

Joan Bouza Koster

Sixth  
Edition

# GROWING ARTISTS

Teaching  
the Arts to  
Young  
Children



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the Arts to  
Young  
Children

**Dr. Joan Bouza Koster**  
Broome Community College



Australia • Brazil • Japan • Korea • Mexico • Singapore • Spain • United Kingdom • United States

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# Preface

## Introduction to the Sixth Edition

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*The arts have always served as the distinctive vehicle for discovering who we are. Providing ways of thinking as disciplined as science or math and as disparate as philosophy or literature, the arts are used by and have shaped every culture and individual on earth. They continue to infuse our lives on nearly all levels—generating a significant part of the creative and intellectual capital that drives our economy. The arts inform our lives with meaning every time we experience the joy of a well-remembered song, experience the flash of inspiration that comes with immersing ourselves in an artist’s sculpture, enjoying a sublime dance, learning from an exciting animation, or being moved by a captivating play . . . Nurturing our children, then, necessarily means that*

*we must provide all of them—not just those identified as “talented”—with a well-rounded education that includes the arts. By doing so, we are fulfilling the college and career readiness needs of our nation’s students, laying the foundations for the success of our nation’s schools and, ultimately, the success of our nation.*

*(National Core Arts Standards: A Conceptual Framework for Arts Learning, 2013. p. 3)*

In recent years the arts have often been neglected in the curriculum, with the increasing focus placed on academic learning in English language arts and mathematics. However, with the development of the National Common Core Arts Standards attention has again turned to the immense importance of the arts in our lives. The NCCAS has set out the following lifelong goals for the education of artistically literate citizens:

1. **The Arts as Communication**—Be able to use a variety of arts media, symbols, and metaphors to create ways to communicate with others and in turn to be able to respond to the communication of others.
2. **The Arts as Personal Creative Realization**—Be competent in at least one art form and continue to be involved with that art form as an adult.

3. **The Arts as Culture, History, and Connection**—Know and understand the arts from diverse times and cultures and be able to identify patterns and connection between the arts and all areas of learning.
4. **The Arts as a Means to Well-Being**—Find joy, inspiration, peace, health, and life-enhancement through the arts.
5. **The Arts as Community Engagement**—Participate in and support the arts in their community, state, country, and the world.

Reaching these goals starts in infancy. Babies are born ready to respond to music, movement, story, and visual images. Therefore, caregivers and teachers play a tremendous role in nurturing children's artistic and creative potential. They do so by deciding actively to provide the best arts experiences they can for the children with whom they work, and by carefully planning those activities. *Growing Artists: Teaching the Arts to Young Children* provides the framework that early childhood educators need in order to design effective arts programs for children from infancy to age eight, which respect the individual pace of young artists. Throughout there is an emphasis on understanding how to foster children's development in the arts by offering open-ended arts activities and by creating a safe, sensory-appealing environment in which creativity will be nurtured. It presents an approach to arts education in which the inclusion of the visual arts, music, dance, and dramatic works created by diverse peoples and cultures is valued, and where arts activities are integrated into the total curriculum in a wide variety of engaging ways.

## What Is the Approach of this Book?

In order that this relationship between child artists and guiding adults can be deep and meaningful, this book provides a theoretical perspective, grounded in the work of Piaget, Vygotsky, Gardner, and Kindler, and suggests effective practices drawn from the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards and the National Association for the Education of Young Children's recommendations for developmentally appropriate curriculum.

## What Is the Plan of this Book?

This book is designed to be an easy-to-use resource for both those preparing to be early childhood teachers and those currently working in the field. The ideas, methods, and suggested practices found in each chapter provide a springboard for readers to design their own curriculum. As such, this book goes beyond the presentation of isolated "projects." It provides child-tested, traditional, and innovative open-ended arts experiences that serve as both a resource and model for those creating their own repertoire of activities.

To accomplish this, the book is divided into three sections of four chapters each, which address the interrelated areas of knowledge needed in order to successfully introduce young children from birth to age 8 to the arts. The first section, "Introduction to the Arts," presents the theory and practice upon which exemplary arts education is based. It looks at learning theory, creativity, developmentally appropriate practice (DAP), reflective teaching, and sensory development in young children. The second section, "Teaching the Arts," examines the components that make up a vibrant, inclusive arts program. It explains how to create an integrated arts program in a welcoming physical and social environment in which all children, including those from diverse backgrounds and those with special needs, can be successful. The third section, "Exploring the Arts," looks at the basic elements and concepts of music, creative movement, drama, and visual art, and presents ways to teach these to young children. The four chapters in this section are rich in activity ideas that show how to incorporate the theory, creative processing, developmentally appropriate practice, assessment methods, and inclusive teaching methods explained in the previous two sections.

Each of the 12 chapters is structured around learning objectives based on effective developmental appropriate practice. These provide a guide for meaningful reading and discussion. Here is an overview of each chapter and the new content for this 6th edition.

Chapter 1 sets the stage for developing a rich, integrated arts program for young children by introducing current research on how the arts influence young children's brain development and linguistic and social-emotional growth. It presents educational



theory as it relates to the development of young children and the teaching of art. It includes descriptions of exemplary programs and gives an example of how such a program would look in an early childhood program.

The ensuing chapters delve into topics related to the effective teaching of art to infants, toddlers, preschoolers, kindergarteners, and primary school students.

Chapter 2 introduces the creative process as a way of understanding why children create the art they do and as a framework for structuring arts activities to allow creative growth. It addresses the role of the teacher and positive ways teachers can respond to young artists in the context of creative development.

Chapter 3 reviews what is known about the artistic development of young children and identifies the physical and environmental factors that influence how children approach arts activities. Authentic assessment using a variety of methods, including portfolios, is provided.

Chapter 4 examines the sensory experience of the arts from infancy on and presents activities to develop children's sensory perception and their awareness of the arts elements in the environment around them. Creating a community of caring artists is addressed in Chapter 5, which focuses on how arts activities can enhance social growth. It presents practices that increase cooperative behaviors, accommodate children with special needs, use art to deal with bias, and provide holiday art activities that are inclusive and open-ended. How to create a setting conducive to the growth of children in the arts and how to present children's arts learning is detailed in Chapter 6. This chapter emphasizes the need to see the arts as an integral part of how both the indoor and outdoor teaching space is designed and arranged.

Chapter 7 provides exciting hands-on activities that open children's eyes to the varied artworks and performances created by musicians, dancers, actors, and artists from many cultures, times, and places. It provides information on organizing field trips and arranging guest artists' visits. Integrating the arts into the curriculum is the focus of Chapter 8, which offers ways to teach an arts-rich curriculum through emergent curriculum design, integrated teaching, multiple intelligences, and the project approach. Ways to celebrate learning with families are shared, including creating documentation panels and holding arts

celebrations. Chapter 9 introduces the teaching of the visual arts and provides practical ways to help children express themselves through drawing, painting, modeling, constructed sculpture, collage, printmaking, computer art, and the fiber arts.

Chapter 10 focuses on the elements of music and how to introduce young children to music making and appreciation through listening to music, playing instruments, and singing. In Chapter 11 creative movement and open-ended dance activities are explored. Finally, Chapter 12 examines the role of children's pretend play and the dramatic arts, including pantomime, guided imagery, narrative drama, and storytelling in the literacy development of young children and presents creative ways to foster dramatic play through puppetry, mask making, and performance.

## In-Text Features

Within each chapter, specific information has been highlighted in order to attract attention to important ideas, present supplementary material, and provide an easy reference for the reader. Look for the following featured material.



**Across Cultures.** Multicultural and bilingual issues are addressed in this section.



**Integrating the Arts.** Here will be found ways to incorporate the arts into other subject areas. Activities that integrate the arts into math, science, social studies, and language activities are suggested.



**Special Needs.** Suggestions are given for adapting arts activities to make them accessible to all children.

**Reflection Pages.** Each chapter ends with reflective activities designed to help readers think further about the information presented in each chapter. These include answering questions about personal beliefs and experiences, applying information from the chapter to real-life situations, and carrying out and reflecting on systematic observations in actual classroom settings.



**Teacher Tip.** This is a brief, practical idea that may prove helpful to teachers who are just starting out.



**Teaching in Action.** These descriptions of teaching illustrate how the ideas in this book work in the reality of the classroom. They are taken directly from practicing teachers' lesson plans, teaching journals, and taped interviews.



**Classroom Technology** Find suggested ways to incorporate digital media into the arts program here.



**Making Plans.** Throughout the book are sample activity plans designed to help beginning teachers better picture how arts activities are organized from beginning to end. Each plan details what to do and say as well as suggests authentic ways to assess the children's progress and is linked to similar model plans available through *Digital Downloads*.

**Teacher to Family.** Sample letters to families are included in many chapters to provide examples of the ways teachers should reach out to the families of the children they teach.

**Young Artists Creating** Short vignettes, based on the author's observations of real children in real situations, provide a vivid picture of the kind of child-art interactions most teachers can expect to find in their rooms. These vignettes lead into discussions of the philosophical basis and organizational needs of a creative and an open-ended arts program.

## New Features in the Sixth Edition

The following new features will be found in this edition :

**Arts for the Whole Child Chapter Web.** Each chapter opens with a graphic presentation of developmentally appropriate learning objectives related to the topics covered in the chapter. These objectives are based on the five key interrelated areas of DAP practice. (1) creating a caring community of learners, (2) teaching to enhance development and learning, (3) planning curriculum to achieve important goals, (4) assessing children's development and learning, (5) establishing reciprocal relationships with families (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). After completing the chapter,

students should be able to demonstrate how they can use and apply their new knowledge and skills.

**Standards Alignment.** A correlation chart to the latest NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation helps students make connections between what they are learning in the textbook and the standards. New and improved coverage of NAEYC and DAP standards includes callouts to help students identify where key standards are addressed in the text. These callouts, the Arts for the Whole Child Chapter Web, and the standards correlation chart helps students make connections between what they are learning in the textbook and the standards.


**Digital Downloads.** Digital Downloads include annotated lists of great children's literature, open-ended activity ideas for infants through primary age, charts, graphics, activity plans, web resources, and complete versions of the forms in the textbook for students to download, often customize, and use to review key concepts and in the classroom! Look for the Digital Downloads label that identifies these items.

**TeachSource Video Cases.** The TeachSource Video Cases feature footage from the classroom to help students relate key chapter content to real-life scenarios. Critical-thinking questions, artifacts, and bonus video help the student reflect on the content in the video.

In addition new material and resources have been added to each chapter as indicated here.


### Chapter 1: The Arts and the Young Child

- Importance of the 2013 National Core Arts Standards and the relationship with to National Common Core Standards**
- Introduction to intentional teaching**
- The arts and English-language learners**
- Up-dated discussion of NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practice for the Arts**
- New Teach Source Video Cases featuring the work of Piaget and Vygotsky**

 New *Digital Downloads* including the 2013 National Core Arts Standards and the Highscope developmental key.

 New *Photo Story*: An integrated arts unit: Ocean life

## Chapter 2: Nurturing Creativity

 New introduction to creativity and an expanded section on the definition of creativity


 New section on the importance of creativity


 New section on creativity and play


 Expanded definition of open-ended activities

 Increased coverage of flow, its importance, and ways to nurture it


 Using soliloquy for language development


 New research on the importance of teacher-child verbal interactions


 Coverage of ways to set the stage for creativity using brainstorming, uncertainty, and other practices


 New materials on creativity and children with special needs

 In-depth discussion of intentional teaching

 New section on thinking about thinking and using thinking routines in responding to the arts.


