Hasenfus, 1978).

Low levels of arousal in the neurons in the brain during creative ideation (Fink & Neubauer, 2006; Haier & Jung, 2008) allow the scattered, multidimensional thinking necessary for innovative ideas.

In their research, Jausovec (2000) and Martindale and Hasenfus (1978) compared highly creative people to more average ones and found highly creative individuals were more likely to exhibit low cortical energy levels during creative problem-solving than their more typical counterparts. The reverse, high brain arousal, is associated with less creative, unoriginal responses (Martindale & Armstrong, 1974).

Another researcher suggests that high neural arousal may cause the brain to focus too quickly on a common thought and end the idea search before any innovative associations can occur (Gnezda, 2011). Longer idea searches are important because, according to Guilford (1967), a larger quantity of ideas produces more opportunities for unusual association.

While it may seem to the casual observer that a creative person in the early stages of the process is idle or not on task, the person may be working hard internally, scanning their brain for as many high-quality ideas as possible (Gnezda, 2011).

Low neural arousal levels do not last throughout an entire creative process. Later in the process, when the person is settling on a new combination of thoughts (that is, perceiving the insight of a creative idea), their brain will turn up the neural activity level (Martindale & Hasenfus, 1978). The creative person experiences the excitement of inspiration, also called *illumination* (Wallas, 1926) or an "aha" moment.

1-6 Promoting Creativity

Learning is more interesting, more effective, and more enjoyable for children in settings where teachers and children both recognize, understand, and actively engage with the process of creative thinking. Incorporating creative thinking into all areas of the curriculum contributes to a young child's positive attitude toward learning (Pastor & David, 2017). As one student teacher commented, "I used to think that if children were having too much fun, they couldn't be learning. Now I understand how they are learning in a more effective way." This section addresses the foundations of the relationship between creativity and the classroom environment, providing guidelines for encouraging creative thinking in all early childhood settings as a fundamental component of a dynamic, responsive, and developmentally appropriate early learning experience.

Creativity is an integral part of each day. It is part of circle time, reading time, and lunchtime—it is not limited to art, music, creative movement, or dramatic play (see Photo 1-7). Creativity needs to be a natural part of the curriculum and the learning environment. Children

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Photo 1-7 Children who meet with unquestioning acceptance of their unique approach to the world feel safe expressing their creativity.

need knowledge and skills to be creative. This section will help you understand the reasoning and strategies on how to attain these goals. As you work through this section, keep in mind that creative thinking is contagious—from teacher to child, from child to teacher, and also from child to child and teacher to teacher.

1-7 The Relationship between Creativity and the Curriculum

To express their creative potential, young children need both a base of knowledge and skills, as well as opportunities to explore, invent, and imagine. The curriculum is the teacher's choice of introducing knowledge and skills that are important and developmentally appropriate for a particular group of children, and establishing an environment and facilitating activities that give children the chance to develop those skills and build that knowledge through exploration and divergent thinking (Bredekamp, 2009) (Land & Jarman, 1992).

This balancing act has foundations in two different types of research. On the one hand, an example of the need for a knowledge base emerged in the early pilot testing of a measure of creative potential for young children. The researchers were trying to adapt the classic "uses" task for preschool children. In this task, the children are asked to name all the uses they can think of for a common item. The number of original (i.e., unusual) answers serves as one measure of creativity (Torrance, 1962; Wallach & Kogan, 1965). The researchers were puzzled when a group of preschool children could think of only a few uses for common objects such as a clothes hanger and a table knife. The researchers realized that the reason for the limited response was that the children had little or no knowledge and skill in the use of clothes hangers and table knives. In fact, most preschool children are not allowed to use these items. In this example, knowledge and skills seem to form a basis for further creativity. Later research came up with better results when the children were asked to think of all the ways to use a box and paper, items about which the children had a working knowledge (Moran, Milgram, Sawyers, & Fu, 1985; Rushton & Larkin, 2007). This study suggested that creativity can evolve from a knowledge base.

On the other hand, a study conducted by George Land and Beth Jarman was commissioned by NASA in 1968 to explore ways to measure divergent thinking and adaptability to find innovative engineers and scientists. This study came to be known as the "paper clip test." After seeing the results with adults, Land and Jarman expanded the study and compiled the results of responses from over 1500 three- to five-year-olds, asking them simply, "what can you do with a paper clip?" They then followed up with the children at age ten and again at age fifteen. In young children, unencumbered by preconceived experience or expectations of what a paper clip is or does, 98% tested at a "genius" level in terms of thinking creatively about paper clips. At subsequent ages, those rates dropped to 30% for ten-year-olds, and 12% for fifteen-year-olds. The same test given to 280,000 adults with an average age of thirty-one years yielded only a 2% rate of individuals testing at that "genius" level. Land and Jarman concluded that this decrease was due to the emphasis in traditional schooling on convergent thinking (i.e., one right answer to a question or problem), and the "competition" that occurs in the brain when we try to use both convergent and divergent thinking simultaneously (Land, 2011; Skillikorn, 2016). As children age through traditional school systems, they became increasingly focused on providing answers that reflected their growing experience with real paper clips and their function. The youngest children, who are not yet "schooled" in this approach and don't really know what paper clips are or how they are used, may be better able to think "outside the box" and generate a much greater degree of creative and innovative ideas by reducing the neural competition between convergent and divergent thinking.

While these two ideas about creativity and previous knowledge may seem to contradict each other, they present, instead, an illustration of two complementary forces that, when balanced, are at the heart of creativity: knowledge, combined with the unencumbered freedom to exercise divergent thinking. The challenge is to help children learn how to separate these functions in time and space to, first, use divergent thinking to generate multiple ideas, however impractical (i.e., "brainstorm"), and then, at a later point, use their knowledge base, skills, and experience to focus and narrow those ideas in a convergent process of practical application.

Thus, one important goal for the early childhood teacher is to provide an adequate base of knowledge and skills for children, while at the same time providing an environment that encourages creative thinking in the use of that knowledge and those skills (Land, 2011; Torrance, 1995). The curriculum is the guide by which teachers determine *what* will be presented to children. Creativity is fostered according to *how* the curriculum is presented to the child (Runco, 2008).

1-8 Promoting Creativity through Play and Exploration

Consider a preschool classroom where pieces of plastic pipes and fittings are available for the children, and observe the process of exploration as it leads into play. At first, the pipes are something novel, and children engage in exploring what the pipes can do—look through them, blow into them, bang them together, create patterns, ask questions, see them used in plumbing, etc. This process of exploring and learning about the pipes and fittings to discover what they can do may cover several days, weeks, or months, depending on the frequency of exposure the children have to them. When the children have gained an understanding of how pipes fit together and what they are used for, they will move on to further explore what they can do with them in a practical and creative sense, such as build structures, change the direction of water poured through them, or combine them with blocks and toy cars to create a city. Equipped with the knowledge and skills gained through exploration, combined with creative thinking, the children begin to play with the pipes in imaginative and innovative ways.

As children explore and play with materials in their environments, they are also in a sense shaping the brain (Catania, 2008). Those who research the human brain contend that experience, particularly in childhood, sculpts the brain (Fischer, Immordino Yang, & Weber, 2007). The brain changes physiologically as a result of experience. New connections are formed every day in active interaction with the environment. Hands-on activities stimulate various regions of the brain, and active participation helps young children form stronger mental association with their existing understandings (Hinton, Miyamoto, & Della-Chiesa, 2008; Rushton & Larkin, 2007). Therefore, the opportunities to learn actively in an environment provided throughout life and particularly in the early years help to create unique individuals (see Photo 1-8). Other researchers put it this way: "Throughout life, we are both shaped by and shaping our environment" (Fischer et al., 2007). Passive observation in the early childhood program is never enough. As Walt Whitman illustrated this process in "Leaves of Grass" (1885, p. 90):

> There was a child went forth every day,
>
> And the first object he looked upon and received with wonder or pity or love or dread, that object he became,
>
> And that object became part of him for the day or a certain part of the day . . . . or for many years or stretching cycles of years.

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Photo 1-8 Creativity is part of each day and is not limited to art activities.

As Whitman so eloquently observed, the role of exploration and play is central to the development of creativity—at all ages.

1-9 Curiosity: A Direct Link to Creativity

Children are curious by nature. From the moment of birth, they are drawn to new things. When children are curious about something new, they want to explore it. Because exploration is a crucial part of the creative process, curiosity is directly linked to creativity.

To ensure that children's curiosity doesn't fade, the following are some tips to encourage curiosity in young children.

- Recognize individual differences in children's styles of curiosity. Some children may want to explore with only their minds, while others may choose more physical ways—touching, smelling, tasting, and climbing.
- Realize that to some degree, these differences are related to temperament differences in the exploratory drive.
- Recognize that some children are more timid than others, while some are more comfortable with novelty and physical exploration.
- Understand that even timid children will be very curious; they may require more encouragement and reinforcement to leave safe and familiar situations.
- Try to redefine "failure." Curiosity often leads to more mess than mastery, but it is how we handle the mess that helps encourage further exploration and thereby creativity.

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Photo 1-9 Young children explore their world in many ways.

