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ABSTRACT

Giving children the opportunity to be creative requires allowing children to find and solve problems and communicate ideas in novel and appropriate ways. This paper presents 12 basic principles for teachers to follow when presenting art activities with children. These principles include: the process of creating a picture or project is more important than the end product; do not expose children to coloring books, patterns, or coloring stencils; do not compare one child's art to another's; do not show children "how to draw"; and never tell a child to "stop scribbling." The creative stages all children go through are also described. First is the scribble stage (ages 2 to 4 years), during which the child progresses from uncontrolled scribble to controlled scribble to a named controlled scribble; then the preschematic stage (4 to 7 years), in which the child draws "things" that are not easily labeled and float all over the page; and finally, the schematic stage (7 to 9 years), in which the child's drawing can be easily labeled as they begin to draw on a baseline. Directions for 16 creative art activities are appended. (ND)

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HOW ART ACTIVITIES CAN BE USED TO ENHANCE
THE EDUCATION OF YOUNG CHILDREN

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How Art Activities Can Be Used To Enhance
The Education of Young Children

When we teach children the visual arts, we really do not teach but rather we provide rich, manipulative, concrete experiences for young children. When a teacher gives children the opportunity to be creative, it requires allowing children to find and solve problems and communicate ideas in novel and appropriate ways. Sometimes teachers think they are teaching children to be creative when they do very structured activities. For instance, some teachers give children a stenciled sheet with a nursery rhyme character to color. When asked, "What is creative about that activity?" the reply has been, that the children got to choose their own colors. A true creative activity might be to read a nursery rhyme to the children, talk about it, dramatize it, and ask the children to draw their own picture about the rhyme (Starko, 1995). This paper will present some basic principles to remember when presenting art activities with children as well as a description of the creative stages young children go through. A list of 16 creative art activities are included at the end.

Basic Principles

1. Do not impose your personality on children by always telling them what they should draw. It is acceptable to tell children that they can draw a picture of their favorite zoo animal after a trip to the zoo. However, if the children draw something else it should also be acceptable. There should be many times that children are not given directions as to what to draw.
2. Remember that the process the child goes through in creating a picture or project is more important than the end product.

3. Do not expose children to coloring books, patterns or coloring stencils as it will make them feel that their own drawings are not good. It will also make them not want to draw or create without a pattern.

4. Do not correct the "wrong" proportions in a child's drawing as that is what makes his art work so charming and sometimes funny. It is alright for a flower to be bigger than a house.

5. Sometimes a child will draw unhappy pictures and this may tell you what is really going on in the child's life. For instance, a child may draw very sexual pictures if she is being sexually abused.

6. Do not compare one child's art to another. Display all children's art in the room.

7. Do not have art contests or rewards for the best pictures. This makes children do less art work not more. They become inhibited and fear failure.

8. Never draw for a child, draw on his paper, draw side by side, or suggest that he add to or take away anything on his paper.

9. Do not show children "how to draw." Do not demonstrate how to draw a flower, etc.

10. Use many types of activities with children such as crayons, painting, clay, collage, etc.

11. Never tell children to stop scribbling as this stage is absolutely normal and developmentally appropriate for children.

12. Young children draw from within. Do not set up still-lives or have them draw from looking at pictures.

Creative Stages All Children Go Through

The Scribble Stage-Two To Four Years

At the age of about 18 months, the child may be given a crayon, pen or pencil. The child will hold this with his fist and begin to scribble. He will usually look at the page for a second and look up. He will often laugh and act shocked at what he has done. This level is the disorder scribble stage. The lines made will be jumbled up with no control.

The next level of the scribble stage is called the controlled scribble stage. This occurs about six months later and the child will spend twice as long drawing and looking at her drawings. He will begin repeating symbols. For instance, he will make an unclosed circle over and over.

The last level of the scribble stage looks just like the control scribble stage except the child begins naming his picture. He will say things like, "This is my dog." Try not to laugh because it will still look like the controlled scribble stage. This level is called the naming the scribble stage. It is important for children to be allowed to scribble as it lays the foundation for later literacy.

The Preschematic Stage-Four To Seven Years

This stage is really delightful. The child will begin to draw "things." Of course, you may not know what that "thing" is until the child tells you what it is. When he or she states what it is, you can usually decipher what it is, too! At this stage, their objects will just float all over the page. The child draws all pictures from within themselves (egocentric behavior) and they will exaggerate what is important in their thinking. For example, if the

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child has a loose tooth he or she may make a big mouth on the picture with a huge tooth hanging out.

You will really enjoy this stage if you remember to delight in the lack of conformity the child demonstrated. They may color a picture of you with green hair! Do not correct the child's choice of color. That is what makes his work so charming.