 New *Teach Source Video* Case examining state requirements and the effect on children's creativity


 New *Digital Downloads* including a Creative Process Wheel and an annotated list of children's literature celebrating creativity


 New *Photo Story* An emergent child-initiated project: A playground for our mouse

## Chapter 3: Artistic Development

 Updated coverage of Developmentally Appropriate Practice


 Expanded coverage of cultural and environmental influences on artistic development and the importance of valuing home cultures

 Updated coverage of assessing children's growth in the arts

 Updated and expanded coverage of using observation tools, digital and online media, and digital portfolios in assessment

 Expanded coverage of how to practice reflective teaching


 New *Teach Source Video* Case illustrating progress monitoring


 New *Digital Downloads* including an example of a digital portfolio and reflective assessments


 New *Photo Story* :Viewing individual development: At the playground


## Chapter 4 : Awakening the Senses

 New research on sensory perceptual development and the effectiveness of sensory deprivation


 New focus infancy and the importance of experiences with the arts from birth

 New research on brain development and ways to build focus and deep meaning through the arts

 New arts activities to promote sensory perceptual development and selective attention in infants and children with special needs


 New *Digital Downloads* including examples of sensory stimuli and annotated children's literature featuring the elements of the arts


## Chapter 5: Coming Together Through the Arts

 New research on socio-emotional development and the role of the arts in creating a positive social-emotional environment

 Expanded section on socio-emotional skills and children's play

 Updated discussion of positive guidance

 Expanded coverage of organizing and facilitating group arts activities including examples

 Updated modifications for children with special needs in the arts

- New coverage of using digital technology to capture the creative process
- New section on cultural differences and respecting family cultures using a multicultural lens
- Expanded discussion of the use of food products in arts activities
- New *Teach Source Video* Case illustrating the different stages of play
- New *Digital Downloads* including community building arts activities and annotated children's literature that celebrate working together
- New *Photo Story*: We all have feelings

### Chapter 6: Creating a Place for the Arts

- Updated coverage of Developmentally Appropriate Practice in designing positive learning environments
- Updated and expanded coverage of the aesthetic design of the instructional space
- New section on designing outdoor spaces to include the nature and arts
- More coverage of how open-ended "intelligent" arts materials should be organized and presented, particularly to infants and toddlers
- New discussion of the use of computers and other digital media in early childhood classrooms
- Expanded discussion of ways to share children's arts activities with families
- New *Teach Source Video* Case illustrating the Reggio Emilia Approach to environment
- New *Digital Downloads* including planning outdoor learning centers and rubrics for assessing the arts environment
- New *Photo Story*: An emergent project: An addition to our school

### Chapter 7: Introducing the Worlds Arts

- New coverage of the foundational guidelines of National Core Arts Standards and ways to respond aesthetically to the arts








- New coverage of the Common Core ELA Curriculum and artistic works as texts
- New discussion of what engagement with the arts looks like and expanded ways to increase that engagement
- Updated coverage of making selections for musical and dance experiences
- New focus on the teacher as mediator of the arts
- Expanded section on how to talk to children about artistic performances and how to incorporate literacy development through aesthetic responsive activities
- New Section on audience etiquette
- New *Digital Downloads* including making a big book about the arts and children's books about the arts of other cultures
- New *Photo Story*: At the Museum

### Chapter 8: Integrating the Arts into the Classroom











- Coverage of the value of cultivating the interests of children
- New examples of how to connect the arts and literacy activities
- New focus on creating documentation panels
- New *Teach Source Video* Case on connecting the arts and mathematical knowledge
- New *Digital Downloads* including a continuum of teaching interactions and examples of integrated units and activity plans
- New *Photo Story*: Documenting an emergent project

### Chapter 9: Creating Visual Art







- Expanded sections on children's development in two- and three-dimension visual art
- More focus on visual art activities for infants and toddlers
- New sections of reading and responding activities for each art medium with questions to ask about each.

-  Revised section on fiber arts
-  New coverage of the NAEYC position on technology and young children with an expanded look at the benefits and disadvantages of using digital
-  Updated section on digital art media
-  Expanded coverage of modeling activities for infants
-  More suggestions for construction activities
-  Ways to connect visual art activities and the Common Core Standards in ELA and mathematics
-  New *Digital Downloads* including suggested activities, model activity plans, children's literature about the visual arts, and listings of digital media resources








## Chapter 10: Making Music

-  Expanded coverage of the elements of music
-  Expanded discussion of the ways children develop musically based on current research in the field
-  Increased coverage of music activities for infants and toddlers
-  Expanded sections on listening activities and rhythm activities
-  Ways to connect music activities and the Common Core Standards in ELA and mathematics
-  New section on ways to share music activities with families
-  New coverage of music software
-  Expanded coverage of adapting music activities to children with special needs, including the use of assistive technology
-  New sections on reading, writing, and talking about music, rhythm, musical instruments, and singing
-  New *Digital Downloads* including suggested activities, model activity plans, children's literature about music, and directions for making musical instruments







## Chapter 11: Moving Creatively

-  New coverage of the Common Core Standards in the Arts for dance and the core processes
-  Expanded coverage of the elements of dance
-  Expanded coverage of children's development in dance
-  New section on developmentally appropriate practice and the role of the reflective teacher
-  New coverage of assessing proficiency in creative movement activities
-  Expanded coverage of open-ended creative movement activities
-  New coverage of technology and digital media and dance
-  New coverage of reading about, responding to, and connecting with dance
-  Expanded coverage of ways to teach children how to respond to arts performances and make connections between the arts and their own lives
-  New *Digital Downloads* including a Circle of Dance graphic, movement starters, suggested activities, model activity plans, suggested music for dancing, and children's literature on dance.

## Chapter 12: Nurturing the Imagination

-  New coverage of the Common Core Standards in the Arts for the theater arts
-  New section on the elements of drama
-  New section on the relationship between children's play and the dramatic arts
-  New coverage and research on children's play, flexible thinking, and the brain
-  Expanded section on adapting dramatic play activities for children with special needs and to address bias
-  New section on teachers' role in children's play
-  Increased focus on open-ended, playful activities for infants and toddlers



-  Expanded coverage of improvisational experiences
-  New section on responding to dramatic performances
-  Expanded coverage of ways to teach children how to respond to arts performances and make connections between the arts and their own lives.
-  New section on using dramatic activities to assess children's growth
-  New *TeachSource Video* Case on the teacher's role in children's imaginative play
-  New *Digital Downloads* featuring a continuum of teacher roles in children's play, suggested dramatic activities, model activity plans, puppetry resources, prop boxes, finger plays, and dramatic play center designs

## Appendices

-  Expanded coverage of recipes for safe, effective arts materials

## Appendices

The following information has been presented in the form of appendices for ease of use.

**Appendix A: Safety guidelines.** These guidelines detail ways to make arts activities safe for young children. It includes a table of substitutions for hazardous arts supplies.

**Appendix B: Planning arts activities.** This section explains the purpose of activity planning and provides guidance in writing an arts-based activity plan. Placing this information in an appendix allows readers to find it quickly and easily when writing plans, and permits instructors to introduce activity plan designs at the point they feel best fits their instruction.

**Appendix C: Teacher resources.** A list of updated sources for the special art supplies, computer software, art prints, and artifacts mentioned in the text.

**Appendix D:** An expanded resource of teacher-tested recipes for arts activities.

**Glossary.** A listing of terms used in the text. These terms are highlighted in bold the first time they appear in the text.

## Ancillary Materials

### Instructor Resources

Cengage Learning's Education CourseMate brings course concepts to life with interactive learning, study, and exam preparation tools that support the printed textbook. CourseMate includes the eBook, quizzes, Digital Downloads, TeachSource Video Cases, flashcards, and more—as well as EngagementTracker, a first-of-its-kind tool that monitors student engagement in the course. The accompanying instructor website, available through [login.cengage.com](http://login.cengage.com), offers access to password-protected resources such as PowerPoint® lecture slides and the online Instructor's Manual with Test Bank. CourseMate can be bundled with the student text. Contact your Cengage sales representative for information on getting access to CourseMate.

### PowerPoint® Lecture Slides

These vibrant Microsoft® PowerPoint lecture slides for each chapter assist you with your lecture, by providing concept coverage using images, figures, and tables directly from the textbook!

### Online Instructor's Manual with Test Bank

An online Instructor's Manual accompanies this book. It contains information to assist the instructor in designing the course, including sample syllabi, discussion questions, teaching and learning activities, field experiences, learning objectives, and additional online resources. For assessment support, the updated test bank includes true/false, multiple-choice, matching, short-answer, and essay questions for each chapter.

### CourseMate

Cengage Learning's Education CourseMate brings course concepts to life with interactive learning, study, and exam preparation tools that support the printed textbook. Access the eBook, Did You Get It? quizzes, Digital Downloads, TeachSource Video Cases, flashcards, and more in your Education CourseMate. Go to [CengageBrain.com](http://CengageBrain.com) to register or purchase access.



## Digital Downloads

Digital Downloads include information and complete versions of the forms in the textbook for students to download, often customize, and use to review key concepts and in the classroom! Look for the Digital Downloads label that identifies these items.

## Did You Get It? Quizzes

Did You Get It? quizzes allow students to measure their performance against the learning objectives in each chapter. Questions encourage students to go to CengageBrain.com, take the full quiz, and check their understanding.

## TeachSource Video Cases

The TeachSource Video Cases feature footage from the classroom to help students relate key chapter content to real-life scenarios. Critical-thinking questions, artifacts, and bonus video help the student reflect on the content in the video.

## What Do the Terms Mean?

### Young Artist

In this book, young artist (or child) is used to refer to children from birth to eight years old. This age range is based on the mode of delivery for art education in our society. Most children ages eight and under are in settings such as child care, preschool, nursery school, play groups, kindergarten, primary programs, or at home, where art activities take a wide range of directions depending on the training and knowledge of the adult in charge.

In addition, these years also form an artistically and conceptually unified whole, because during this span children develop their first graphic symbol system through art. Children in the midst of this process need a nourishing environment in which to explore the arts.

## Educational Settings

Programs for young children meet in many different locations, from private homes and church basements to public and private school buildings. For simplicity, classroom refers to the inside area used by the children, and outdoor area refers to any contiguous outside play area. Adaptations are included for activities in the home, as are suggestions about when to use the outdoor area.

## Guiding Adults

Throughout the text, guiding adult is used interchangeably with teacher, parent, aide, and caregiver. The role of the adult in the arts is to be a guide—someone who selects and prepares the supplies, maps out the possible routes, provides encouragement along the way, takes time for side trips, and celebrates each milepost the child reaches.

## About the Author

Joan Koster is an instructor in early childhood education at Broome Community College, Binghamton, New York, and holds degrees in art education and elementary education from Adelphi University and Temple University, and a doctorate in education from Binghamton University. Over the past 43 years, she has taught art at all levels, from preschool through college. She is the author of *Bringing Art into the Elementary School Classroom* and *Handloom Construction: A Practical Guide for the Non-Expert*. Her work in early childhood education has been published in various journals, including *Young Children*, and she has presented numerous workshops to teachers' organizations. In addition, with her family she operates a small sheep farm in upstate New York and is a professional hand-weaver, whose uniquely dyed work has been exhibited and marketed widely.





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# Section 1



## Introduction to the **ARTS**





# Chapter 1

## The Arts and Young Children



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Understand how an effective creative arts program builds group cohesiveness and classroom community.

Creating  
a Caring  
Community

Design creative arts curricula based on developmentally appropriate practice, learning theory, and learning standards.

Planning  
Curriculum  
to Achieve  
Important  
Goals

**The Arts and  
Young Children  
DAP Learning  
Objectives**

Establishing  
Reciprocal  
Family  
Relationships

Explain ways that teachers can use the creative arts to foster relationships with families.

Teaching  
to Enhance  
Development  
and Learning

Explain why the creative arts are important for young children's development.

Assessing  
Children's  
Development  
and Learning

Evaluate creative arts curricula using developmentally appropriate guidelines and compare to exemplary arts curriculum.

## Young Artists Creating

Maria, age one, pulls her finger through a drop of spilled cereal and then licks her finger.

Steve, age two, hums a tune as he amuses himself during his bath by decorating the tub with handfuls of bubbly white soap foam.

Lorna, age four, splashes through a puddle and then with careful deliberation makes a pattern of wet footprints on the pavement. With every step she looks back to see her "trail."

Paul, age six, spends a busy day at the beach building sand mountains and decorating them with broken shells and beach pebbles. Other children join in his fun and watch excitedly as the surf slowly creeps up and then finally washes each mountain away.