- Use your attentiveness and positive feedback to reinforce the exploring, curious child.
- If exploration in the classroom becomes disruptive, redirect it by helping children learn when and where to safely and respectfully engage in that particular kind of exploration (See Photo 1-9). (Perry, 2009).

1-10 Helping Children Express Creativity

There are at least eight things that can be done for children to help them express natural creative tendencies.

1. **Help children accept change.** A child who becomes overly worried or upset in new situations is unlikely to express creative potential.
2. **Help children realize that some problems have no easy answers.** This may help prevent children from becoming anxious when they cannot find an immediate answer to a question or problem.
3. **Help children recognize that many problems have a number of possible answers.** Encourage them to search for more than one answer. Then they can evaluate all the different answers to see which ones fit the situation best.
4. **Help children learn to judge and accept their own feelings.** Children should not feel guilty for having feelings about things. Create an environment where judgment is deferred and all ideas are respected, where discussion and debate are a means of trying out ideas in a nonthreatening atmosphere.
5. **Reward children for being creative.** Let children know that their creative ideas are valued. The more creative the ideas or products, the more greatly they should be rewarded. It is also useful to help children realize that good work is sometimes its own reward.
6. **Help children feel joy in their creative productions and in working through problems**. Children should find that doing things and finding answers for themselves is fun. The adult should establish the conditions that allow this to take place (See Photo 1-10).

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Photo 1-10 Effective teachers help children feel joy in their creative productions.

7. **Help children appreciate themselves for being different.** There is sometimes a tendency to reward children for conforming, which discourages creativity. Children need support to learn to appreciate the unique qualities they possess.
8. **Help children develop perseverance—"stick-to-itiveness."** Help children by encouraging them to follow through. Provide chances for them to stick with an activity even if everyone else has moved on to something different.

1-11 Promoting Creativity through Positive Acceptance

Adults who work with young children are in an especially crucial position to foster each child's creativity. In the day-to-day experiences in early childhood settings, as young children actively explore their world, adults' attitudes clearly transmit their feelings to the child. Children who meet with unquestionable acceptance of their unique approach to the world will feel safe in expressing their creativity, whatever the activity or situation.

The following are guidelines on how to help transmit this **positive acceptance** to children, which in turn fosters creativity in any situation.

- Openly demonstrate to young children that there is value in their curiosity, exploration, and original behavior.
- Allow children to go at their own pace when they are carrying out an activity that excites and interests them.
- Let children stay with what they are making until they feel it's finished.
- Let children figure out their own ways of doing things if they prefer to do so.
- Keep the atmosphere relaxed.
- Encourage guessing, especially when the answers make good sense.
- Let the creative activity be the reward and refrain from empty "rewarding" comments (such as "good job"). Instead, comment on the work in an observational, but non-judgmental way, such as "I notice you are using many diagonal lines." Be careful not to impose adult standards or aesthetic values on a child's creation. Rather than remark, "that's beautiful," make a descriptive observation and ask a reflective question, such as, "I see lots of different colors that you used—why did you choose those colors? How do they make you feel?"

1-12 Working with Older Children

In the upper elementary grades, teachers have an even greater challenge to promote creativity because the curriculum often dominates the program. There are often state-level guidelines for what to teach, at what level, and with specific books and materials. Even in this situation, you can encourage creativity in your classroom. Here are some suggestions to help you get started.

To encourage creativity with older children:

- Use tangible rewards (stickers, prizes) as seldom as possible; instead, encourage children's own pride in the work they have done.
- Avoid setting up competitive situations for children.
- Downplay your evaluation of children's work. Instead, lead them to become more proficient at recognizing their own strengths.
- Encourage children to monitor their own work rather than rely on your surveillance of them.
- Whenever possible, give children choices about what activities they do and how to do those activities.
- Make intrinsic (internal) motivation a conscious factor in your discussions with children. Encourage them to become aware of their own special interests and to take their focus off the extrinsic (external) rewards.
- To build children's intrinsic (internal) motivation, help them build their self-esteem by focusing on and appreciating their unique talents and strengths.
- As much as possible, encourage children to become active, independent learners rather than to rely on you for constant direction. Encourage them to take confident control of their own learning process.
- Give children ample opportunities for free play with various materials, and allow them to engage in fantasy whenever possible.
- Show children that you value creativity in many different ways—not only do you allow it, but you also engage in it yourself.
- Whenever you can, show your students that you are an intrinsically motivated adult who enjoys thinking creatively.

It may help to also consider these additional points on working with older students.

Time

As much as possible, give students extended, unhurried time to explore and do their best work. Stand aside when students are productively engaged and motivated to complete an interesting and creative task.

Space

Provide students with an area to leave unfinished work to be completed later. Create an inviting workspace that has natural light, comfortable furniture, and stimulating resources.

Materials

Provide an abundant supply of interesting and useful materials, including writing and art materials that students can use freely to invent, experiment, and demonstrate ideas and products.

Climate

Create a classroom atmosphere where students understand that mistakes are acceptable and it is appropriate to take risks. Allow a reasonable amount of noise, mess, and freedom.

Enrichment

Introduce students to out-of-class experiences so they encounter ideas to use in classroom learning. Help students reflect on their experiences and what they mean to them.

Even if you feel burdened by state standards and high-stakes testing, it's worth the effort to create a classroom environment that is both visually and mentally stimulating. Students need to be certain that a spark of learning and the opportunity for divergent thinking is present in their daily lessons.

THINK ABOUT IT

Research on Benefits of the Arts in Education

Numerous studies have demonstrated the amazing benefits of having art as part of a well-rounded curriculum. The following research studies reveal the power of art to inspire, motivate, and educate today's students.

In 2006, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum study on arts education showed a link between arts education and improved literacy skills. In this study, the Guggenheim sent artists into schools to teach students and help them create their own masterpieces. Children who took part in the program performed better on six different categories of literacy and critical thinking skills than those who did not.

In 2009, the Center for Arts Education published a report that suggests arts education may improve graduation rates. Examining the role of arts education in New York public schools, this report found that schools with the least access to arts education also had the highest dropout rates. Conversely, those with the highest graduation rates also had the greatest access to arts education and resources. Although a number of other factors play into graduation rates, it was reported that many at-risk students cited participation in the arts as their reason for staying. Participation in these activities had a quantifiable impact on levels of truancy, delinquency, and academic performance.

In 2010, a study of Missouri public schools found that greater arts education led to fewer disciplinary infractions and higher attendance, graduation rates, and test scores. Using data submitted by the state's public schools, the Missouri Department of Education and the Missouri Alliance for Arts Education compiled this report. They found that arts education had a significant effect on the academic and social success of their students. Those with greater arts participation were more likely to come to class, avoid being removed, and graduate. They also demonstrated greater proficiency in math and communication.

In 2011, a study called "Reinvesting in Arts Education" found that integrating arts with other subjects could help raise achievement levels. Arts education may not just help raise test scores but also assist the learning process itself. In this report on the Maryland school system, it was found that skills learned in the visual arts could help improve reading, and the counterparts fostered in playing an instrument could be applied to mathematics. The researchers and school officials believe that arts education can be a valuable education reform tool and that classroom integration of creative opportunities could be key to motivating students and improving standardized scores.

1-13 Creative Questioning Strategies to Encourage Creative Thinking

Just the way a question is phrased or asked sets the stage for creative replies. For example, the request, "Describe (or tell me about) the sky . . ." would certainly elicit different responses than, "What color is the sky?" In the first, more open-ended (divergent) request, children are encouraged to share their personal feelings and experiences about the sky. This might be color or cloud shapes or even how jets, birds, and helicopters can fill it at times. The second question is phrased in such a way that a one-word (convergent) reply would do, and it may make it seem to children that there is only one correct answer.

In asking questions, then, a teacher can foster children's creativity. Following are specific examples of activities that focus on creative questioning. These activities suggest various ways of asking questions and are designed to draw out the creative potential in young children. Activities that deal directly with specific art forms and media are found in later sections of this book.

1. Making Things Better with Your Imagination

One way to help children think more creatively is to get them to "make things better with their imagination." Ask children to change things to make them the way they would like them to be. Here are some examples of questions of this type.

- What would taste better if it were sweeter?
- What would be nicer if it were smaller?
- What would be more fun if it were faster?
- What would be better if it were quieter?
- What would be more exciting if it went backwards?
- What would be happier if it were bigger?

2. Using Other Senses

Young children can stretch their creative talents by using their senses in unusual ways. For example, children may be asked to close their eyes and describe (not just guess) what has been placed in their hands, such as a piece of foam rubber, a small rock, a grape, a piece of sandpaper, and so on. Another approach is to have children close their eyes and describe what they hear. For example, you can use sounds like shuffling cards, jingling coins, rubbing sandpaper, or ripping paper. After they have thoroughly described what they are holding or hearing, then they can guess what it is.

3. Divergent-Thinking Questions

Any time you ask children a question requiring a variety of answers, you are encouraging their creative thinking skills. Here are some examples using the concept of water.