The Schematic Stage-Seven To Nine Years

Although this is not the last stage of creative development, it is the last stage in the early years. At this stage, the child's drawing can be easily labeled as they begin to draw on a baseline. Their drawings will have a line across them and everything they place in the picture will be on the baseline. Things can no longer "float" on the page. The child will draw everything in great order -- the house, the tree, the flower, all on the line. In addition, the child may draw a sky line. Some children draw curved baselines or more than one baseline.

When you ask children at this stage, what is between the sky and the ground they will say that it is "just air." Do not try to teach children to draw the sky down to the ground or the horizon. They do that in a later stage. In this stage color becomes much more realistic. They will not draw your hair green anymore, but they still exaggerate. Also, children develop a schema for things like a person and will repeat the schema over and over (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987).

References

Lowenfeld, V., & Brittain, W. L. (1987). Creative and mental growth (8th ed.). New York: Macmillan.

Starko, A. (1995). Creativity in the classroom. White Plains, New York: Longman.

ART ACTIVITIES

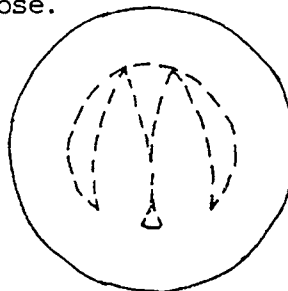
HATS

Fancy Hats

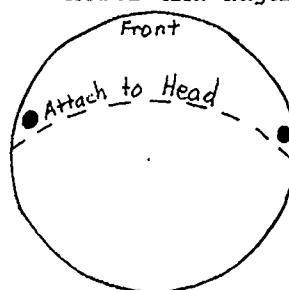
Hats of paper and paste are shaped to fit your own head. Paste together two big squares of wrapping paper. You end up with one damp square. Have somebody set this on your head, mold the crown of the hat, and tie string around your brow to hold the shape. Wait 10 minutes; then take it off, shape it, let it dry.

BUNNY HATS

To make bunny hats take one sturdy paper plate. Follow the diagram below and cut on the dotted lines. Fold the center sections up in order to form the ears. If desired, add pipe cleaners to the back of the ears for durability. Paint and decorate however you choose.

**SUN VISORS**

Sun visors can be made from sturdy paper plates. The diagram below illustrates how to cut the paper plate. Follow the dotted lines. Punch holes at the circles. Tie the yarn through the holes and adjust to fit your head.

**NEWSPAPER HATS**

To make a newspaper hat find a partner. Take two pieces of newspaper, and cover the partner's head. Tape around the head of the partner twice. Bend the newspaper upwards and tape it. Go all around the head bending the paper and taping it.

Paint the hat with spray paint being sure to cover the paint area with plenty of newspaper.

Decorate the hat with tissue paper, construction paper, buttons, markers, or yarn. Paper flowers for your hat can be made from tissue paper, coffee filters or muffin tins.

Switch places with your partner and make a hat for your head.

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PAPER PLAY

Torn Tissue Design

Torn shapes of bright tissue paper can look spectacular in an abstract design. Arrange the pieces on a sheet of white poster board. Experiment with color mixtures by overlapping some of the pieces -- yellow over red creates orange, and pale blue over pink turns into a beautiful shade of violet.

Add a few extra ingredients, like dried weeds or pieces of colored string. Brush white glue, thinned with water, over everything. After the picture dries, you can coat it with glossy acrylic polymer to give it a nice sheen.

Oil Water Art

Oil and water have a friendly relationship in a painting. This is how you mix them: partly fill a shallow baking pan with water. Dribble several colors of oil-based enamel paint across the water (it's toxic, so make sure nobody taste it). Swirl the puddles of paint with a toothpick.

Lay a sheet of good art paper on the surface of the water. Tap it gently; then lift it off and look at the design. Let it dry flat on newspapers (this may take a whole day).

Surprising swirls of color appear when you lift up an oil and water painting.

Shimmer & Shine Wraps

You need a large roll of heavy duty aluminum foil. From an art supply store get some colorful tissue paper and a bottle of glossy acrylic polymer. Mix it with a little water. Tear or cut up the paper. Arrange the pieces on the foil and brush the gloss all over, letting it soak through. Like glue, it makes the paper stick to the foil.

The results are dazzling.

Dip & Dye Snowflakes

Use cone or square-shaped coffee filter papers. Fold them in half, quarters, thirds -- or just fold them haphazardly. Dip them, blot them, open them up, and let them dry. Then fold the papers again. Cut out snowflake lace, following one of the patterns on the left or inventing your own pattern. Tape the snowflakes to a sunny window -- the colors will blaze with cheer.