### Who Are the Young Artists?

Each of these children is a young artist, investigating elements of the arts—line, shape, color, texture, form, movement, melody, rhythm, and pattern. They are making the same artistic discoveries and decisions that all of us have made in our own lives. In doing so, they are repeating a process that has gone on as long as people have inhabited the earth. Like the circles, swirls, and lines on the walls of the caves and cliffs that were the canvasses of the earliest humans, the stone-smoothed satin black pot of a Pueblo potter, the intense sound of a jazz musician, and the flowing movement of a Chinese lotus dancer, the art of young children expresses their personal and cultural history. Their art reflects who they are at this moment in time.

Children from birth to age eight are busy discovering the nature of their world. They are not consciously artists in the way an adult is. They do not stop and say, "Now I am creating a piece of art." They are not creating a product—they are involved in a process!

They are at play. They enjoy manipulating the many materials that they find around them and expressing their creative power to change a piece of their world. In doing so they communicate their feelings and what they are learning. As they learn, they grow and develop.

In this process they gain control over their large and small muscles. Their skill in handling their bodies and artistic tools improves. Their repertoire of lines,



When young children create artwork, they are communicating their thoughts and feelings with the skills and knowledge that they have at that moment of time. In this tempera painting, Tyler, age four, explores ways to make lines, spots, and colors with his brush, just as artists have for thousands of years.

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shapes, sounds, movements, and patterns expands. They repeat their successes over and over and learn to use artistic symbols that have meaning not just to themselves but also to others around them. By the time these young artists reach age eight, they already know a great deal about the world of creative expression.

But these growing artists are also still very young. They do not yet have skillful control over their bodies and the materials they use. They make messes. They

sing out of tune and bump into things. They cry if they spill paint on their shoes.

Young children have short attention spans and are infinitely curious. They get distracted by a noise and run off, leaving their paintbrush in the middle of their picture. They do not always do things in an orderly sequence. Sometimes they glue their paper to the table. Sometimes they drop clay on the floor and unintentionally step on it when trying to pick it up. Anyone working with these children soon learns that great patience is needed.

But most importantly, each child is unique. As young as they are, they each bring to the creative arts experience their own personalities as well as their family and cultural heritage. Some are timid. Others are bold. Some have listened to many folktales and others have heard none. Some have been surrounded by music from birth, and others have rarely heard a tune. One child may have been taught not to get dirty and will not touch fingerpaint, while another child revels in being as messy as possible and smears paint up to the elbows. Children grow at their own pace, but through sensitive planning of creative arts experiences, each child can find his or her personal joy and growth through the arts.

### Did You Get It?

Young children from birth to age eight most resemble adult artists when they:

- a. display a short attention span
- b. create a product
- c. play with materials
- d. make messes

[Take the full quiz on CourseMate](#)

## What Are the Creative Arts?

The arts exist in all societies and have been part of human existence since prehistoric times. Ellen Dissanayake (1995) points out that art creation is taking ordinary things and making them special. She argues that making art is part of being human—a normal behavior in which all people participate. Jessica Davis (2008) notes that as long as people have made tools

they have also made art. Through the creative manipulation of visual, auditory, dramatic, and spatial elements, the arts express the history, culture, and soul of the peoples of the world, both past and present.

## A World Without the Arts

The arts are so much a part of our lives that we can recognize their existence only by imagining their absence. Envision our homes and clothing without patterns, textures, and colors; our books without stories; advertisements without pictures; a drive in the car without music; and our feet never dancing to the rhythm of a pop tune. Their purpose can be practical—as in the interior design of a home; communicative—as in an illustration or a television advertisement; or aesthetically and spiritually expressive—as in the swirling colors of a Van Gogh painting or the power of a Beethoven symphony.

In the same way, the creative arts are a part of every activity we offer children, through the clapped rhythms we use to catch their attention, in the box of blocks we give them to build with, and in the picture books we choose to read to them. The colors, textures, and forms of the toys we purchase, the pictures we hang on the walls, the patterns on our floors, and the sounds and rhythms they hear all form the artistic environment of the child. The arts surround us constantly. We can choose to ignore them, or we can select activities for children with an awareness of the role the arts play in our lives.

## The Unique Arts

All of the arts incorporate creative problem solving, playfulness, and the expression of feelings and ideas. The term **the arts** encompasses all the different ways of doing this. In this text, the term **art form** is used to refer to the unique disciplines of creative movement or dance, drama, music, and visual art. However, these art forms should not be viewed as static, rigid categories. What makes them powerful is that they are expansive, and complementary, readily intermingled to create something new.

## Creative Dance

**Creative dance** explores the movement and position of the body in space. Children involved in creative movement activities discover ways to physically control



and coordinate the rhythmic movement of their bodies in a specific environment, alone and in cooperation with others. Specific information on creative dance and how to introduce young children to creative movement activities is provided in Chapter 11.

## Drama

**Drama** is based on the presentation of ideas and actions through pantomime, improvisation, play acting, literature, and storytelling to create a visual and auditory performance. Dramatic activities and dramatic play engage children in verbal and physical communication through imitative role behavior, make believe, and social interaction with real and imaginary others. Chapter 12 presents many ways to interact with children through the dramatic arts and play.

## Music

**Music** is organized sound. Music activities provide opportunities for children to learn how to control and respond to voices and instruments as they create rhythmic and melodic patterns through song and sound. Chapter 10 looks at ways to increase children's skill in listening to music, making music, and creating music.

## Visual Arts

The **visual arts** draw on visual and tactile elements in order to communicate ideas and feelings. Children involved in visual arts activities use hand-eye coordination as they become skilled at manipulating materials and tools in symbolic ways. Two-dimensional and three-dimensional art activities for young children are provided in Chapter 9.

### Did You Get It?

**Creative dance, dramatic play, music, and visual art all share which feature?**

- a. colorfulness
- b. playfulness
- c. story structure
- d. sound play

[Take the full quiz on CourseMate](#)

## Why Should the Arts Be Taught to Young Children?

We need to teach the arts to young children, first of all, because the arts are an integral part of our lives as human beings. Second, and just as important, the arts help children grow and develop into learners who are stronger in the key developmental areas—intellectually, linguistically, physically, emotionally, perceptually, socially, and creatively.

## The Arts Stimulate Intellectual Growth

Because the arts are multisensory and interactive, they are an ideal way to help young children develop **cognitively**. Infants are born ready to make sense of the world. From birth, their brains absorb and process sensory and spatial information. Billions of neural connections grow rapidly as the child interacts with the environment. The arts can play an important role in enhancing this process.

**The arts enrich learning.** Eric Jensen (2005, 2008) suggests the following ways to strengthen learning based on recent brain research.

1. **Provide multisensory, interactive activities.** Because the brain is capable of simultaneously processing information from many senses, we learn best when sensory, visual, and spatial information are combined. Providing hands-on arts activities stimulates the senses and makes learning more memorable.
2. **Create an enriched environment.** Young children, and infants in particular, constantly seek stimulation and are attracted to novelty—loud noises, sudden movements, bright colors, and unique textures. Unusual events call forth excitement and curiosity. Enriched learning environments have been found to have a positive effect on brain development, physically changing the brain. Animals provided with many toys, for example, develop more brain connections than animals in bare environments (Carey, 2002, p. 11). Hanging intriguing artworks on the wall for children to look at, singing a wide variety of songs, offering intriguing props for dramatic play, and providing

colorful, tactile art materials for them to explore are ways to enrich the learning environment and foster young children's brain development.

3. **Establish connections.** Searching for meaning is an innate process. The brain constantly examines incoming information, finding and creating patterns as it creates links to previous experiences. We help children learn when we draw on what they already know and present new information in integrated ways, such as when after a trip to the supermarket we set up a play store so that children can learn more about money through their dramatic play.
4. **Build on individual interests.** Every child is unique. A child's memories are constantly changing as new connections are made between past experience and incoming information. Making and talking about their creative work is a positive way for children to share what they know and like. Based on what they tell us, we can create a more personalized curriculum.

**The arts help children develop logical thinking.** To grow intellectually means to become skilled at finding patterns, organizing them logically, and using reasoning to solve problems.

For example, arts activities invite counting, sorting, and classifying. Through questioning, children involved in arts activities can become aware of numerical concepts. They can count the number of flowers they have drawn. They can graph the shapes in their collages and sort the leftover paper scraps by color. They can represent the rhythm of a song with symbols, or map the pattern in the steps in a dance.

Well-designed arts activities require children to make their own decisions and to order their behavior to accomplish a goal. Children who are busy creating develop skill in planning and sequencing. They learn that they must put glue on the paper before attaching the piece of yarn. They must dip the brush in the water to clean the paint off of it. They must beat the drum in a regular pattern if they want to follow the rhythm of the song. They must move their arms in a special way to imitate flapping wings. When they are done, they must put their artistic tools in the proper place so they will be ready to use again.

Arts activities provide children with experiences in identifying how properties change and in discovering



By participating in creative movement activities, these young children are not only increasing physical control over their bodies in space, but are also improving their health and well-being.

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examples of cause and effect. Visual arts activities allow children to examine the properties of different substances—sticky glue, damp clay, shifting sand. Music activities let children play with changes in pitch, rhythm, and dynamics. Cause and effect are discovered when children explore how their fingers can change the shape of their play dough, or discover that spinning around makes them feel dizzy. Through discussion and questioning, we can help children formulate math and science concepts about these results.

## The Arts Are a Child's First Language

Long before they can put their ideas into spoken and written words, children can demonstrate their concept of the world through the arts. It is through the creative exploration of their bodies, the materials and tools of the art form, and the environment that child artists begin to develop visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and graphic symbols with which to represent their thoughts.



Children's language abilities are enhanced through the arts in many ways.

1. **Listening.** All of the arts require children to attend carefully to directions in order to be successful.
2. **Communicating.** Children share their art creations in a variety of ways—some nonverbally, some through sound effects or movements, and others with intricate oral explanations and stories. This is an important part of language development—the prewriting stage.
3. **Vocabulary.** Children learn new words and develop fluency when describing arts materials, processes, their own work, and the works of others.
4. **Symbolically.** Between the ages of two and eight, children acquire the ability to make symbols and learn that these symbols can communicate to others. Children develop writing skills by creating a graphic symbol system to record their inner and outer observations. When children are asked to respond creatively in response to an experience, they are being challenged to communicate their ideas and thoughts in a symbolic mode. Responsive arts activities, such as imitating the movement of animals after a visit to the zoo and then talking or writing about it or keeping an illustrated journal, help them use this developing symbol system and refine the nature of their communication.



## Special Needs

### • ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS [ELLs] AND THE ARTS •

Because the arts are a nonverbal way to communicate feelings and ideas, arts activities are an ideal way to integrate non-English speaking children or those beginning to learn English into the community of the classroom. Directions for many arts activities can be given through modeling, physical clues, and hands-on demonstrations. Activities that are open-ended with no preconceived correct responses and that incorporate an element of play can allow ELLs to develop self-confidence and to gain acknowledgment from peers. For example, creative movement allows all children to express themselves nonverbally, so it provides an ideal communication tool for children who are nonnative speakers or who have trouble expressing themselves orally (Koff, 2000).

## The Arts Improve Physical Well-Being

Physical activity promotes fitness and health. This is particularly important at a time when our children are becoming increasingly sedentary. A 2006–2007 study found that 20 percent of two-year-olds watch two or more hours of television a day, which can lead to childhood obesity and slowed development (Kent, Murphy & Stanton, 2010, p. 837; Louv, 2008, p. 7).

The arts are a motivating way to get children moving. Arts activities help children improve their ability to control large and small muscles and refine hand-eye coordination. An infant shaking a bell, a preschooler jumping up and down to music, and a first grader acting out a nursery rhyme are all learning to manage the way their bodies move.

Soft, pliable play dough and clay improve finger strength. Using brushes at an easel develops control of the arm and wrist. Large and small muscles are exercised and challenged through the manipulation of materials and tools when children stack blocks or tap a rhythm on a drum. Cutting a shape from paper or placing a leaf in a dab of glue requires the eye and hand to work together. Creative movement activities, such as imagining one's body as clay that can be made into different shapes, help the child relate physical movement and concepts. Listening to different types of music has been shown to slow down or speed up a person's heart rate and lower blood pressure (Using music, 2009).