- How can you use water?
- What floats in water?
- How does water help us?
- Why is cold water cold? Why is hot water hot?
- What are the different colors that water can be? Why?
- What makes water rain? What makes it stop?
- What always stays underwater?

Divergent-thinking questions using concepts such as sand, ice, smoke, cars, and similar topics are fun for children. They also encourage openness and flexibility of thinking.

4. What-Would-Happen-If?

The "What-would-happen-if?" technique has been used successfully by many teachers of young children to spark good thinking-and-doing sessions designed to ignite imaginations. Some of the following questions may be used.

- What would happen if all the trees in the world were blue?
- What would happen if everyone looked alike?
- What would happen if all the cars were gone?
- What would happen if everybody wore the same clothes?
- What would happen if every vegetable tasted like chocolate?
- What would happen if there were no more clocks or watches?
- What would happen if you could fly?

5. In How Many Different Ways?

Another type of question that extends a child's creative thinking is one that begins, "In how many different ways . . .?" A few examples are provided here.

- In how many different ways could a spoon be used?
- In how many different ways could a button be used?
- In how many different ways could a string be used?
- In what new ways could we use this? How could it be modified to fit a new use?

All of these questioning strategies are intended to help an adult encourage creativity in young children. Children may also generate these types of questions once they have been modeled for them. Often, the use of these strategies is enough to begin a long-running and positive creative experience for the child as well as the teacher. They are limited only by the user's imagination. More of these types of questioning activities are provided at the end of this chapter.

1-14 Motivating Skills for Teachers

Some children need help in getting started. The fact that the activity is labeled "creative" does not necessarily make the child "ready to go." A child may be feeling restless or tired or may feel like doing something else. All teachers, even those with good ideas, face this problem. There are several ways to help children become motivated for the creative process.

Physical Needs

Schedule the day so that children are rested and well nourished. Sleepy, hungry, or sick children struggle to be attentive and creative. Physical needs must be met before such learning can be effective.

TeachSource Video

Preschool: Cooking Activities

1. Consider the comments the teacher made to the children as they made their "snack bugs." Discuss how they reflect the information in this chapter on motivating skills for teachers.
2. How would you alter this cooking activity so that it encourages more divergent thinking?

Interests

Try to find out, and then use, what naturally interests the children in your program. Children want to not only do things they like to do, but also be successful at them. Whenever children feel that they will succeed in a task, they are generally much more willing to get involved.

Friends

Consider having children to work together with their friends. This may not be possible or advisable all the time, but some teachers avoid ever putting children who are friends together in working situations. They are concerned that these children will lose focus or disturb others. When this does happen, one should question whether the problem is not with the children, but if the task at hand is not holding the children's interest. In that case, consider altering the activity in a way that is more responsive to specific needs, abilities, and interests of the children.

Activities for Fun

Allow the activity to be fun for the child. Encourage child-initiated activities and self-selection of creative materials, and emphasize voluntary participation of the children in the activities presented. By considering the following questions, teachers can generate activities that allow children opportunities for fun:

- Is the activity exciting?
- Is the activity in a free setting?
- Can the children imagine in it?
- Can the children play at it?
- Is there a game-like quality to it?
- Are judgments avoided?
- Is competition deemphasized?
- Will there be something to laugh about?

Goals

Permit children to set and reach goals. Most of the excitement in achieving a goal is in reaching for it. Children should be given opportunities to plan projects. They should be able to get involved in activities that have something at the end for which they can strive. If the completion of an activity is not rewarding to a child, then the value of that activity is questionable. "Reward" in this context doesn't mean a tangible "prize," but rather a sense of completion and achievement.

Variety

Vary the content and style of what the children can do. Consider not only what will be next, but how it will be done, too. For example, the teacher has the children sit and watch a movie, then they sit and draw, and then they sit and listen to a story. These are three different activities, but in each of them, the children are sitting. The content of the activity has changed but not the style.

While routine is important (to some children more than others), teachers who set the standard for valuing creativity by taking a chance on a "crazy" idea may positively influence the expression of creative potential for all of the children in their care.

Challenge

Challenge children. This means letting them know that what they are about to do is something that will be exciting to try. An example of this is letting the children know that their next activity may be tricky, adventurous, or mysterious. Provide them with a challenging, yet safe and developmentally appropriate, task to accomplish.

Reinforcement

Reinforce the creative behavior of children by ensuring there is something at the end of the activity that lets the children feel they would like to do it again. It could be seeing the teacher's smile, receiving a compliment on their effort, reaching the goal, hanging up the creation, sharing with a friend, or just finishing the activity. Children should feel both intrinsically satisfied with, and extrinsically appreciated for, their efforts.

The Children's Feelings

Try to make sure children feel good about what they are doing. Some teachers believe that if a child is working intensely or learning, that is enough. This may not be so. The most important thing is not what children are doing but how they *feel about* what they are doing. If children feel bad about themselves or an activity while doing it, this is a warning. The teacher must be continually in touch with how the children are feeling. This is the result of listening, watching, and being with the children in a manner that is open and caring. Rather than forcing completion or engagement, it is important to help children identify *why* they are feeling resistant, and to determine whether it is in their best interest to try to persevere through that resistance, or pursue a different task.

1-15 How to Inspire Creativity: Research Perspective

In a study of several art classes in Boston-area schools, Ellen Winner and Lois Hetland (2007) found that arts programs teach a specific set of thinking skills rarely addressed elsewhere in the curriculum. Far from being irrelevant in a test-driven education system, arts education is becoming even more important as standardized tests exert a narrowing influence over what schools teach.

Winner and Hetland assert that the implications are broad, not just for schools, but also for society. As schools cut time for the arts, they may be losing their ability to produce not just the artistic creators of the future, but innovative leaders as well.

The standardized tests we use in many of our schools today are almost exclusively focused on verbal and quantitative skills, which reward the child who has a knack for language and math and who can absorb and regurgitate information. This type of testing reveals little about a student's intellectual depth, creativity, or desire to learn (Winner & Goldstein, 2011).

As schools increasingly shape their curriculum to produce high test scores, many life skills not measured by tests just do not get taught. In their study, Winner and Hetland spent an academic year in two local Boston-area schools to determine what happens inside arts classes. They videotaped and photographed classes and analyzed what they saw. They also interviewed teachers and their students. They watched student–teacher interactions repeatedly to identify specific habits and skills and then coded the segments to count the times each were taught.

In their analysis, the researchers found that while students in art classes learn techniques specific to art, such as how to mix paint, they are also taught a remarkable array of mental habits not emphasized elsewhere in school. They identified eight "studio habits of mind" that art classes taught, including the development of artistic craft (Winner & Hetland, 2007). Such skills included visual–spatial abilities, reflection, self-criticism, and the willingness to experiment and learn from mistakes. All of these skills are important in any number of careers but are widely ignored by today's standardized tests (Hetland, Winner, Veenema, & Sheridan, 2007).

Another of these habits was persistence. Students worked on projects over sustained periods of time and were expected to find meaningful problems and persevere through frustration. Each of the skills and habits they identified has a role in life and learning.

Finally, the researchers, who both have long histories in arts education, were startled to find a systematic emphasis on thinking and perception in the art classes they studied. In contrast to the reputation of the arts as mainly about expressive craft, they found that teachers talked about decisions, choices, and understanding far more than they talked about feelings.

In their summary, Winner and Hetland state their belief that while art teachers rightly resist making their classes like "academic" classes, teachers of academic subjects might well benefit from making their classes more like art classes (2007).

For students living in a rapidly changing world, the arts teach vital modes of seeing, imagining, inventing, and thinking. Those who have learned the lessons of the arts—how to see new patterns, how to learn from mistakes, and how to envision solutions—are the ones most likely to come up with the answers needed most for the future.

Summary

1-1 Define creativity, and compare and contrast the kinds of creativity.

Creativity is a way of thinking and acting or making something that is original for the individual child. Capital C creativity involves bringing into existence something genuinely new that receives social validation enough to be added to the culture. An example of Capital C creativity is the invention of the lightbulb. Small c creativity involves ideas or products that are new to the person, but only to the person. An example of small c creativity is a child's new way of blending finger paint colors. Young children are naturally creative. This means they behave in ways and do things that are unique and valued by themselves or others. Creativity in preschool children is stimulated when they are allowed to think divergently.

1-2 List three ways in which children and teachers benefit from an environment in which creativity is encouraged.

Children benefit from an environment in which creativity is encouraged by:

- Learning to feel good about themselves
- Learning to seek many answers to a problem
- Developing their potential to think
- Developing their individuality
- Developing new skills

Teachers benefit from encouraging creativity, in such ways as the following:

- Being able to provide for more and greater variety in the program
- Learning to recognize children for their unique skills
- Being able to develop closer relationships with children
- Reducing and more effectively managing behavior problems
- Being better prepared to expand on standardized curricula to address external evaluation

1-3 Discuss the ways creativity has been expressed throughout history, and how that expression influences or is reflected in contemporary life and classroom practice.

The human desire to be creative has been present throughout history in all communities. We can see from the existence of prehistoric cave paintings that human beings have made their mark using the materials available to them. The desire to represent and share experiences with others—for example through art, music, and dance—seems to be a basic human characteristic.