Dipping

Fold-and-dye is a way of producing colorful patterns on absorbent paper. What you do is fold the paper into a fairly small packet. Experiment with the fold patterns sketched below, or make up your own.

Dip the corners of the packets in bowls of dye. The dye can be either diluted food coloring or strong water colors. The more absorbent the paper, the faster the dyes will spread. You can control this by blotting the packet between paper towels.

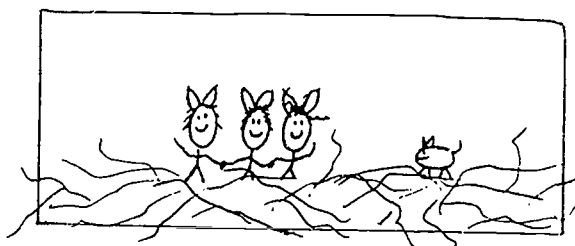
Rice paper takes the dyes beautifully -- but this project goes very fast, so you might want to use something less expensive, like paper towels.

EASTER

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LIMA BEAN FAMILIES

The first thing to do is to glue Easter grass onto a sheet of construction paper. Trim the excess grass from the edges. Glue one lima bean onto the paper for each member of the family. Next, draw a face on the lima beans and add paper bunny rabbit ears. Add any details to the picture that you would like.



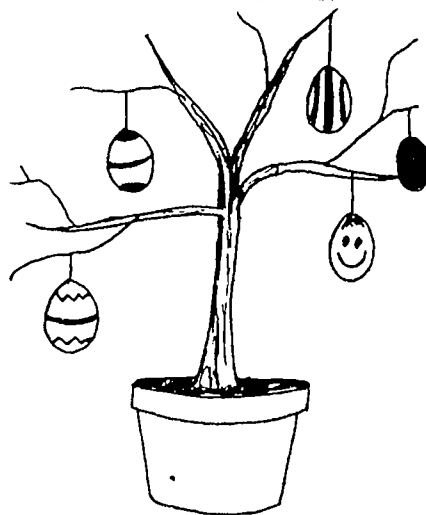
CONSTRUCTION PAPER EGGS

Read the story Little B Rabbits and Painted Eggs by Edna Barth. Cut an oval shape from construction paper. Use your imagination and decorate the egg shape any way that you would like. Glue the egg to another sheet of construction paper.



EGG TREE

Read the story The Egg Tree by Katherine Milhous. Demonstrate to students how the colors red, yellow, and blue can be mixed together to make the secondary colors. Use food coloring and 3 plastic cups with water so that you can see the colors as they mix. Now decorate your own construction paper Easter egg. Paint or color your egg. Cut a piece of yarn to thread through a hole in the paper egg and hang it onto a tree branch.



PRINTING

SANDPAPER DESIGN

Cut a sheet of white construction paper to the size of a piece of sandpaper. Create a picture on the sandpaper with crayons. Turn the sandpaper design upside down onto the sheet of construction paper. Iron the back of the sandpaper with a hot iron. The crayon will melt onto the construction paper creating a second picture.

FINGER PRINTS

Pour a small amount of tempera paint into a jar lid. Stick thumb into the paint and then put it on the paper. Use magic markers or a felt-tip pen to add detail to the print. Create all sorts of fun critters.



MUD PRINTS

Place one spoonful of chocolate pudding onto a paper plate. Smear the "mud" around on the plate and create a picture. When the design is complete turn the paper plate upside down onto a sheet of white construction paper and gently press down on the paper plate. Lift the paper plate up and a print of the mud drawing will remain on the paper. When dry add the following poem to the print:

Mud is very nice to feel
All squish-squash between the toes!
I'd rather wade in wiggly mud
Than smell a yellow rose.

Nobody else but the rosebush knows
How nice mud feels
Between the toes.

Polly Chase Boyden

FRUIT & VEGETABLE DESIGNS

Cut a red cabbage in half and notice the beautiful ripples formed by its leaves. Many other fruits and vegetables have interesting patterns of skin, pulp, and seeds hidden inside them, too. You can capture these designs on paper. Just roll water-based printing ink on the cut side of the fruit or vegetable. Then press it on a sheet of paper over several layers of newspaper. Besides cabbage, you might try halves of onions, artichokes, oranges, apples, mushrooms, green peppers, and string beans. Let them drain, cut side down, for a while before you print with them. If you don't have any ink on hand, poster paint works almost as well. Pour a little of either on the bottom of a glass baking dish or cookie sheet. Roll it out with a brayer. Use the brayer to coat the cut side of the fruit or vegetable. You should be able to print several times with one coating. If you don't have a brayer, try pouring poster paint on several layers of paper towels and stamping the fruit or vegetable in it.