## The Arts Foster Emotional Well-Being

The arts have always been valued for the self-expression they can provide. However, their importance in emotional health goes far beyond this. Purposeful and playful physical movement, such as is found in arts activities, improves emotional well-being by causing the brain to release mood-altering chemicals, such as endorphins, which can heighten attention and provide a sense of well-being.

This is supported by current research on the effect of creative arts expression on healing. Heather Stuckey and Jeremy Noble (2010), in a summary of research done between 1995 and 2007, found a strong connection between each of the art forms and emotional well-being.

**Music**—Music, which is the most researched of the arts, can control pain and restore emotional balance.

**Visual Arts**—Visual art allows people to express feelings and thoughts that are difficult to put into words, such as grief, fear, and anxiety. Overall, creating visual art was found to be a positive activity that provided release from anxiety-producing situations, such as severe pain and health issues.

**Creative Movement**—Creative movement not only improves physical condition but also improves self-awareness and body image.

**Drama**—Theater training improves both long-term memory and feelings of self-confidence.

In all cases, participating in the arts reduced stress. Therefore, by providing a wide range of **open-ended**, developmentally appropriate arts activities, not only

do we set the stage for young children to express their feelings, but we also gift them with a lifelong way to relieve stress and a source of self-healing that will improve the quality of their lives.

## The Arts Build Sensory Perception

The arts help children develop perceptually. Children learn through their senses. They absorb information from the world through touching, seeing, hearing, tasting, and smelling. This is how they acquire concepts about the nature of objects, actions, and events. Children learn better when teachers provide experiences that are sensually rich and varied, and that require children to use their perceptual abilities in many different ways. Children who have sung songs about, drawn pictures of, and acted out the metamorphosis of a butterfly will have a better understanding of the process than children who have only been told about the process.

The arts also enhance perceptive skills by teaching spatial concepts. Creative movement activities, for example, allow children to play with and use spatial concepts such as big/small, long/short, and under/over as they reach high or crawl along the floor. Visual arts activities let children explore the visual and tactile constructs of color, shape, pattern, form, and placement in space as they draw, paint, and play with modeling clay. Singing and playing instruments provide opportunities for children to develop their listening abilities as they investigate pitch, rhythm, and melody.

Most importantly, the arts, especially when integrated with experiences with nature, allow children to use all their senses to develop a sense of wonder and appreciation for the aesthetic qualities of the objects in our world. Chapter 4 presents activities that awaken children to the sensory landscape around them.

## The Arts Create Community

Arts activities can help children develop socially by teaching them to take turns, to share space and materials with others, and to make positive choices in personal behavior. Arts activities often require children to work with others to accomplish a



The arts bring people together in ways that are enjoyable and fun. As these children learn to make music together, they are also learning how to listen to others and to work toward a common goal.

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project or to produce a single, unified piece of art or a dramatic story.

Looking at artwork done by people different from oneself, taking a role in dramatic play, and experiencing unfamiliar styles of music are all ways to enhance children's understanding that each person has a different viewpoint and other individuals do not necessarily see things the same way they do. The arts provide the best entry point for developing media literacy (Nakamura et al., 2009). This is an essential skill for thinking critically in a society in which visual images, music, acting, and dance are frequently used in advertisements to entice us to make unnecessary purchases or propagandize one political point of view over another.



## Across Cultures

### Multiculturalism: What It Looks Like in the Arts

1. **Content Integration:** Information about diverse peoples and cultures are woven into the entire curriculum on a daily basis. *What this looks like:* Crayons and paints in shades of skin tones are available every day in the art center, not just for certain projects. Instruments from Asia and Africa are included in the bin of rhythm instruments, not just brought out on a special occasion.
2. **Knowledge Construction:** Diversity and cultural perspectives are valued and included. Prejudice and discrimination is recognized and addressed. *What this looks like:* A parent from Haiti visits the class and teaches a song she learned as a child. A Thanksgiving poster depicting Eastern Woodland Native Americans in Plains Indian headdresses is replaced with a more accurate image.
3. **Equity Pedagogy:** Teachers change the way they teach so that all students can understand and learn. *What this looks like:* Arts directions are given in a way that non-English speaking children can understand.
4. **Prejudice Reduction:** Teachers address prejudice when they see and hear it and actively celebrate diversity. *What this looks like:* In selecting art posters to share with the class, the teacher makes sure that many different cultures and types of people are represented.

See Chapters 5 and 7 for more ideas.

Sharing space and supplies, laughter and tears, and working on group projects with other young artists help children learn the power of cooperation and of empathy (Brouillette, 2010). Jessica Davis (2008) reminds us that the arts “excite and engage students, wakening attitudes to learning, including passion and joy, and the discovery ‘I care.’” Chapter 5 presents many ways to foster community through the arts.

Studying the arts of other times, people, and cultures is another way the arts can draw us together as we learn to appreciate and understand the fabulous diversity of creative ideas as represented by unique art forms from around the world. In addition, sharing the arts from the cultures of students and their families is a respectful way to honor the diversity of our children. In Chapter 7 we will explore ways to present the art of others to young children.

### Addressing bias and cultural differences.

Our children come from different social and cultural backgrounds. Derman-Sparks and the A.B.C. Task Force (1989) encourage arts activities that help children accept racial and cultural differences and reject stereotypes. Selecting arts activities that show respect for their family backgrounds, home culture, and language can support children from diverse cultures and make families feel valued. Activities should reflect appreciation for different cultural beliefs, holiday customs, and family traditions, and they should develop a sense of community. Visual art materials should reflect the many colors of humanity; drama, music, and dance activities should reflect the stories, sounds, and rhythms of the world, as well as the local community; and artworks that decorate the walls should represent people from diverse backgrounds. Field trips and guest artists can provide access to culturally diverse musical, dance, and dramatic performances. Through seeing, touching, and talking about a wide variety of art forms selected from both their own culture and different cultures, children learn that the arts reflect the ideas and feelings of all people.

## The Arts Nurture Creativity

The arts occupy the realm of the imagination. The unstructured quality of well-designed arts activities allows children to experiment with their voices, bodies, and familiar materials in new ways. They can use their own ideas and power to initiate and cause change



and to produce original actions and combinations. Paint that drips, block towers that fall down, whistles that are hard to blow, and all of the other small difficulties arts activities present challenge children to find their own solutions to emerging problems.

Torrance (1970) defined creativity as being able to see a problem, form ideas about it, and then communicate the results. When children are engaged in the arts, they are creating something new and unique; in doing so, they are being creative. As Chapter 2 will illustrate, creativity is not something that can be taught but, instead, is something that must be nurtured.

### Did You Get It?

**Which of the following is true of the relationship between the arts and child development?**

- a. Children first develop their understanding of the world through spoken and written words.
- b. The arts have no developmental effect on children before the age of two years, when they can understand arts concepts.
- c. Arts activities develop those areas of a child's brain that are not concerned with logic and cognition.
- d. The arts allow children to develop socially.

[Take the full quiz on CourseMate](#)

## How Do the Creative Arts Help Children Learn?

Young children do not have a set goal in mind as they begin to create artistically, any more than they start the day with the goal of learning ten new words. They are caught up in the process of responding to and playing with the stimuli around them, such as the way paint drips, the way clay stretches and bends, and the way another child hums a tune.

As teachers, we can see children growing and developing through the arts activities we design. We can watch the changes in behavior that come with increasing experience in the arts—from the first tentative brush strokes of the two-year-old to the tuneful singing of the mature eight-year-old. However, it is also necessary that children grow in ways that will make them more successful in their interactions with the world.

The nature of an early childhood arts curriculum is determined by our philosophy of how children learn. Visits to most preschools, child care centers, and primary school programs will reveal children drawing, painting, singing, and dancing. However, what the children are actually doing as they draw, paint, sing, and dance will vary widely depending on what the adults in charge believe young children are capable of doing, what they think is the correct way to teach them, and how they interpret the role of the arts in education.

To strengthen our philosophy and establish our goals, we need to examine learning theories, contemporary viewpoints, current research, and successful approaches to the arts in the education of children. These ideas will provide direction in the creation of a successful and meaningful arts curriculum for young children.

## Piaget and Constructivism

In the early 1920s Jean Piaget, a Swiss biologist, began studying children's responses to problems he designed. Based on his now-classic research, Piaget (1959) described how children develop their knowledge of the world. His findings have become the basis of the constructivist approach to early childhood education and include the following beliefs about how children learn:

- ☞ Children are active learners. They are curious and actively seek out information that helps them make sense of the world around them.
- ☞ Children construct knowledge based on their experiences. Because each child has different experiences, the understandings and misunderstandings acquired are unique to each child and are continually changing as the child has new experiences.
- ☞ Experience is essential for cognitive development. Children need to physically interact with the people and objects around them.
- ☞ Thoughts become more complex as children have more experiences. Although Piaget proposed that cognitive development was age dependent, many researchers today have modified his age categories and believe that complexity of thought follows gradual trends and may vary in different contexts and content areas (Ormrod, 2003).





### TeachSource Video Case 1.1



#### 0-2 Years: Piaget's Sensorimotor Stage

Watch the *0-2 Years: Piaget's Sensori-Motor Stage*. Do you think young children think the same way as adults? How does Piaget explain how children think and learn?

[Watch on CourseMate](#)

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**Theory in practice.** Constructivism views children as self-motivated learners who are responsible for their own learning. Open-ended arts activities that offer many creative possibilities and choices are ideal for this purpose. Logical thought is developed by asking children to explain why they chose their particular creative solutions.

## Vygotsky's Sociocultural Perspective and Social Cognitive Theory

Research on children's thinking in the 1920s and 1930s by Lev Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the importance of peers and adults in children's cognitive development. Vygotsky proposed that one way children construct their knowledge is based on past and present social interactions. His major points were the following:

- Complex thought begins through communication with adults and more knowledgeable peers. Watching and interacting with the people around them helps children internalize the thought processes, concepts, and beliefs common to their culture.
- Although children need to experience things personally and make discoveries on their own, they can also learn from the experiences of others.

Children can perform at a higher cognitive level when guided by an adult or a more competent peer. Vygotsky defined the **actual developmental level** as what the child can do independently, and the **potential developmental level** as what the child can do with assistance.

According to Vygotsky, most learning occurs when children are challenged to perform closer to their potential developmental level in what has come to be known as the **zone of proximal development**. It is when they are asked to perform tasks that require communication with more skilled individuals that children experience maximum cognitive growth.

Vygotsky also thought that young children developed symbolic thought through play. Make-believe and dramatic play allow children to represent ideas using substitute objects (for example, pretending that a bowl placed upside down on their head is a hat) and so help children develop the ability to think abstractly.

Social cognitive theory emphasizes the role of modeling and imitation in children's learning. The well-known psychologist Albert Bandura (1973) found, for example, that children who watched a doll being treated aggressively repeated the behavior when alone with the doll.

However, for a child to learn from a role model, four factors need to occur.

1. **Attention:** The child needs to watch the role model perform the behavior.
2. **Motivation:** The child must want to imitate the role model. Bandura found children were more likely to imitate those they liked or respected, or who were considered attractive or powerful (Bandura, 1989).
3. **Remembering:** The child needs to understand and recall what the role model did.
4. **Reproduction:** The child must repeat the behavior enough times to improve in skill.

**Theory in practice.** These theories help us see children as members of a social community in which adults as role models are an important source of information about the nature of the arts. As teachers we



### TeachSource Video Case 1.2



#### 5-11 Years: Lev Vygotsky, the Zone of Proximal Development, and Scaffolding

Watch the video *5-11 Years: Lev Vygotsky and the Zone of Proximal Development and Scaffolding*. How do Piaget's and Vygotsky's approaches compare? What are some ways you can determine when a child is ready to learn something new?