1-4 Explain the ways in which you, as a professional, will recognize, understand, and respond to characteristics of children who demonstrate a creative disposition, including positive and negative aspects of such characteristics.

Some characteristics of creativity that may be perceived as challenging are faultfinding, stubbornness, appearance of haughtiness, self-satisfaction, and apparent discontent. Characteristics generally perceived as positive include determination, curiosity, intuition, a willingness to take risks, a preference for complex ideas, and a sense of humor.

1-5 Understand the relationship between creative thinking and neural activity.

Even though high creative thinkers are often stereotyped as dreamers, research suggests that low levels of neural activity are an indicator of creative ideation.

1-6 Recognize the importance of balancing opportunities for divergent and convergent thinking in the curriculum.

Research on the ability of children to generate innovative or imaginative ideas underscores the importance of both divergent and convergent thought processes, with a balance between knowledge and skill development with ample opportunities for exploration.

1-7 Describe the role of play and exploration in promoting creativity.

The process of exploring to discover the characteristics of objects is essential to the development of a child's creativity. As children explore and play with materials, they are acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary to eventually use these materials creatively.

1-8 Explain how curiosity and creativity are directly linked.

It is crucial for teachers and caregivers to recognize, appreciate, and encourage active curiosity.

1-9 Identify strategies you can implement in your classroom practice to help children develop confidence in expressing their creativity.

There are at least eight things that can be done for children to help them express natural creative tendencies:

- Help children accept change.
- Help children realize that some problems have no easy answers.
- Help children recognize that many problems have a number of possible answers.
- Help children learn to judge and accept their own feelings.
- Reward children for being creative.
- Help children feel joy in their creative productions and in working through problems.
- Help children appreciate their own unique qualities.
- Help children develop perseverance—"stick-to-itiveness."

1-10 Employ encouragement and acceptance from adults as a key factor in supporting children's creative development.

Recognizing and acknowledging children's creative efforts in non-judgmental ways provides a safe and supportive environment for children to be creative.

1-11 Be aware of the strategies available to support creativity for older children, even in settings that emphasize preparation for standardized testing.

Encouraging children to be active, independent learners who are intrinsically motivated, and employing strategies to provide them with resources, activities, and time to bring creative thinking to their work helps them maintain their creative abilities as they progress in traditional school settings.

1-12 Consider not just what questions are asked, but also *how* those questions are phrased and presented to inspire divergent thinking.

Creativity is supported by divergent thinking, and asking open-ended questions that require children to think descriptively and imaginatively.

1-13 Integrate and apply the knowledge, skills, and willingness to adapt programs and activities to motivate children for creativity.

Identifying, respecting, and incorporating children's needs, interests, and feelings into activities will help keep them engaged and motivated. Some of the elements to consider when motivating children include working with friends, allowing children to set their own goals, providing variety, making sure activities are developmentally appropriate and challenging, and reinforcing creative behavior.

1-14 Develop a solid foundation for understanding the research that supports the need for vibrant arts education that develops creative, innovative, and accomplished students.

Along with art and creative experiences in general classrooms, research also suggests that robust and broadly accessible arts education throughout a school or district is a key factor in developing attitudes and skills that support academic success.

Key Terms

capital C creativity 4
convergent thinking 6
creativity 4
divergent thinking 6
hard thinking 8
positive acceptance 15
process over product 8
small c creativity 4
soft thinking 8

Learning Activities

Activities for Younger Children (Pre-K to Grade 3)

Creative thinking occurs when one imagines what might be, tries to think about ordinary things in unusual ways, or brainstorms different approaches to questions or problems. It's a good way to exercise creativity. Here are some exercises that allow children to experience this type of creative process.

- **Just Suppose**
  - "Just suppose" there is nothing made of wood in the room. What would change? What would things look like? What dangers might exist? What would you be unable to do?
  - "Just suppose" (try this with other people) you cannot use words, either written or spoken, for an hour. How

can you communicate? What is frustrating about it? What is pleasing about it? What would it mean if it continued for days?
- "Just suppose" you receive a million dollars and must spend it within two minutes. Make a list of ways to spend the money.
- "Just suppose" you were the first person to meet an alien from Mars and could ask only three questions. What would they be?
- "Just suppose" you could be any person in the world for one hour. Who would it be? What would you do?

- **Think About It**
  - List as many uses as you can (not related to building or construction) for a standard brick. Do not worry if some of them seem silly. The important thing is to think of using something in a new and different way. Try this exercise with a number of different objects: a nail, paper clip, key, belt, cup, book, or other objects.
  - What would happen if all people awakened tomorrow morning to find themselves twice as large, or covered in feathers?
  - Hand the children a piece of modeling clay, and ask them to imagine that they are the modeling clay.
  - Place a child in a different time and place. For example, ask a child to describe how they would cook a meal without electricity, silverware, dishes, and so on.
  - Ask a child to describe a problem or an event using pictures instead of words.
  - Ask the children to solve a problem using the most unusual solutions they can come up with.

- **Water Play Activities for Divergent and Creative Thinking**

  Water play lends itself to the development of creative thinking in young children. A creative teacher can extend the play of young children by asking thought-provoking, divergent-thinking questions, posing simple problems to solve with water and play objects. Some of these divergent-thinking questions follow.

  - Can you make a water shower for the plants?
  - Can you catch one drop of water on something? How many drops of water can you put on a jar lid?
  - Can we think of some words to talk about what we do with water or that tell what water can do? *(sprinkle, pour, drip, trickle, drizzle, shower, splash, stir, ripple, etc.)*
  - Could we collect some rainwater? How?
  - How far can you make the water spray?
  - Can you make something look different by putting it in water?
  - Can you find some things that float (or sink) in the water?
  - Can you make a noise in the water?

  Ask children some of the following questions to encourage their creative thinking.

    - What are some uses of water?
    - What floats in water?
    - How does water help us?
    - What always stays underwater?
    - What are the different colors that water can be?

  Follow up children's responses by encouraging them to draw, paint, or model in clay or play dough the ideas about water they experienced during this activity. Generate divergent questions about other topics such as fire, sand, smoke, and ice.

- **Space Explorers**

  When children need a "stretch," try one of these for fun.

  - Have children pretend they are on a planet in space where they are much heavier than they are on earth. Have them lift their arms as though they weighed twice as much as they do.
  - Have children pretend they are on the moon. Have them lift their arms as though they were very light—almost weightless. Also have children "float" across the floor.
  - Have children select a familiar activity such as dancing or moving to rhythms and carry out that activity on a strange planet, using slow motion because of increased weight.

- **Falling Leaves**

  In this activity, children explore nature's cycles as they recreate the path of a leaf. Use music with a slow, floating quality, such as "Autumn" from *The Four Seasons* by Antonio Vivaldi; "Honshirabe" by Kohachiro Miyata; "Cama-I" by Mary Youngblood; or "Prelude: The Atlas March" from *Cloud Atlas (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack)* by Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek, and Reinhold Heil. You will also need real or construction paper autumn leaves and a photograph or picture of an autumn tree.

  - Talk with children about how autumn affects leaves—how they change colors and then fall. Encourage children to move like a leaf as it twists and floats to the ground. Invite a few children to demonstrate some of these motions with their hands—for instance, reaching up high and slowly swaying down using both hands as if they were floating to the floor.
  - Create a "woods in fall" atmosphere by bringing in colorful leaves, or cutting them out of paper. Hold each one up, and then let it drop while children brainstorm words to describe its path. Write their words on a large piece of a chart paper.
  - Ask children to lift up their hands and copy the path of a floating, tumbling, twirling leaf. You may want to use some of their words from the previously mentioned chart. Then choose a space for them to recreate the path of a leaf with their bodies. Indicate the path by posting or drawing a picture of a tree at one end of the room and placing a leaf (for the leaf pile) at the other end.
  - Group children at the "tree" end of the room. Tell them that as they are playing falling leaves, they should start with their hands reaching up high into the

tree branches to show they are still attached to the tree, and then spin, sway, and float all the way to the designated leaf pile. Suggest that they start on tiptoe and gradually get lower and lower, crouching as they drift and twirl, until they are gently rolling along the floor toward the leaf pile.
- Put on the music and send the leaves on their way, one by one, with a tap for each. When all children have reached the leaf pile, ask them to relax and listen to the music. Repeat the activity, tapping each resting leaf when it's time to walk slowly back to the tree area and attach to the branches to begin again.
- Children also learn by watching each other. Have half the group watch the other half travel the leaf pathway. Add interest by asking the leaves to freeze their positions. Then ask the audience to notice and comment on the leaf shapes and places in their fall. Switch groups and repeat. Encourage children to try out any new movements they observed.

- **Circle Creations**
  - Have children find circle shapes in the room. Then have them draw circles of different sizes on their paper, doing at least five variations.
  - Next, have the children find five different ways to make circular shapes with their bodies. Tell them to hold each shape still as if they were having a photo taken. Ask them to try to repeat their five ideas.
  - Then, have the children discover with a partner five different ways to make circle shapes together. They might change the level from high to low, face different directions, or use different parts of their bodies.
  - Then, have the children do the same thing in a small group.
  - When finished, ask the children to describe the ways they formed circles. How did they create circular shapes with a partner or a group? How was making circles with a partner or group different from making circles alone?

- **Creative Construction**

  Gather a collection of recycled materials such as soup cans, oatmeal containers, cereal boxes, scraps of fabric and paper, glue, and scissors. Challenge the children to create buildings, creatures, designs, and so on from these recycled materials. For children in kindergarten and up, let them choose a theme, such as favorite animals or famous buildings and then use the materials to make creations along this theme.

- **Drawing for Creative Expression**

  Encourage children to use imagination in expressing their observations, ideas, and feelings through drawing. An excellent resource for creative drawing "starter" ideas is the series of *Anti-Coloring Books*, by Susan Striker and Edward Kimmel. Similar ideas to those from Striker and Kimmel are:

  - Draw a picture that shows how you would weigh an elephant.
  - Design a machine that makes peanut butter.
  - Draw a picture of a jelly bean factory.
  - Design an underground city.
  - Design a dog-exercising machine.
  - Draw a picture that shows how you would make your school a better place.
  - Draw as many animals as you can on one page—some real, some imaginary.
  - Draw a picture of something that can't be seen.
  - Draw a picture of an angry sea or a noisy city. The lines you make should help to express the mood of your picture.
  - Complete and then illustrate one of the following statements:
    - "If only I could . . . "
    - "Wouldn't it be strange if . . . "
    - "Can you believe I saw . . . "

Activities for Older Children (Grades 4–5)

- **Brainstorming Activities**

  What if? Divide the class into brainstorming groups of about 8–10 students each. Ask them to come up with the most unique "what if" question and answer they can think of. They are to start with "what if?" and finish with some unusual situation. For example: What if people didn't need to sleep? What if dogs could talk like people? After the groups have settled on their particular questions and answers, have the groups share their questions and answers.

- **Creative Problem-Solving**

  Break the students into groups of three. Name a problem with which everyone is familiar, for example, how to make cars more fuel efficient. Then assign each group a familiar figure from history, fiction, or current events, and have the group determine how that person would solve the problem. For example, how would George Washington Carver tackle the problem? What if Wonder Woman were to try it? Bart Simpson? As a starting point, suggest that the students consider what particular expertise the person would bring to the problem and what their objectives would be.

- **Five Whole Minutes—A Brainstorming Idea**

  Brainstorm with children a list of different things they think they can do in 5 minutes. Put the list aside. Have children do various things in 5-minute intervals (e.g., read, exercise, color, do math, walk, sit perfectly still, etc.). Discuss their reactions. Talk about time management and how 5 minutes can be used most effectively.

- **Looking at Things in New Ways**

  Artists develop their visual abilities by continuous practice and use. They practice by looking at things closely, drawing them, and recording them in their mind's eye. Have your students try some of these visual exercises to develop visual abilities.

- Draw a picture of something (such as a bicycle or a shoe) showing it from different views on the same page.
- Fill a page full of drawings of bugs, seashells, or something you collect.
- Examine an object for 1 minute. Put the object away. Then draw a picture of what you remember about it. When you've finished, look at the object again and see how much you remembered about it.
- Use a magnifying glass to draw enlarged views of water drops, hair, plant leaves, and other small items.
- Go through a magazine and cut out a picture of something you like or find interesting to look at. Draw a picture of this image—only turn it upside down. This will make you look closely at what you're drawing.
- Draw a family member or friend from memory.
- Sit under a tree and draw the tree from your point of view. Draw other things around your backyard (or school yard) from unusual points of view. Or take pictures instead of drawing in this exercise.
- Take off your shoe and examine it closely. Feel its contours, look inside, and turn it upside down. After you've done this, draw a picture of it. Try this with other common objects around you.

- **Take a Drawing Break**

  When you find you have 5–10 minutes to fill, have your students take a "drawing break" by drawing some of the following:

  - Your lunch
  - The teacher
  - A friend
  - Your hand holding something
  - A small object big
  - A car
  - A dream or a nightmare
  - A leaf
  - Yourself

- **Creative Problem-Solving—No Hands Allowed!**

  The objective of this activity is for students to use creative thinking and problem-solving skills to figure out ways to carry a variety of items without using their hands. In advance, gather together an assortment of large and small objects, such as cardboard boxes and stuffed animals. Set out the items for children to choose for the game.

  - Meet as a group and invite children to talk about different ways people carry large and small objects. Ask children to demonstrate how they would hold and carry a box. Then, challenge them to think of other ways they might hold and carry the same box.
  - Help children pair off and explain that each pair will work together to carry a cardboard box across the room. The only rule: No hands allowed!
  - Give a box to each set of partners and invite them to figure out different ways to lift and hold the box without using their hands.
  - After partners have had time to experiment, gather everyone together, along with the boxes, in an area with a lot of floor space. Ask partners to take turns carrying their boxes all the way across the room and back.
  - Invite partners to choose an object of a different size from among the assorted items you had set out earlier. Encourage children to work together to find an original way to transport the new item across the room and back. Encourage children to experiment with a variety of objects.
  - Now combine sets of partners so that children are working in groups of four. Challenge them to move an object or two, making sure that everyone touches the object without, of course, using their hands.

Activities for Teachers

- **Seven Sentences**

  Create seven sentences for which the seven-letter word *imagine* would be the acronym. All sentences should reflect in some way your thoughts about creative thinking, imagination, and ingenuity based on what you have learned by reading this unit. Example:

  - **I**deas should not be hoarded or hidden.
  - **M**any small solutions are necessary to solve big problems.
  - **A**ll people are born with the potential to be creative.
  - **G**ood ideas drive out bad ideas.
  - **I**nnovative ideas are resisted by "spectators."
  - **N**ever mind what others think—use your own judgment.
  - **E**njoy your fantasies—that's what they are for!

- **Creative Characteristics**

  Pick one or two characteristics associated with creativity that you want to increase in your own life. For example, you might want to become more open to experience or be more persistent. For a month, try to exercise that characteristic whenever you can. Record your efforts and see if you find that the characteristics can be changed.

- **Creative (Mis)Behavior**

  Creativity is not always expressed in school-appropriate ways. For one week, pay careful attention to students causing disturbances in your room. Do you see evidence of creativity in their behavior? Propose and explain ways you could channel that originality in other ways.

- **Product Personality**

  Name a brand name or specific product and imagine what kind of personality it would have if it were to become human. Be as descriptive as possible in your answer, including a list of personality traits as well as a physical description.

Story Fill-In

Ask a classmate to write down the start of what can be a story, such as, "Standing right next to the fire truck was. . . ." or "I had never seen such a. . . ." After this, ask for an end, such as "never again will this happen to me" or "this was the best party I've ever attended!" Now, you write the story that goes in between the beginning and ending sentences, but your challenge is to write a story completely different from what people would assume from the start. A variation on this activity is to ask someone to give you a random title and write a story about it. This can also be a good group activity as well.

Imagine It

- Imagine and draw the taste of chocolate.
- Imagine clouds had strings. What things would happen? What would you do?
- Imagine you could instantly change your age. What age would you be, and what would you do?

What If?

Choose a "what if?" from the following list, and then draw a picture or create a photomontage showing how life would be changed by this new condition.

What if . . .

- it rained shoes every day?
- animals had people for pets?
- you had a dragon for a next-door neighbor?
- cows could fly?
- people were magnetic?
- everyone lived on their own island?
- the oceans were made of chocolate pudding?
- every day at 2:00 p.m., gravity went away for 20 minutes?
- works of art came to life?
- nothing could be thrown away?
- all the art in the world was stolen by aliens?
- What if you are trapped inside a box? This box is made of planks of wood all nailed together on the outside very tightly. All you have with you is a bow and one arrow, a piece of cardboard, a crayon, and everything you are currently wearing. You can include whatever is in your pockets, except that you have no phone or other digital technology. Now, think of as many ways as possible for getting out of that box with only those items. How are you going to "step out of the box"?

Creative Project

One of the most interesting and effective ways to explore creativity is to undertake a creative project of your own. Identify a problem, and invent something to address it. Look around for everyday annoyances or dilemmas that you might solve. What things around you might be improved, simplified, or made more elaborate? Alternatively, you might want to undertake a creative writing project, artistic endeavor, or other creative task. Whatever you choose, record your thoughts, feelings, and activities. How do you feel about creativity as you contemplate such a project?

Fluent Thoughts

Practice fluency of thought with this game. Write five-word sentences from the five given letters GAMES, one word for each letter:

- Great Animals Make Everything Sensational.
- Giving Anonymously Makes Everyone Secure.
- Now see how many sentences you can produce in exactly 5 minutes. A small group version of this game can involve each member of the group contributing a sentence that builds a story, with each new sentence beginning with a successive letter of the alphabet.

Divergent Thinking

Practice your own divergent thinking by playing the activity, "In how many different ways?" described in this chapter. Use a variety of objects: a key, a Lego® block, a paper clip, a spatula, a paper cup. Compare your responses to those of several children.