[Watch on CourseMate](#)

can model for children how artists think and behave. This is because the arts lend themselves to what is characterized as the “apprenticeship model” (Gardner, 1993). In an apprenticeship, the child learns not only how to do the task but also how experts think about the task. We can model artistic methods while thinking out loud about the process. We can make well-timed suggestions that guide the child to the next level of understanding, and we can ask children to explain what they are doing so that they make the learning their own. In addition, we can provide models of what the arts can be by introducing children to wonderful artists from all times and cultures. Doing these things will not only help children grow cognitively but will also nurture their ability to think and act as artists.

## Multiple Intelligence Theory

Based on cognitive research, Howard Gardner (1983, 1991) has proposed that there are at least eight intellectual capabilities, or **intelligences**. These intelligences represent biological and psychological potentials within each individual. Everyone has capabilities in each intelligence, with special strengths in one or more of them. Gardner has identified these intelligences as follows:

1. **Linguistic:** The ability to manipulate the oral and written symbols of language
2. **Logical-Mathematical:** The ability to manipulate numerical patterns and concepts in logical ways
3. **Spatial:** The ability to visualize the configuration of objects in both two- and three-dimensional space
4. **Musical:** The ability to manipulate rhythm and sound
5. **Bodily-Kinesthetic:** The ability to use the body to solve problems or to make things
6. **Interpersonal:** The ability to understand and work with others
7. **Intrapersonal:** The ability to understand oneself



Open-ended arts activities have no preconceived end result. Instead, they invite exploration of materials and concepts or pose a problem that can be solved in multiple ways. Playing with puppets allows children to express their ideas and feelings in a wide variety of ways as they engage in imaginative dramatic play. Will this dinosaur be angry and bite or will he be friendly? This child can create his own dinosaur story while developing his oral language skills.

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8. **Naturalistic-Environmental:** The ability to sense and make use of the characteristics of the natural world

Traditional educational practice has focused mainly on strengths in the linguistic and logical-mathematical domains. Multiple intelligences (MI) theory provides a framework upon which teachers can build a more educationally balanced program—one that better meets the needs of children with talents in other areas. The arts as a learning and symbolic tool is particularly valuable not only because it embraces the talents often overlooked in education, but also because it crosses and links all of the intelligences.

It is important to note that Gardner (1993) does not believe that there is a separate artistic intelligence. Instead, each of the eight intelligences can be used for either artistic or nonartistic purposes. How an intelligence is expressed will depend on a variety of factors, including personal choice and cultural environment. Linguistic intelligence, for example, can be used to scribble an appointment on a calendar or to compose a short story. Spatial intelligence can be used to create a sculpture or to read a map. Conversely, to create a painting, a visual artist must draw not only on visual-spatial intelligence in order to visualize the artistic elements in the work, but also on bodily-kinesthetic intelligence in order to control the brush and logical-mathematical intelligence in order to plan the sequence in which the paint will be applied.

**Theory in practice.** MI theory broadens our view of children's abilities and potentials into a multidimensional view of intelligence. It means that we need to honor the special abilities of every child by creating an early childhood curriculum that includes many opportunities to use all of the intelligences in artistic ways.

Not every activity will engage all of the intelligences, but when activities are chosen that incorporate many of the intelligences, children can learn in whatever way best fits their intellectual strengths or learning style. In this book, Gardner's intelligences have been interrelated with the physical, linguistic, social, emotional, creative, and intellectual growth areas in order to create models of such balanced arts activities.

For an example of an MI curriculum planning web with correlated objectives, see *The MI Planning Web* on CourseMate.

### Did You Get It?

**Ms. Fanelli, a preschool teacher, believes in the constructivist approach to learning. Accordingly, she will most likely**

- a. allow children to physically interact with objects and people around them.
- b. evaluate a child's ability to create an original melody by comparing the child's work to that of his peers.
- c. develop arts activities that require the children to follow step-by-step directions.
- d. view children as requiring constant supervision and direction in arts activities.

[Take the full quiz on CourseMate](#)

## What Does a Well-Designed Arts Curriculum Look Like?

The Task Force on Children's Learning and the Arts: Birth to Age 8 (1998) has laid out three curriculum strands for arts-based curricula. These incorporate the need for artistic skills and judgments, while at the same time allowing for creative self-expression and cultural understanding. These strands are as follows:

**Children must be active participants in the arts process.** They should create, participate, perform, and respond to carefully selected arts activities that reflect their culture and background experience.

**Arts activities must be domain based, relevant, and integrated.** Arts activities should allow every child to be successful and reflect children's daily life experiences. The arts should be fully integrated into the rest of the curriculum and help children make connections with what they are learning. At the same time, these activities should build artistic skill and competence in the particular art form being used. Verbal and graphic expressive, reflective, and evaluative responses to arts activities can provide the opportunity to build literacy and intellectual skills.

**The learning environment must nurture the arts.** Adequate quality materials, space, and time should be provided with the needs and abilities of the children foremost. Adult engagement should





## Integrating the Arts

### WHAT IS ARTS INTEGRATION?

According to the Kennedy Center Artsedge (<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org>) arts integration means that children develop understanding of a concept and demonstrate that new knowledge through an art form. Integrated arts curricula creatively connect language, math, social studies, or science concepts together with one or more art forms so that the learning objectives in both areas are met.

*Integrated arts curriculum design will be examined more deeply in Chapter 8.*

share in and support children in their artistic explorations and reflect input from current research in the field and artists, arts specialists, early childhood teachers, parents, caregivers, and other community resources.

### Developmentally Appropriate Practice and the Arts

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has similar recommendations (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). A developmentally appropriate curriculum provides daily opportunities for creative exploration and aesthetic appreciation in all of the arts forms using a wide range of materials from a variety of cultures. These activities are integrated into the children's total learning experiences and, while introducing arts vocabulary and concepts, and should have an open-ended design that has joy as its central purpose.



### The Reggio Emilia Approach to Arts Education

These principles are well illustrated by the preprimary program of the municipality of Reggio Emilia, Italy. In this program, the arts are highly valued. Each school has an *atelierista*, or art educator, who works directly with the teachers in designing the program. In addition, each school has a beautiful art room where supplies are arranged by color. This attention to aesthetic qualities carries over to the

school itself, which is decorated with children's artwork that has been carefully mounted. Light, mirrors, and color produce wonderful spaces in which children can play and create. In the Reggio Emilia program, the arts are used as an important method of recording the observations, ideas, and memories of experiences in which the children have participated. The *atelierista* offers suggestions as the children work. The children also share their art with other children. Unlike in the United States, where arts experiences are often used as fillers and artwork is usually sent home at the end of each day, in Reggio Emilia, children are asked to return to their artistic works to reconsider, discuss and critique, and then to rework, or repeat their responsive arts activities.

The Reggio Emilia program is an example of **emergent curriculum**. Elizabeth Jones and John Nimmo (1994) describe this approach to teaching young children as one in which teachers are sensitive to the needs and interests of the children and then build on these through the provision of wonderful learning experiences. The teacher and children are coplayers sharing ideas and choices together in a curriculum that is open-ended and constantly adjusting to new ideas and needs. This does not mean that the teacher has no control over the



Creativity is nourished when children are allowed the freedom to express their unique ideas in an accepting environment that values the arts as a form of communication and self-expression. Jason, age four, has painted his own idea of a cat.

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curriculum. Rather the guiding adult is more like a stage director, the one who “sets the stage, times the acts, and keeps the basic drama together” (1994, p. 5). In such a curriculum, the arts can play a major role as is seen in the work done by children in the Reggio Emilia schools.

## The Project Approach

Another example of emergent curriculum in action is the Project Approach, as exemplified by the work of Lillian Katz and Sylvia Chard (2000). This approach identifies and investigates a topic based on child interest, and then the arts are incorporated as a rich, vital way to express learning will be examined more deeply in Chapter 8.

## Goals for Learning

What do children need to learn about the arts? This is a key question in designing an effective arts curriculum for young children. According to Lillian Katz and Sylvia Chard (2000), there are four main categories of learning goals.

**Knowledge.** **Knowledge** includes the vocabulary and concepts we want our children to hear and use. In early childhood arts, this means that we must make sure that children will be learning to talk about and identify the elements of each art form, as well as the materials and methods belonging to each. We then want children to be able to apply what they have learned in their artistic performances and creations as well as in their responses to the artwork of others.

Young children construct this kind of knowledge from direct experiences and interactions with more expert peers and adults. It happens when we ask children to tell how they made a particular color in their paintings or when they learn a song from a friend. The knowledge to be imparted can be expressed in the vocabulary words selected, the concepts being applied, and the questions children will be asked as they are involved in arts activities. In the Exploring the Arts section of this book, examples of these are found under the “What to Say” heading.

**Dispositions.** **Dispositions** are the ways we behave as learners and performers. Examples of dispositions include being intellectually curious, using

the creative process, thinking logically, and being generous and helpful. Another way to view dispositions is to think of them as preferred ways of thinking and behaving. We can think and make decisions, as would a creative musician, an inquiring artist, or an observant poet. Dispositions are nurtured instead of being taught directly. They develop best in carefully designed open-ended learning environments that allow creative exploration, provide safe risk taking, and foster creative problem solving.

Many different dispositions can be developed in the creation of art. First and foremost is the disposition to think and to act like a creative artist, musician, dancer, or actor. For example, a young child playing a drum may say, “Look, I am a drummer like in the band. You can march to the beat of my drum.” This is nourished through open-ended arts activities using real art skills, materials, and tools presented by a teacher who is passionate about the arts and who verbally and visually models what these artists do. At the same time, thoughtful statements and questions can promote intellectual curiosity, and careful organization of the activity can promote cooperative behavior and nurture the growth of a caring and socially aware individual.

**Feelings.** Feelings describe how children receive, respond to, and value what they are learning and are reflected in the emotional state of the child. Positive feelings about the arts, or any other subject area, develop in an arts program that makes children feel safe; when activities are challenging but possible; when mistakes are seen as positive ways to grow; and where accomplishments are enthusiastically acknowledged.

Children come to value the arts when we prepare a curriculum that provides activities that share with them a sense of wonder and awaken them to the aesthetic qualities of the world in which they live, and encourages them to respond positively to the art of others. In such an arts program, teachers and peers respond to artistic endeavors with heartfelt, thoughtful comments, and provide open-ended arts activities that allow children to express their unique personal feelings and ideas. Most importantly, a well-planned arts program allows all children to feel successful as artists, thereby enabling them to see themselves as competent individuals.

**Skills.** Skills are the observable behaviors used in arts creation, such as cutting out shapes with a scissors or shaping clay into a ball. Although some skills are learned spontaneously, most develop through practice. If we want our children to be able to use paint skillfully, for example, then we need to give them lots of opportunities to explore paint. In addition, skills from the different growth areas can be practiced through the arts. For example, intentionally having two children use the same glue bottle provides them with an opportunity to practice sharing. Talking about how it feels to move like a drop of water allows children to develop their oral language skills. In fact, well-planned arts activities usually address skill development in all of the growth areas.

## National Core Standards for Arts Education

Another way of looking at what children need to learn about the arts is to examine standards for arts education. Standards provide us with a definition of what a good arts education is and provide a structure on which to build a successful arts program. Based on the specific concepts and skills identified in the standards, we can make sure that young children are introduced to a breadth of rich arts experiences through the curriculum units and activity plans we write. In conjunction with forming teaching objectives, the content standards for visual arts, music, dance, and dramatics are provided in Chapters 9 through 12.

The 2013 National Core Arts Standards (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2013) address what competencies children from kindergarten to high school should have in the arts in order to become adults who understand, value, and enjoy the arts.

The 2013 Core Arts Standards are based on the following definition of artistic literacy, which recognizes the importance of the arts in our society:

**Artistic literacy is the knowledge and understanding required to participate**

**authentically in the arts. Fluency in the language(s) of the arts is the ability to create, perform/produce/present, respond, and connect through symbolic and metaphoric forms that are unique to the arts. It is embodied in specific philosophical foundations and lifelong goals that enable an artistically literate person to transfer arts knowledge, skills, and capacities to other subjects, settings, and contexts. (p. 13)**

To address this goal of artistic literacy for all students the standards delineate expectations in the following areas of competency in the arts:

1. **Creating:** Conceiving and developing new artistic ideas and work.
2. **Performing** (dance, music, theatre), **Producing** (media arts), and **Presenting** (visual arts): Although the various arts disciplines have chosen different words to represent this artistic process, they are clustered here as essentially parallel. This area of competency refers to the physical interaction with the materials, concepts, and techniques of the arts forms as well as the sharing of that process with others.
3. **Responding:** Interacting with and reflecting on artistic work and performances to develop understanding.
4. **Connecting:** Relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and contextual knowledge.