- Also play the "Making things better" game described in this chapter, comparing your responses to those of several children. Whose responses—yours or theirs—best meet the criteria for being creative?

Shadows

Looking for Shadows. People usually don't pay much attention to things they see every day. A key to being creative, however, is noticing things that other people often miss. For example, most people don't bother to look at shadows. But once you start looking for shadows, you'll discover them everywhere. Looking at shadows is a good way to focus your vision and reacquaint yourself with the world around you. For this exercise, you'll need a flashlight and some way to take photos.

- Begin by studying the shadows of things in your room. Shine a strong flashlight on an object. Notice how the position of the light determines the size and shapes of the shadow.
- Go outside on a sunny day and concentrate on shadows. Watch the shadows of things moving around you. Notice how much detail you can see in shadows. If it's late afternoon, note how the shadows stretch out on the ground.
- Take photos of the shadows you see in your surroundings. Look for both familiar and unfamiliar shadows to record. Select your "best" shadow picture to hang on the class bulletin board.

Picture Books That Support Creative Activities and Divergent Thinking

Amazing Grace (1991) by Mary Hoffman, illustrated by Caroline Binch. Ages 5–8+ (positive acceptance for being creative).

Art and Max (2010) by David Wiesner. Ages 4–8 (positive acceptance for being creative).

The Artist Who Painted a Blue Horse (2011) by Eric Carle. Ages 3–5+ (divergent thinking).

A Bad Case of Stripes (2004) by David Shannon. Ages 3–7 (what if).

Beautiful Oops (2010) by Barney Saltzberg. Ages 3–8 (confidence in being creative).

The Book of Mistakes (2014) by Corinna Luyken. Ages 4–8 (confidence in being creative).

Boxitects (2020) by Kim Smith. Ages 4–7 (creative social play and use of materials).

A Child of Books (2016) by Oliver Jeffers & Sam Winston. Ages 5–8 (imagination and reading).

The Colors of Us (2002) by Karen Katz. Ages 4–8 (divergent thinking).

The Day the Crayons Quit (2013) by Drew Daywalt, illustrated by Oliver Jeffers. Ages 3–7 (divergent thinking).

Door (2018) by Jihyeon Lee. Ages 3–8 (what if, wordless picture book, creative language).

The Dot (2003) by Peter Reynolds. Ages 5–8+ (positive acceptance for being creative).

Hum and Swish (2019) by Matt Myers. Ages 4–8 (positive acceptance for being creative).

If I Built a School (2019) by Chris Van Dusen. Ages 5–8 (what if, divergent thinking).

Jingle Dancer (2000) by Cynthia L. Smith, illustrated by Cornelius Van Wright and Ying-Hwa Hu. Ages 4–8+ (creativity and culture).

Journey (2013) by Aaron Becker. Ages 3–8+ (art and imagination, wordless picture book).

King Bidgood's in the Bathtub (1985) by Audrey Wood, illustrated by Don Wood. Ages 2–6 (playful language and problem solving).

Ladybug Girl and Bumblebee Boy (2009) by Jacky Davis, illustrated by David Soman. Ages 3–7 (imaginative social play).

Lift (2020) by Minh Lê, illustrated by Dan Santat. Ages 4–8 (creativity and social emotional development).

Made by Maxine (2018) by Ruth Spiro, illustrated by Holly Hatam. Ages 5–8+ (active exploration and problem solving).

Martin's Hats (1984) by Joan W. Blos, illustrated by Marc Simont. Ages 4–8 (imaginative solo play).

The Most Magnificent Thing (2014) by Ashley Spires. Ages 3–7 (problem solving).

Nadia's Hands (2009) by Karen English, illustrated by Jonathan Weiner. Ages 5–8+ (creativity and culture).

The Napping House (1984) by Audrey Wood, illustrated by Don Wood. Ages 2–5 (what if).

Niko Draws a Feeling (2017) by Bob Raczka, illustrated by Simone Shin. Ages 5–8+ (art and social emotional development).

Not a Box (2006) by Antoinette Portis. Ages 2–5 (innovation).

Pish Posh Said Hieronymus Bosch (1991) by Nancy Willard, illustrated by Leo & Diane Dillon. Ages 5–8 (imaginative thinking).

Roxaboxen (2004) by Alice McLerran, illustrated by Barbara Cooney. Ages 4–8 (creative social play).

A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin (2013) by Jen Bryant, illustrated by Melissa Sweet. Ages 5–8+ (confidence in being creative).

Sulwe (2019) by Lupita Nyong'o, illustrated by Vashti Harrison. Ages 5–8 (imagination and social emotional development).

Weslandia (2002) by Paul Fleischman, illustrated by Kevin Hawkes. Ages 4–8 (imaginative play).

What If (2018) by Samantha Berger, illustrated by Mark Curato. Ages 4–8 (divergent thinking and innovation).

Willaby (1977) by Rachel Isadora. Ages 5–8 (positive acceptance for being creative).

Windblown (2013) by Édouard Manceau. Ages 3–7 (divergent use of materials).

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Chapter 2

Aesthetics: Definition, Theories, and Importance in the Early Childhood Environment

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Just as creativity is nurtured in the early childhood classroom, a child's aesthetic sensitivity—the sense of and appreciation for beauty in the world—is cultivated in much the same way. In this chapter, we explore the concept of aesthetics and the ways in which early childhood teachers can create an environment in which the young child's aesthetic sensitivity can blossom and grow.

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

- **2-1** Define aesthetics and how it relates to an early childhood environment.
- **2-2** Understand the theories related to aesthetic awareness.
- **2-3** List three things a teacher can do to help children develop their aesthetic sensitivity, and explain why this is important.
- **2-4** Recognize the five benefits of aesthetic sensitivity in children and explain the value of each.
- **2-5** Encourage children to go beyond art's functional aspects and find satisfaction in its aesthetic possibilities.
- **2-6** Recognize and be able to effectively implement activities and experiences that reflect art as an ideal means of enacting culturally responsive practice that honors heritage, community, and tradition.
- **2-7** List at least three art elements to discuss with children, and explain the importance of communicating thoughtfully with children about art and aesthetics.
- **2-8** Choose materials that have good aesthetic potential, and find ways to ensure children are using materials in meaningful ways.
- **2-9** Understand that children recreate their visual world through drawings, paintings, sculpture, music, movement, and mixed media as reflected by the culture around them.
- **2-10** Be able to arrange and display children's creative efforts in a manner that is aesthetically pleasing, and values their work.
- **2-11** Support parents in their awareness of, and support for, the creative efforts and developing aesthetic sensibilities of their children.

2-1 The Concept of Aesthetics: Definition and History

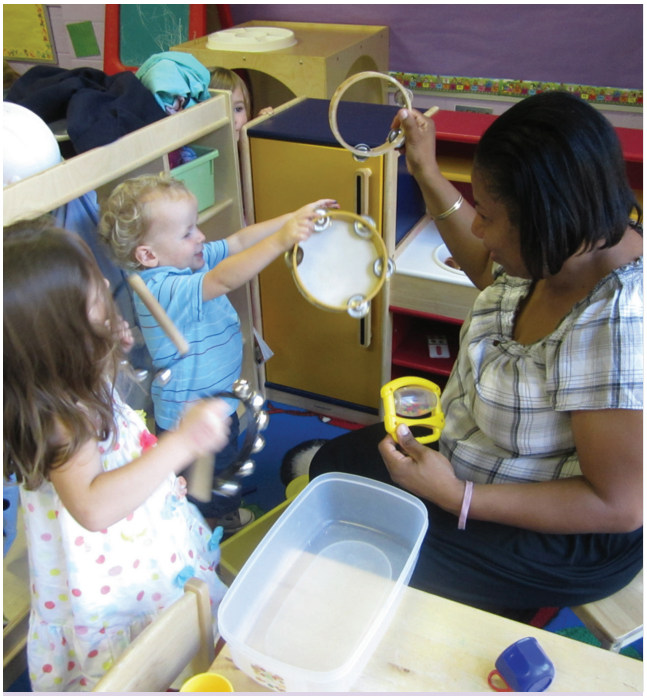
The term **aesthetics** refers to the recognition of and appreciation for "beauty," as defined by different individuals and cultures, and as reflected in various types of environments, objects, and experiences related to those individuals and cultures. **Aesthetic experience** begins with, and depends on, the senses. It is seeing colors in a sunset, hearing rhythm in a rainfall, and loving the expression on a person's face. Each person has an individual, personal sense of what is or is not pleasing, and different cultures have different perceptions and standards for what is considered aesthetically pleasing.

In the art world, the term *aesthetics* was invented or adapted from Greek by the German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten, whose work *Aesthetica* was published in 1750. In this particular work, the word was defined to mean the "science of the beautiful" or the "philosophy of taste" (Baumgarten). The **Aesthetic Movement** in the art world began in the later 1800s. By 1880, the Aesthetic Movement in the arts was a well-established fact and the name itself became a part of everyday speech.