The 2013 Core Arts Standards also establish benchmarks starting at the end of second grade that assess the artistic literacy of the children. Early childhood arts education as described in this text will be key in making sure our children reach these high levels of artistic understanding. In addition, because the arts are a vehicle for learning in all areas of knowledge, the arts standards are linked to the National Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics.

Similar arts standards for the education of younger children have been developed by many states.

Photo  
Story**Oceans  
Integrated  
Arts Unit**

Engaging in dramatic play with sea toys develops creative storytelling skills and at the same time allows a science-related investigation of buoyancy.

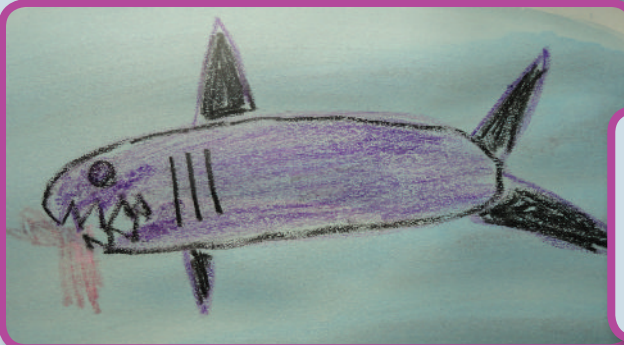
Observing and caring for live fish provides inspiration for arts production and performance while developing an understanding of aquatic life. The fish in the children's artworks sprout fins and gills.



Sorting seashells develops sensory and aesthetic perception as well as logical mathematical reasoning skills.



"Rainbow fish"  
Carved Styrofoam  
and sponge prints—  
Emma, Makenzie,  
Jason, and Jack ages  
seven and eight



"Shark attack" by Ben age seven



"Fish mobiles" Cut paper—Cynthia, Jake, and David  
ages seven and eight



For more information on arts standards and to see a sample of state arts standards, visit, [Learning Standards Resources on CourseMate](#).

### Did You Get It?

**According to the Task Force on Children's Learning and the Arts: Birth to Age 8, the developmentally appropriate practice for arts education for young children should include**

- a. daily opportunities for active, creative exploration and aesthetic appreciation.
- b. regular offerings of simple arts activities.
- c. only materials that are familiar to the children.
- d. step-by-step guidance of children as they participate in arts activities.

[Take the full quiz on CourseMate](#)

## What Is the Teacher's Role in Creative Arts Education?

In an early childhood program that values the arts, music, dance, dramatics, and visual arts activities are inseparable from the total curriculum. It all seems so effortless. There is a rhythm and flow to a well-planned program that creates the sense that this is what will naturally happen if the children are just told to have fun with a lot of interesting materials. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Behind that successful program is superb planning by teachers who have knowledge about how children think, learn, and respond to stimuli in their environment. These teachers practice **intentional teaching**. This means that they have a strong knowledge of how children develop in the arts and have practiced ahead of time what they will say and do to encourage young artists so that when that **teachable moment** arises—and it will if open-ended materials and experiences are provided—everything comes together in a moment of wonder and understanding.

We can be those teachers. We can learn what to say about arts production, presentation, and performance, how to say it, and when it is best left unsaid. We can know when to interact and when to wait and watch.

We will seek to be judged not on the children's products but on their growth. We can continually learn and grow along with our young artists from the first contact to the last. We can constantly improve the curriculum we offer, assessing each activity and noting how the children show growth in relation to the goals we have set for them. The result is an arts curriculum of our own creation, both meaningful and thoughtful.

As teachers, we do not need to be professional musicians, dancers, artists, or actors to be effective teachers of the arts. Rather we need to design an art curriculum made up of activities that nurture young artists.

In the end, the teacher is the most important part of the arts curriculum. Teachers are like gardeners, providing the "fertile ground"—the enriched arts curriculum—that gives children a start in thinking and working as artists. As the children grow in skill and confidence, it is our planning, enthusiasm, and encouragement that will allow the child's creativity to flower. It is the purpose of this text to help you become this teacher.

### Did You Get It?

**Intentional teaching means**

- a. using an idea found on the Internet.
- b. using knowledge of children's artistic development to plan arts activities.
- c. using materials that have one specific use.
- d. ignoring the teachable moment.

[Take the full quiz on CourseMate](#)

## Conclusion: The Well-Designed Arts Program

The stage has now been set for developing a rich and meaningful arts program for children. Children are natural artists, in the sense that they play creatively with the elements of the arts that they find in their surroundings. But those surroundings must be



provided, determined by a philosophy of what child art is, and what it means. We need to consider why children should do certain arts activities, which ones should be selected, how they should be delivered, and what environment is most conducive to their performance.

This chapter has closely examined why the arts need to be taught. We have learned how the arts help children grow socially, emotionally, physically, intellectually, and linguistically. The following chapters will consider:

1. **How:** We will see how the delivery of arts activities affects what children learn, as well as how the way the child learns affects what activities will be successful.

2. **Where:** We will learn how to design the environment in which child artists will work.
3. **What:** We will investigate the appropriate selection and efficient delivery of arts concepts and skills.

It is the educator's role to nurture the artist within every young child. Although the focus will always be on guiding the artistic development of the child, in doing so the artist within the adult will also be rekindled. Adults and children must become part of the artistic continuum that stretches from our distant human past into the future. To guide young children as they grow through the arts is a deeply rewarding experience.

For additional information about the importance of the arts, arts organizations, and arts standards, see [Online Resources on CourseMate](#).

## Teaching In Action

### *An Integrated Arts Curriculum*

*The arts are integrated into the curriculum through emergent curriculum.*

*Children develop socially by working on a group project.*

*The teacher enthusiastically responds to the artistic elements in the child's work with positive feedback.*

It is a warm spring day, and sunlight streams through the windows of the large bright room. Photographs of fish and sea creatures decorate one wall. Children's books about the sea are on display on the bookshelf. The teacher has already read several books about the sea to the children and talked to the children about experiences they have had during visits to the beach. Seashells, starfish, fishnets, floats, and other sea-related objects are placed around the room. It is easy to tell that the children have been learning about the ocean. In the center of the room an adult and several children, ages three and four, are hard at work painting a refrigerator box in which round windows and two doors have been cut. They are using yellow poster paint and large paintbrushes. Newspapers cover the floor. One child is painting broad strokes of color across the box, while the other child presses the brush down again and again, making rectangular stamp marks in one small section. In the background, a recording of the Beatles' classic "Yellow Submarine" can be heard.

While the painters work away on their submarine, other children are playing at the water table, experimenting with a variety of objects in different sizes, colors, and shapes that either sink or float. At an easel, a four-year-old has filled his paper with waving lines using mixtures of blue, green, and yellow paint. The teacher stops to help the painter at the easel remove his smock. "Look at all the blue-greens and turquoises you have made," she tells him, pointing to examples of those colors.

*(continued)*

## Teaching In Action *(continued)*

*Arts activities are open-ended. Children choose to use the art supplies in their own creative way.*

At a round table, three children have taken premade paper tubes from the supply shelf and are decorating them with paper, yarn, glue, and crayons. One child asks the teacher to attach a piece of blue cellophane to the end of his "scope." A second child puts her tube up to her nose. "I'm a swordfish. This is my sword. I have a beautiful sword," she tells another girl as she makes a roaring sound through the tube. A three-year-old is exploring what happens when he glues a piece of yarn on the tube and then pulls it off. In another corner, two boys are engaged in noisy, animated play with trucks and blocks. At the computer, a four-year-old is making a multicolored line travel a wiggly path over the screen.

*Visual images from diverse sources enrich the children's experience.*

At the game table, two children are matching pictures. The cards have been made from prints of paintings, sculptures, and crafts from many cultures that illustrate subjects about the sea. These have been cut out of museum catalogs, glued to card stock, and laminated. On the wall behind them is a poster-size print of one of the artworks. One child finds a card that matches the poster and walks over and compares the two pictures. "They're the same, but this one is littler," he notes, holding the picture card up to the print.

*Visitors provide common experiences that lead to integrated learning.*

Suddenly everyone stops working. A special visitor has arrived! A father of one of the children brings in two plastic buckets, and all the children circle round. In the tubs are saltwater creatures borrowed from the pet store where he works. The children closely observe a sea urchin, an anemone, and a sea snake. One child looks at the sea urchin through his cellophane-covered tube. "It changes color," he states with wonder. He shares his tube with the others so they can see the change too.

*Arts and language activities are unified.*

When the visitor leaves, some children head off to a table where crayons, markers, and stapled paper booklets are set out. "I'm writing a story about a sea snake and an 'anoome,'" says one five-year-old girl. She draws a long wiggly line on one page. "Here he is very sad." Then she draws a purple circle. "This is his friend, the 'anoome.' Now he is happy!" When she finishes her book, she "reads" it to her teacher, inventing a long, detailed story to go with her pictures. "You made your anemone the same color as the one Sam's father brought to show us," the teacher says. The girl beams with pride and skips off to read her book to her friend.

*Children explore sensory experiences.*

A three-year-old has settled in with a lump of play dough. He rolls out a long "worm." "Look—I can make it wiggle like a sea snake," he says, as he twists and turns the play dough. Some children take cardboard tubes to decorate. They want to put cellophane on theirs so they can have their own "scopes." Several other children have taken colored paper, markers, and scissors. They talk quietly together as they invent new sea creatures.

"Mine has tentacles like the sea urchin."

"I'm going to give mine a big mouth and teeth," says another. They cut out their creatures and take them to the teacher.

*(continued)*

## Teaching In Action

*Children initiate and choose what they want displayed.*

"Let's put a string on them and hang them up so they can swim in our sea," says one. The teacher hangs their creatures inside a large glass aquarium that has been decorated with sand and shells on the bottom. They join other paper sea creatures, made by other children, which are already afloat on the air currents.

Meanwhile, several other children have moved into the submarine. They are busy arranging blankets and pillows.

"I think it is softer this way," says Peter. Sam lies down and tries it out. He curls up and sucks his thumb.

"I think we should have a yellow blanket in the yellow submarine," says Sue, bringing in a piece of yellow cloth from the dress-up box. Other children look in through the portholes and make faces at their friends.

*Creative movement grows out of the children's dramatic play, and, combined with music, provides a smooth transition to story time.*

"We will be the fish swimming around the submarine!" they tell them. The teacher observes the children's play and puts on Saint-Saens's *The Swan*. The music matches the children's actions as they move around the box inventing fish sounds and motions. The teacher joins the dancers and invites the children in the box to come out and swim in the sea with them. Sue swirls the yellow cloth behind her. "This is my tail," she sings.

*Children have made plans and look forward to the next day.*

"Story time!" says the teacher. "Let's swim to the rug." The dancing children and those working about the room move to the rug and settle around the teacher, who reads the story *The Rainbow Fish* by Marcus Pfister. The children gather round the aquarium and look at their floating sea creatures.

"We need a rainbow fish," says one boy.

"Let's make lots of rainbow fish tomorrow," joins in another.

"I will find some shiny rainbow paper for you," says the teacher. Full of excitement about the next day, the children help put away the materials they have used and then get ready to leave.

# Reflection Page



## Why the Arts?

All of the following have been suggested as important reasons children should be taught the arts. Think carefully about each item and then rank each by its importance. Write a number in front of each, with 1 being the highest rank and 9 being the lowest. Based on your ranking, write a statement that explains why you feel the arts are essential for young children.

- \_\_\_\_\_ The arts are part of being human.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The arts stimulate brain development.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The arts promote early literacy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The arts improve physical health.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The arts promote emotional well-being.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The arts create community.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The arts foster cognitive growth.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The arts nurture creativity.

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# Reflection Page







## How to Have a Successful Observation




Observing children involved in arts activities is an invaluable way to learn how children react to various kinds of arts experiences. As an observer, you are free of the pressure of performing and can devote your attention to the small details that busy, overworked caregivers often miss.

The following checklist will help you and the participants in the program you are visiting have a pleasant and rewarding experience.



### Before the Visit

-  Call for an appointment and get permission to visit.
-  Write down the names of the people you speak to on the phone and those of the teachers whose children you will be observing.
-  If you intend to use a camera or camcorder, make sure you have all the necessary permissions. In many programs, parents must be asked to sign a release form before you can photograph. Some schools may already have these on file.
-  Prepare a form on which to record your observations.

### On the Day of the Visit

-  Arrive on time and introduce yourself to the teachers. If possible, have them introduce you to the children. If asked, give a simple explanation for your visit, such as, “My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I can’t wait to see what you are doing today.”
-  Observe and record carefully. Do not bother the teachers. They are there to work with the children, not you.
-  When it is time for you to leave, do not disturb the children or the teachers.

### After the Observation

-  As soon as possible, review your notes and add any special details that you remember. Some people find it helpful to make an audiotape recording while the experience is still fresh in their minds.
-  Write a note of thanks to everyone with whom you had contact. A special handmade card for the children is always welcome.

# Reflection Page



## Observation: The Arts and the Child

The purpose of this observation is to observe young children in a typical learning situation. The observation will focus on the artistic behavior of the children in a group educational situation. This observation may be done in an organized school or a child care setting that services children between the ages of one and eight. The observation should last 40 minutes to 1 hour.

**Date of observation:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Length of observation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Ages of children:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Group size:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Observation

1. Which arts activities (creative dance, music, dramatic play, and visual arts) are the children involved in?

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2. What are the adults doing?

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3. How are arts activities made available to the children?

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4. How did the children participate in these arts activities? (Examples: tried once, then left; engaged in nonverbal or verbal interaction with children and/or adults; worked alone; length of time at activity)

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# Reflection Page



## Analysis: The Arts and the Child

Based on your observation, write a response to these questions:

1. How do the arts activities relate to the learning theories and arts standards discussed in this chapter?

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2. Which artistic dispositions for children were being met, and which ones were not? Why?

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3. What do you think are the guiding principles of the arts curriculum in this program?

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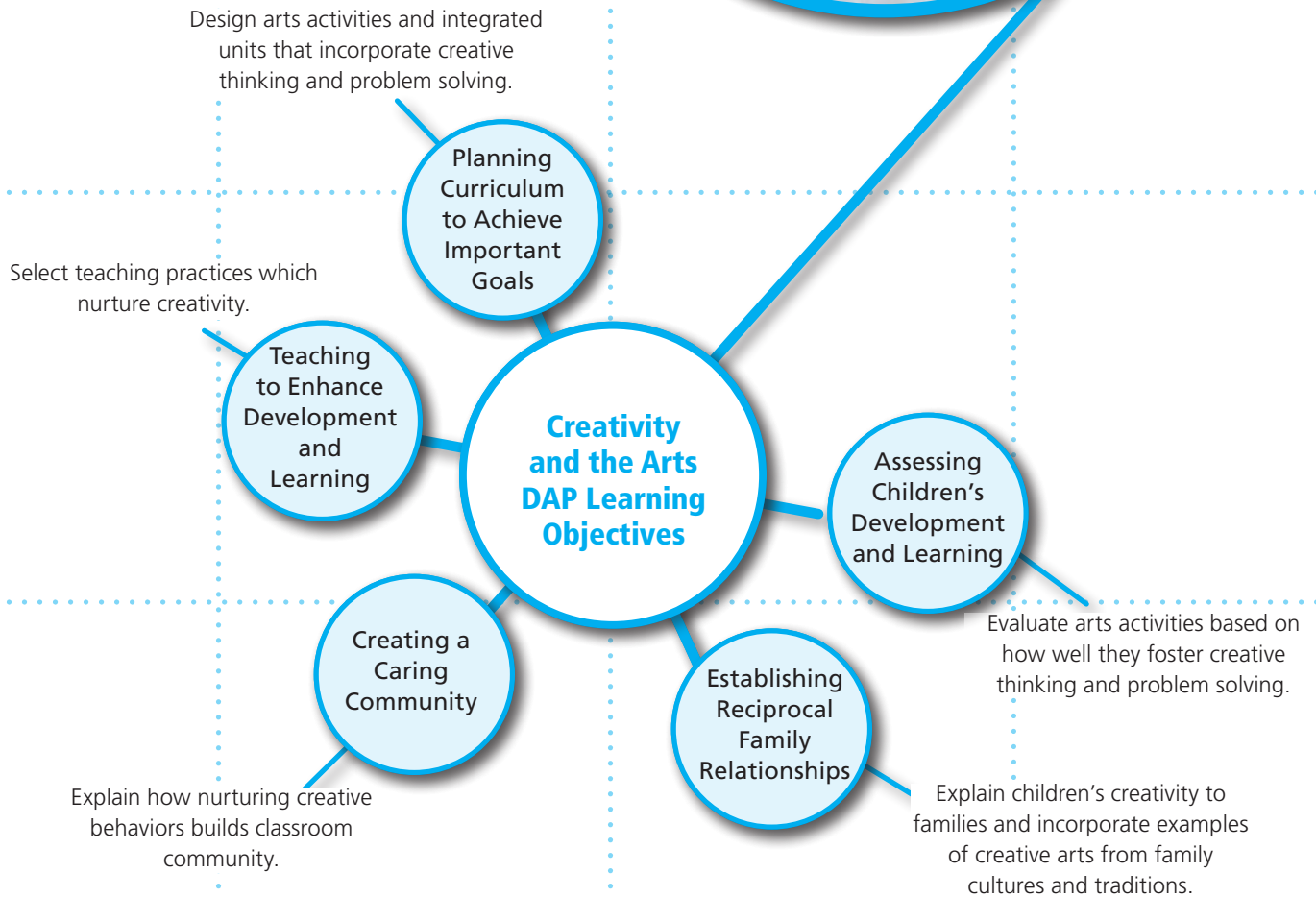
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# Chapter 2

## Nurturing Creativity



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## Young Artists Creating

Makalya dabs some white glue with her fingers and then begins to rub it across her paper in a swirling pattern. Although she is usually easily distracted, at this moment she pays no attention to the other children working beside her at the table. Instead of her perpetual chatter, she is silent. Her tongue projects slightly from her mouth as her eyes follow the movement of her hand. If we speak to her at this moment, she may not even hear us, and if she does, she may jump slightly or hesitate before responding to us. In the simple act of spreading the glue in a new way, Makalya has become immersed in the process of discovery and creativity.

### What Is Creativity?

If there is one word most often associated with the arts, it is creativity. We even call them the creative arts. But that doesn't mean that all arts activities are inherently creative or allow children to express themselves creatively. In this chapter we will explore the nature of creativity to learn why it is important to nurture creativity in young children and how to select and design arts experiences that do so.

### Defining Creativity

**Creativity** has been the subject of much research and analysis, yet there is no generally accepted definition. A creative act can be viewed in many ways. What is thought creative behavior in one time and place may not be thought creative in another. Different researchers have offered the following descriptions of creativity.

**Uniqueness.** Creativity is inventing something so unique that it is astonishing to the viewer or user and produces “effective surprise” (Bruner, 1979, p. 12). Thomas Edison's invention of the light bulb or Georges Seurat's use of tiny dots of color to create the style of pointillism are examples of unique products that are considered highly creative.

**Rule breaking.** Creativity is doing something that goes beyond the accepted rules but in a new way that may at first meet resistance, but is eventually understandable and acceptable to a wider audience (Boden, 1990, p. 12). For example, the composer Arnold Shoenberg created a mathematically based twelve-tone method of music composition and introduced atonal music that was initially poorly received.

**Problem solving.** E. P. Torrance (1970) described creativity as the ability to see a problem, form an idea to solve it, and then share the results. The innovative American architect Frank Lloyd Wright thought houses should be inexpensive and fit their environment, so he developed slab construction and designed the “prairie home,” which became the prototype for the contemporary ranch-style home.

**An Interactive Process.** Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1996, 1997) views creativity as a complex process that reflects an individual's motivation to solve a problem, not alone but in interaction with the requirements of a particular field of study and with other experts in that area of study as well as with the public. For example, a choreographer, in a desire to express a particular idea, invents a new style of dance. The resulting performance reflects the choreographer's experiences and knowledge of how the body can move. This piece will then be judged and accepted or rejected by other choreographers, dancers, and the public.

**Making something new.** Jane Piirto believes creativity is a “basic human need to make new” (2004, p. 37). In this view, creativity is not something unique to a few people who make big changes in the world—what has been called by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1996) the “Big C”—but is part of each of us (the “little c”) that helps us figure out how to arrange furniture in our classroom for optimal learning or design an activity plan that best meets the needs of our particular children.

Most animals have inherited reflexes and responses that enable them to survive from birth. Human beings, on the other hand, must learn almost everything

starting in infancy. Creativity is the mechanism by which people use past knowledge and learned skills to meet the needs of a new situation or to solve a problem. If we combine this with Dissanayake's view of the arts as making the everyday special, we can see that the arts are a powerful forum for human creativity.

**Creative Thinking Skills.** Research by Amabile (1983), Feldman and Goldsmith (1986), Gardner (1993), Csikszentmihalyi (1996), and Gruber and Wallace (1999) identifies the following characteristics of creative people:

- They are both passionately interested in and skilled in a particular area of learning, such as science, the arts, or writing, and can identify areas where new ideas are needed or fit and are willing to try something never done before.

- They have the ability to imagine a range of possibilities. They are playful, flexible thinkers who generate many possible ways of doing something or of solving a problem.

- They are energetic and highly persistent and do not give up, even if they fail many times.

- When something goes wrong or fails, they are intrigued instead of discouraged.

- They set high personal standards for themselves and push themselves to learn more and work harder.

They are dissatisfied with what already exists or is known or can be done.

- They are intrinsically motivated, willing to work hard and to struggle with frustration, and yet find great pleasure and satisfaction in the act of creation, or **flow** (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008).

- They have multiple problems and projects that they are working on at the same time.

**Divergent thinking.** J. P. Guilford (1986) proposed a model of intelligence that includes divergent thinking as one of the basic thought processes. Divergent thinking can be defined as the ability to generate many different solutions to a problem and is a key component of creative problem solving. It is characterized by

- Fluency**—Producing a multitude of diverse ideas or solutions. An example of fluency would be when a child thinks of many different ways to move like a bird.

- Flexibility**—Seeing things from alternative viewpoints. Flexibility is seen when a child plays several different roles, such as mother, child, and police officer, in pretend play.

- Originality**—Thinking of ideas or solutions that have never been thought of before. An example of this is when a child takes two magazine clippings of different objects, such as a clock and a bird, and glues them together to create a clock-headed bird.

- Elaboration**—Improving ideas by adding on or expanding them. Children building with blocks elaborate on each other's ideas when they connect what they have made to someone else's creation, such as when one child makes the garage and the other makes the car to go in it.

## The Importance of Creativity

In the rapidly evolving technological society we live in, creativity and innovation are essential. Our children will grow up in a future that will not only require them to not only build on the past, but also remain ready to solve increasingly complex problems, ones that we cannot even imagine yet. Howard Gardner (2006) has identified creativity as one of the five different "minds" or ways of processing and acting upon information that need to be cultivated if an individual is to be successful in the workplace. He warns that those without creating capabilities can be replaced by computers (p. 23).

Mitchell Resnick (2006) notes that the burgeoning growth in new technologies is increasing the rate of change so rapidly that the future—what he calls the "Creative Society of the 21st Century"—will be based less on what we know, and more on our ability to think creatively. Already young children are more at ease with the technological wonders of today than are their parents. "Childhood," Resnick points out, "is one of the most creative periods of our lives. We must make sure that children's



### TeachSource Video Case 2.1



Video supplied by the BBC Motion Gallery.