In the center of the movement was a close-knit group of self-appointed "experts" who passed on to their followers standards of color, ornament, and form for all aspects of art. These standards were in direct opposition to the ornate Victorian style. The Aesthetic Movement preferred the simple and sensible over the ornate. One of the most influential figures of the whole movement was Oscar Wilde, who lectured and spread the word of the Aesthetic Movement. The famous painter, Whistler, was another supporter of the Aesthetic Movement (Art Story).

Aesthetic experiences emphasize doing things for pure joy and sensory satisfaction. There does not have to be any practical purpose or reason for doing something (although there can be). The goal of aesthetic experiences in the early childhood environment is to provide a foundation for a full, rich life for all children. You may take a ride in a car to feel its power and enjoy the scenery rather than to visit someone or run an errand. In the same way, a child plays with blocks to feel their shapes and see them tumble rather than to build something.

Young children benefit from aesthetic experiences. They love nature and enjoy creating, looking at, and talking about visual and performing art. They express their feelings and ideas through language, song, expressive movement, music, and dance far more openly than adults (see Photo 2-1). They are not yet hampered by the conventional labels used by adults to separate each art expression into pigeonholes. Young children experience the arts as a whole. They are creative, inquisitive, and delighted by a variety of arts experiences.



Casper Holroyd

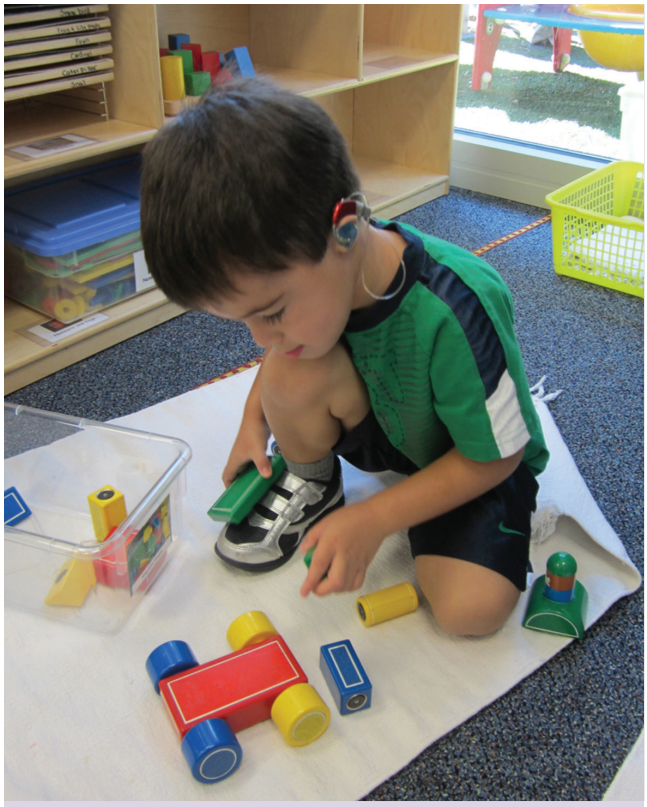
Photo 2-1 Opportunities for aesthetic experiences abound in the early childhood program.

While interactive and integrated arts experiences (such as **multimedia artwork** and performance) may be novel for even sophisticated adult artists, it is a familiar approach for young children. For instance, in early childhood programs, it is a common occurrence to find young children singing original songs while they paint or moving their bodies rhythmically while playing with clay. Young children naturally and unselfconsciously integrate the arts—weaving together graphic arts, movement, dance, drama, music, and poetry in their expressive activities (see Photo 2-2).

The capacity for aesthetics is a fundamental human characteristic. Infants sense with their whole bodies. They are open to all feelings; experience is not separated from thinking. A child's aesthetic sense comes long before the ability to create. All of an infant's experiences have an aesthetic component—preferring a soft satin-edged blanket, studying a bright mobile,

Casper Holroyd

Photo 2-2 Children grow in their aesthetic appreciation as they are actively involved in creative learning experiences.



Casper Holroyd

Photo 2-3 The capacity to make aesthetic choices continues to grow through preschool.

or choosing a colorful toy. These choices are all statements of personal taste. As infants grow into toddlers, the desire to learn through taste, touch, and smell as well as through sight and sound grows, too. The ability to make aesthetic choices continues to grow through preschool (see Photo 2-3). Preschoolers' ability to perceive, respond, and be sensitive becomes more obvious and more refined. This is obvious in their spontaneous creations using a wide variety of materials.

To develop an aesthetic sense in children, one must help them continuously find, respond to, and evaluate elements and effects of art and wonder in their world. This is the potential of every human being. To create, invent, be joyful, sing, dance, appreciate, and be amazed are possible for everyone.

Children sometimes respond to things in a way that is intended to please adults; teachers must realize this and the power it implies (Auzmendi et al., 1966). Teachers who prefer that children value art by the same standards as they themselves do are not encouraging a sense of aesthetics in children. It is only when children can choose and evaluate for themselves that they can truly develop their own aesthetic taste. Just as becoming literate is a basic goal of education, one of the key goals of all creative early childhood programs is to help young children develop the ability to speak freely about their own attitudes, feelings, and ideas about art.

Children gain an aesthetic sense by actively engaging in the world around them—that is, sensing, feeling, and responding to things. It can be rolling a ball, smelling a flower, petting an animal, or hearing a story. Aesthetic development takes place in secure settings free of competition and adult judgment.

2-2 Aesthetic Awareness in Young Children—Theorists' Views

Many theorists study and write about young children and aesthetics. As teachers of young children, it is important to be aware of this area of early childhood education and how it relates to classroom practice. The following summary of some of their ideas provides more ideas about young children's **aesthetic development** and how to enhance it.

Teaching young children ways to appreciate art is not the daunting task that it appears to be. At a

TeachSource Video

Infants and Toddlers: Cognitive Development and Imaginative Play

1. Using the material from your text, explain how the teacher in this video could expand the children's aesthetic experiences in her questioning about animals.
2. Discuss how this teacher could involve more of the children's senses in this activity.

very young age, children are quite capable of having an aesthetic experience on their own, whether it is the delight of mixing different-textured foods on the high chair tray or becoming visually engaged with a mobile suspended over the crib (Danko-McGhee, 2006).

When children express preferences for colors, shapes, sounds, tastes, and textures, they are actually making aesthetic choices. Long before young children can speak, their responses to shapes, colors, and other stimuli around them help to form their own special style of interacting with the world (Schirrmacher, 2005).

As young children grow, they continue to exercise their aesthetic senses while observing lines, textures, shapes, colors, and designs found in their environment. This includes images in picture books, artwork found in museums and in the popular media, and music in the car or at a concert. These aesthetic experiences provide a starting point for understanding that there is a "language of art" (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005, p. 4). Knowledgeable teachers can facilitate this learning process by helping them to recognize, name, describe, and respond to these experiences.

Developmentally appropriate ways of engaging young children in appreciating the arts include *play*, *conversations*, and *authenticating the experience* (Danko-McGhee, 2006). *Play* involves finding connections between an artwork and the child by using tangible objects. *Conversations* engage the child in talking about the artwork with a focus on language details. When viewing art, watching a play or dance, or listening to music or natural sounds and rhythms, adults can serve as role models for young children by using rich language to describe aesthetic qualities found in nature and in works of art. And finally, *authenticating the experience* guides children into related aesthetic activities. During this "appreciating" process, children develop their perceptual discernment. "Looking at, reflecting upon, creating, and experiencing art teaches, guides, and refines perception. True perception requires thought" (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005, p. 16).

Having an aesthetic experience is the result of being deeply affected by sensory perception and may help to increase some aspects of our cognitive (mental) abilities. Through sensory perception, we are prompted to reflect and think (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Eisner, 2002; Goodman, 1984; Parsons & Blocker, 1993; Siegesmund, 2000; Smith, 2002).

Aesthetic education need not be exclusive to art activities. Eisner (2002, p. 43) suggests: "Aesthetic experience is in no way restricted to what we refer to as the fine arts. . . . Aesthetic experience, therefore, is potentially in any encounter an individual has with the world."

Maxine Greene (2001) suggests that teachers follow the thoughts of Herbert Read and instruct students to experience what it "feels like to live in music, move over and about a painting, travel round and in between the masses of sculpture, dwell in a poem" (p. 302). We should teach our students to pay heed to and use their senses and feelings to understand the qualities of what is perceived in everything. In so doing, we should create more chances for students to find those "a-ha" moments by simply asking questions or calling attention to the elegance of uncomplicated tasks and everyday situations (Flannery, 1977).

Teachers can help their students to slow down, to smell the flowers in a garden, to listen to morning sounds, to catch and taste a raindrop, and to feel the texture on the classroom walls. Teachers can extend these lessons by allowing time for students to talk to their peers and write about, or express through art or performance, their feelings and responses to their

aesthetic experiences. Students begin to embrace authentic and meaningful learning as they come to realize that they are the agents that create these experiences, and they do not need to have something that an artist delivers to the classroom for passive appreciation (Heid, 2005).

2-3 Developing Children's Aesthetic Sensitivity

Aesthetic learning means joining what one thinks and does with what one feels. Through the arts, ideas and feelings are expressed. The arts are important because they can deepen and enlarge understanding. All children can develop an aesthetic sense—an appreciation for the arts, whether or not they may eventually become professional artists or performers.