#### Kindergarten Curriculum

The video *Play: The Kindergarten Curriculum* discusses the effect of state requirements on kindergarteners' opportunities to be creative. What balance do you think there should be between academics and the arts in early childhood curricula? In this video the teacher has organized a unit for preschoolers around the questions: What are shapes? How has the teacher incorporated the arts? How would you make this unit more exciting and creative for these children?

[Watch on CourseMate](#)

creativity is nurtured and developed, providing children with opportunities to exercise, refine, and extend their creative abilities" (p. 203). The arts provide a perfect place in which to do so. The College Board (2011) found that of the thirteen identified 21st century skills and habits, creativity was one the top four, alongside communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving, that most aligned with the arts.

#### Did You Get It?

Which of the following is a characteristic of creative people?

- After the initial energy for a new idea wears out, they easily give up and move to the next task.
- When something goes wrong or fails, they are discouraged instead of being intrigued.
- They work hard and struggle with frustration, yet find satisfaction in the act of creation.
- They are serious, rigid thinkers who focus on finding one best way of doing something.

[Take the full quiz on CourseMate](#)

## What Does Creativity Look Like in Children?

Because children are less familiar with the world, they are constantly dealing with fresh circumstances and problems and "creating" a unique response to the situation. The infant finds a dab of spilled milk and creates a design by swirling small fingers through it. The toddler rhythmically taps a spoon on a table. The preschooler finds a stone, adds some crayon marks, and imagines it is a "little creature."

The nature of the creative artistic responses children make will depend upon many factors. An infant does not yet have the ability to create a landscape painting. A toddler cannot produce a symphony. A preschooler cannot carve a marble monument. Nevertheless, even though the children are limited by their skill level and stage of physical growth, their artistic performances are still highly creative. At any moment, each child is at a precise point in development, has a unique set of experiences, and has a personal base of knowledge and skills. These combine to produce creative responses to each stimulus that the child confronts. We should not find it surprising that a one-of-a-kind child produces one-of-a-kind art, music, dance movements, and dramatic play!



In this tempera painting, Elizabeth, age six, shows creative thinking. Using what she knows about animals, she has given her imaginary creature eyes, teeth, and feet. But then she has elaborated by adding color, texture, and pattern to make something totally original.

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At the same time, children's creativity looks different than that of adults. Adults bring to the creative process a reservoir of experience and skill. They have technical expertise in their subject matter and knowledge of other creative works. They also have years of living in a particular culture, which may set limits on what is deemed possible or acceptable. Children, on the other hand, are only beginning to obtain experience and expertise and are not yet bound by a rigid concept of what is possible. Therefore, their creative acts are characterized by spontaneity, imagination, and fantasy.

**Spontaneity.** Because children have less expertise than adults and have experienced less pressure to conform, they tend to be freer in their creative ideas and are more willing to share them. This leads to an open and bold approach to arts activities and an increased willingness to explore and take risks.

**Imagination.** When we use our **imagination** or pretend, we are playing with mental images. These images are ideas of things that can be manipulated in the mind and can take visual, auditory, and sensory form. The ability to imagine is particularly strong in young children. Being able to pretend is a key feature of young children's play. A banana becomes a telephone; a bed becomes a boat. Indeed, Jane Piirto sees children's play as the "seed ground of adult imagination" (2004, p. 62).

**Fantasy.** **Fantasy** is the creation of imaginary worlds. It is where the mental images of the imagination are brought to life through story. It is the realm of monsters, fairies, and flying elephants. For young children, the difference between reality and fantasy is not as strongly delineated as it is in adults. This allows children to be less stereotypical in their ideas, an ability that is often envied by adult artists. As Pablo Picasso said, "Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up."

## Creativity and Play

All children are creative. But their creativity is easily stifled. Spontaneity, imagination, and fantasy are foundations of children's natural play and the place where their creativity is born. Children's creative play is essential for healthy development. The link between play and



cognitive development is strongly supported by research. Child-initiated play develops memory, self-regulation, oral language, social skills, and leads to more successful adjustment to school (Bodrova & Leong, 2004; Singer, Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2006). As they play children gain knowledge and skills. They also discover problems and become motivated to solve them. This is the creative process at work.

However, children today spend much of their time either in adult-organized settings such as school and daycare, or in front of the television or computer screen, and spend less time in child-initiated play. State assessments have increased academic expectations and led to more structured learning at all levels. Time for play and the creative arts is often lost, but it need not be. If we value children's growth and development we can create a playful setting in which academic learning happens, and the creative process is nurtured.

In the following discussion of the creative process, we will see how our behaviors and attitudes, and the decisions we make, can create such a nurturing environment.

### Did You Get It?

**Which of the following is a reason for children's art to be more spontaneous and characterized by fantasy?**

- a. They are not bound by a rigid concept of what is possible.
- b. They feel more pressure to conform to accepted views of reality.
- c. They bring a reservoir of skill and technical expertise.
- d. They tend to take less risk with their limited expertise and experience.

[Take the full quiz on CourseMate](#)







## What Is the Creative Process?

Creativity can be seen as the human ability to use one's knowledge and skill to make plans, to try out ideas, and to come up with a response. This creative process or set of behaviors can be witnessed whenever someone solves a problem or produces a unique response to a situation.





It consists of the following:

-  **Knowledge**—What individuals already know about what they are exploring
-  **Motivation**—The inner drive to accomplish something
-  **Skill**—The development of expertise in using tools and materials or in carrying out an action
-  **Immersion**—Being intensely focused on creating something unique with this knowledge and skill
-  **Incubation**—A period of time in which individuals think and process what they know and what they wish to do
-  **Production**—The active pursuit of a solution or expressive act which may or may not lead to a creative product, presentation, or performance; or

which may be unsuccessful, resulting in the entire process starting over

## Knowledge

Whenever people face a new stimulus or problem, the first thing that comes into play is what they already know and can do. Young children have a much more limited knowledge base than adults, so their responses are often wildly different from those we might expect. The amount of experience children have with an arts material or a technique will influence what their creative response will be. For example, given an assortment of rhythm instruments, a toddler might decide to create a noise by banging the drum with a maraca.

Teachers help children gain knowledge about the arts in several ways.

**Talking about the arts and creativity.** Use a vocabulary rich in artistic language and point out how the children use the different arts elements in their paintings, songs, dances, and make-believe play. For example, children who know what a line is and are aware that there are many different kinds of lines will be able to make a unique line. Activities to use in introducing the art elements are provided in Chapter 4. Use words that describe the creative process. “You thought of many ideas” (fluency). “Your ideas are all so different from each other” (flexibility). “I’ve never seen that before” (originality). “You made it more interesting by adding more” (elaboration).

**Exploring the arts and creativity.** To enhance fluency, provide a variety of arts experiences that allow children to explore new ways of using their bodies, their voices, and the materials and tools of the arts.

**Experiencing the arts and creativity.** Take children to music, drama, and dance performances and show them the works of visual artists. This encourages flexibility and elaboration as children can take what they experienced and build on it to create something new. For example, after seeing a children’s theater production of *Little Red Riding Hood*, a group of children might decide to elaborate and act out the story from the viewpoint of the wolf.

**Accepting individual differences in knowledge.** Each child brings different background knowledge to the arts experience. We must remember that a child’s artistic responses may not be what we expect because their knowledge base is limited. Incorporating a used paper towel into a collage can be seen as a creative choice. It demonstrates an ability to categorize it as a piece of textured paper. This represents a highly creative action, equivalent to the famous Spanish painter Pablo Picasso using a piece of real newspaper to represent itself in an early Cubist painting—which art connoisseurs considered unpleasant at the time.

**Set the stage for creativity.** Creativity is not just an individual experience. Groups can work together to come up with creative ideas and solutions. **Brainstorming**—the listing of ideas in an atmosphere of total acceptance and fun develops fluency, originality, and flexible thinking. Creating **topic webs** allows elaboration. **KWL charts**, which display what children already know, and what they wonder about are a way

to elicit child-initiated problems to solve. Ways to use these strategies are discussed in Chapter 8.

## Motivation

The inner drive that causes an individual to want to do something is called **motivation**. Young children are driven by intense curiosity about the world around them. Everything is new and exciting to them. They want to touch everything, see everything, and try everything. How wonderful for the teacher!

Often we have only to present the arts materials or technique and give a few simple instructions, and the children’s natural curiosity and desire to explore and play will do the rest. This is called **intrinsic motivation**. When intrinsic motivation is at work, smiling, laughing children gather excitedly around us. They ask curious questions and cannot wait to get started. They spend a great deal of time on their explorations, and want to do more and more.



Motivation cannot be taught. It must be inspired. Open-ended materials that can be used in multiple ways (such as blocks) provide choices, risks, and challenges that spark creativity. These children show intense concentration as they discover if their ideas will work to solve the emergent problem of balancing the blocks.

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Giving rewards and prizes is known as **extrinsic motivation**. Prizes or stars for “good” work or competition among students to win a ribbon replace intrinsic motivation with extrinsic motivation and do not belong in an arts program for young children. Such external rewards have been shown to have a limiting effect on creativity. Research by Therese Amabile (1983) found that children produced more artworks when engaged in an open-ended, free play environment than when offered rewards. Another study, in which children were asked to tell stories from a picture book, showed that the group that was rewarded produced stories judged less creative than those by children in the unrewarded group (Amabile, Hennessey, & Grossman, 1986).

In order to create an intrinsically motivating environment, teachers need to be as creative as their students. However, the side benefit to creating a motivating environment is that it also build a classroom community that welcomes and celebrates difference, looks on failure as a way to learn, and provides success for students with special needs. Here are some ways to foster motivation in the arts as well as all areas of learning.

**Provide choice.** Intrinsically motivating activities are always **open-ended**. These are activities that have a multitude of possible results and ways of getting there. When children choose what material they will use or what idea they will express, they take interest in and feel ownership of their work, which will heighten their motivation.

**Be sensitive.** Unfortunately, intrinsic motivation is a delicate force. It may be easily lost through inappropriate organization or presentation of arts activities. Overly restrictive arts activities quickly dampen a child’s natural curiosity. Self-motivation in children is diminished by materials that can be used in only one way, projects that must match a teacher-made model, or actions that must conform to a fixed standard.

**Be surprising.** Intrinsic motivation occurs when the mind is active. Get children thinking and asking questions by making sure something new or surprising is always happening in the room. Display new artworks, introduce new materials, play unfamiliar music, wear unusual clothing, tell new stories, and constantly discuss new ideas and experiences.

**Be flexible.** Intrinsic motivation develops from within. Create child ownership of problems and ideas



## Across Cultures

### Creativity Across Cultures

Reading books about creative people from many places and times is a great way to celebrate diversity and introduce children to the ways our creativity can make the world a better place for us all.

Numerous children’s books depict people solving problems in creative ways. In Karen Williams’ book *Galimoto*. (1991 New York: HarperCollins) an African boy collects a variety of discarded materials to build a toy car. This is an excellent book to use with children to inspire them to be “creators.” Follow up reading the story by cleaning up litter around the school grounds. Use what you find to invent something new or that will help people stop littering.

For more books and activities, see *Books That Celebrate Creativity on CourseMate*.

by being willing to change direction and follow up on their interests and passions. If a child arrives at school excited because he or she just saw the moon out during the day, take the whole group outside to see it and then together research the moon, read books to learn more, make up stories, songs, and dances to express ideas and feelings about the moon.

**Be encouraging.** Establish an environment in which mistakes are part of the learning process. Eliminate the word *failure* and substitute the word *persevere*. Record children’s progress, noting ideas that did not work as learning steps and things learned. Share examples of people who suffered many failures before their ideas worked or were accepted, such as Leonardo DaVinci. Read books that show creativity at work such as Peter Reynold’s *The Dot* (2003), in which a young girl who says she cannot draw is encouraged by a teacher to just make a mark and find out where it takes her.

**Be accepting.** Teach children to respect the differing ideas and work of others in an atmosphere where insults and ridicule are banned. Anxiety about making a mistake can prevent children from fully exploring an arts activity.

**Welcome everyone.** In selecting arts activities consider the special needs and skill levels of every child in the group. When activities are truly open-ended and process-oriented, they are inclusive—every child has an equal opportunity to participate successfully in their own unique way. Avoid activities that require lockstep