Teachers can encourage the aesthetic sense in children in a variety of ways. For example, science activities lend themselves very well to beauty and artistic expression. Because children use their senses in learning, science exhibits with things such as rocks, wood, and leaves can be placed in attractive displays for children to touch, smell, and explore with all of their senses. With their senses, they can experience artistic elements such as line, shape, pattern, color, and texture in these natural objects.

2-3a Sensory Awareness

Sensory awareness is nourished by teachers who help young children focus on the variations and contrasts in the environment: the feel and look of smooth bark and rippling rough bark, the heaviness of rock and the lightness of pumice stone, the feathery leaf and the leathery leaf, the slippery marble and the sticky tar. Aesthetic appreciation of nature is not confined to the sense of sight. Appreciation of the outdoors may include listening to the song of birds, the smell of newly cut grass, or the soft feeling of moss on a rock. All these are opportunities for expression in the arts, poetry, sound, movement, and many other art forms.

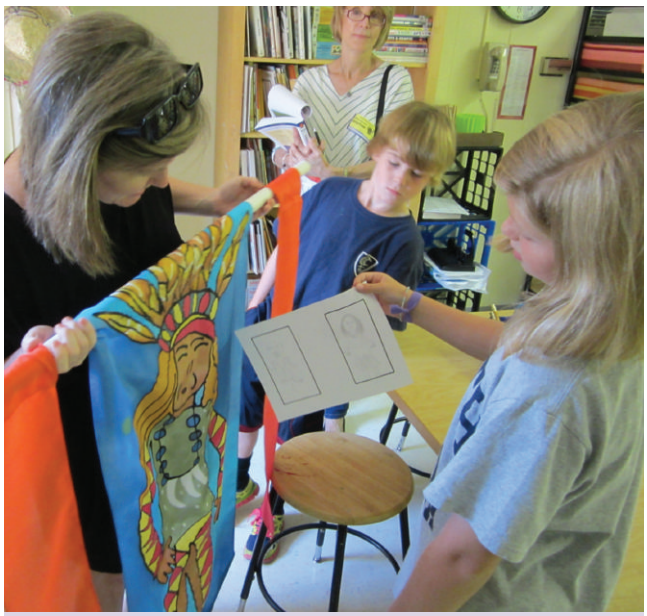
The arts are developed best as a whole. After hearing a story, some children may want to act it out. Some may prefer to paint a picture about it. Others may wish to create a dance about it, and some may want to make the music for the dance. These activities can lead to others. There should be a constant exchange, not only among all the art activities but also among all subject areas. This prevents children from creating a false separation between work and play, art and learning, and thought and feeling.

A teacher can invite, encourage, or stimulate children's aesthetic experiences by offering possibilities for firsthand, vivid personal perceptions with trips, resources brought into the classroom, and new materials and equipment, and by asking questions to encourage personal, felt responses.

Having one's interest and energy *invited* is not the same as being persuaded to move toward a goal predetermined by someone else. For example, holding up a model of a finished product may stimulate the child's desire to make one like it, or demonstrating how it is produced may invite the child's interest in seeing if they can do it, too (see Photo 2-4). Although these approaches are direct and fast ways to get a group of children to work, by themselves they *do not invite* the individual child to raise their own questions or to draw upon their own experiences and interests.

In the classroom, invitations to art work are often offered within a whole group context. Even in this setting, the effective teacher knows that meaningful aesthetic response is individual and freely given, and not always in line with a group project.

The early childhood environment can be set up in such a way as to encourage this type of aesthetic discussion by implementing the following suggestions.



Casper Holroyd

Photo 2-4 Provide children with many opportunities to look at and talk about art.

- In addition to the ready availability of art materials as a free choice, include books about artists in the environment and integrate them into activities.
- Include "real" art books. These do not necessarily have to be children's books; young children will enjoy looking at artwork in any book.
- Display art prints on bulletin boards and walls so that children can easily see them. Be sure to change them regularly. If they are up too long, they will quickly fade into the background.
- Include aesthetically interesting objects on the science table, where appropriate. Geodes, shards of pottery, and crystals are all good starting points.
- Include a variety of musical genres, artists, and cultural traditions for listening during rest time, in the background while children are working and playing, or for focused music activities.
- Invite guest art educators into the classroom to show children art objects to look at, touch, and talk about; performers to do a play, a dance, or a puppet show; or musicians to share their work for children to listen to.
- Give children an opportunity to choose their favorites from a selection of art prints or different types of music.
- Display art prints near the writing and art centers. Make sure images made available for children represent a diverse range of cultural styles and aesthetic forms, not just those that most people in the United States and Europe have historically considered to be "fine" art. Great art is not just the paintings or sculptures found in museums and galleries in the western hemisphere—cultures and civilizations around the world and across millennia have produced, and continue to create, amazing examples of aesthetic diversity.

2-3b Sensing, Feeling, and Imagining

There are basically three types of sensing and feeling. The first is ***external sensory*** perception, which means contact with the world outside of the person—actual sensory contact with things and events. It is seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching. The second is ***emotional and interoceptive*** perception, what people feel within themselves. This includes emotional reactions as well as what they experience within their bodies. Itches, tensions, muscular movements, hunger, bladder and bowel fullness, and other sources of pain or discomfort are all a part of this type of sensing. The third type of sensing and feeling goes beyond the present and/or physical reality. It is usually called ***fantasy*** and includes dreams, memories, images, and guesses.

For a child, each of these types of sensing and feeling is very important, and contributes to their developing aesthetic sensitivity. All three can take place during the same activity. Any one type can become more important than the other two, depending on what the child needs or wants at the moment. Most teachers are concerned about the child's sensory contact with the outside world. Children do many things that involve touching, seeing, and hearing; yet, what they feel inside and what they fantasize about are also important. The teacher must give attention to these two processes as well. They are part of **aesthetic sensitivity**.

2-3c Sensory Interactions

Children experience the world in many different ways, using all of their available sensory pathways. Children seek out what they need, but they also are drawn to what they find to be stimulating. Something can be stimulating to a child for many different reasons—because it is colorful, exciting, different, interesting, challenging, moving, unusual, and so on. Here are some basic guidelines for preparing a stimulating activity or object.

- **Can children experience it with more than one sense?** Children enjoy what they can touch, see, and hear more than something they can only see or hear.
- **Can children interact with it?** Children tend to enjoy what they can participate in (see Photo 2-5). For example, a picture of a donkey may be interesting, but can never replace the look, feel, and smell of a real donkey.
- **Are the children interested in it?** Younger children relate to what is familiar to them and part of their life, while older children can begin to consider things in a broader or more abstract context. Talking about a food that children have never eaten cannot produce the kind of discussion that comes when they talk about their favorite food, though it can open the door for trying new things or thinking about food in a

Photo 2-5 Children tend to enjoy what they can actively participate in.

2-4 Benefits of Aesthetic Sensitivity

An **aesthetic sense** does not mean, "I see," or "I hear." It means, "I am moved by what I see," or "I appreciate what I hear." It means that the child is using taste or preference. Aesthetic sensitivity is important for children because it is a crucial component of the creative process, in both the creation and the reception of works of art and performance (Tinio, 2019). Aesthetic sensibility in children has many other benefits, too.

- Children are more sensitive to problems because they have more insight into their world. This means they can be more helpful to other children and to adults.
- Children are more likely to be self-learners because they are more sensitive to gaps in their knowledge.
- Life is more exciting for children because they have the capacity to be curious and to be surprised.
- Children are more tolerant because they learn that there are many possible ways of doing things.
- Children are more independent because they are more open to their own thoughts. They are good questioners for the same reason.
- Children can deal better with complexity because they do not expect to find one best answer.

different way. In addition, even young children can be imaginatively captivated by things that they cannot physically "see" in their daily lives, such as dinosaurs and superheroes.

- **Is the activity well-paced?** Something that moves too quickly or too slowly may eventually lose a child's interest. Pay attention to how many children begin to fidget when the story is too long. Notice how children lose interest in toys that may appeal to adults but are too complex for children to use and enjoy, or are too simplistic or prescriptive, defining the play rather than allowing the children to bring their own imagination to the activity.
- **Does it promise to be rewarding?** Is the activity fun, adventurous, challenging, or exciting? Does it have something worthwhile at the end? Searching for a piece of a puzzle or looking for a hidden treasure is only fun if the children believe they can find it.

2-5 Promoting Aesthetic Experiences

Aesthetic experiences for young children can take many forms. They can involve an appreciation of the colors and sounds of nature, the rhythm and imagery of music or poetry, or the qualities of works of art. Far from being a specialized talent, the recognition of aesthetic qualities comes quite naturally to children.

People search their world for what is important to them. Individual perceptions are shaped by what a person needs, wants, and experiences. This is as true of preschool children as it is of adults.

Imagine that a group of people is taken into a room and asked to look around. The room contains a bed, and some food and a glass of water on a table. Those who are hungry are most likely to notice the food. Those who are thirsty will probably notice the water. Those who are tired will notice the bed. If one of them is a carpenter, they will probably take a closer look at the way the table is constructed.