

The importance of art in a child's development



The Importance of Art in a Child's Development Shimona Vig M. F. A Art Education III Semester Have you ever seen a child painting over a sheet of paper with both hands, pulling her fingertips through the paint to scribble? Or observed a child coloring in freehand circles with crayons? If yes, then you have seen the concentration on these children's faces, and the joyful expressions of art explored. You have witnessed creative art in process! I talked to few parents who do art activities with their kids on a regular basis, " Why is art important? One of the parent said, " My kids express things through their art that they don't even have words for yet. " Another parent said, " Art helps my kids feel willing to try new ideas, to experiment, to solve problems. " Some said, " After our kids spend time creating art, they focus better in math, science, and other academic assignments. " Some answered, " It seems art is the one area where kids and their creativity have free reign. " Most of the people know that art is important for children; they simply believe it's important because they've seen children deeply involved in art.

But as an art student we can say that art helps in the overall development of children. Creating art expands child's ability to interact with the world around them, and provides a new set of skills for self-expression and communication. Art helps children to express themselves freely, to become self confident and to explore different ways of representing their thoughts and feelings. Not only does art help to develop their brain, it also cultivates important skills that benefit a child's development. Children Develop Life Skills through Art Activities

Art may seem like fun and games but the child is actually learning a lot through exploring the arts and doing art activities. Children gain useful life

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skills through art like: Communication Skills: When a child draws a picture or paints a portrait, that child is beginning to communicate visually. A child may draw to document an actual experience like playing in the park, release feelings of joy by painting swirling colors, or share an emotionally charged experience like the passing of a loved one through art. Art goes beyond verbal language to communicate feelings that might not otherwise be expressed.

Problem-Solving Skills: When children explore art ideas, they are testing possibilities and working through challenges, much like a scientist who experiments and finds solutions. Should I use a shorter piece of paper to balance my collage? This glue isn't holding - what should I try instead? How did I make brown - I thought I made orange? Art allows children to make their own assessments, while also teaching them that a problem may have more than one answer. Instead of following specific rules or directions, the child's brain becomes engaged in the discovery of "how" and "why". Even when experimenting or learning how to handle art materials effectively, children are solving challenges and coming up with new ways to handle unexpected outcomes. Social & Emotional Skills: Art helps children come to terms with themselves and the control they have over their efforts. Through art, they also practice sharing and taking turns, as well as appreciating one another's efforts. Art fosters positive mental health by allowing a child to show individual uniqueness as well as success and accomplishment, all part of a positive self-concept.

Child starts representing his cultural backgrounds which motivates him to gain more knowledge about his culture and society. Fine Motor Skills: Fine

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motor skills enable a child do things like delicately turn the page of a book or fill in a sheet of paper with written words, holding a paintbrush so that it will make the desired marks, cutting paper with scissors into definite shapes, drawing with a crayon, squeezing glue from a bottle in a controlled manner, or molding a clay. These all help to develop a child's fine motor skills and control of materials.

This results in the physical development of the child. Self-Expression and Creativity Children express themselves through art. Their artwork is the manifestation (clear appearance) of their expression. Eg: a six-year-old joyfully paints flowers with huge arm movements blending, reds and yellows; a ten year-old draws a portrait of her grandmother who recently passed away. Creating art allows children to work through feelings and emotions, and referring to a finished piece of artwork helps a child talk about feelings in a new and meaningful way. Art also develops a child's creativity.

Rather than being told what to do, answers and directions come from the child. Art is an experience that requires freethinking, experimentation, and analysis - all part of creativity. Many people misunderstand "talent" from "creativity" - a child does not have to create a masterpiece to have a meaningful artistic experience. Art is a process, not a product. Where art is concerned, it is the process of creating - exploring, discovering, and experimenting - that has the greatest value. Through self-expression and creativity, children's skills will develop naturally, and their ability to create will soar (rise rapidly).

Thinking process Art activities also help the children to think. The beautiful concept of the artwork of the children is the combination of the conscious and subconscious mind. The knowledge and experiences increases and new ideas develop and enhance the creativity of the children. Learning through Art Activity Learning in an art activity begins with thinking, knowing and doing or vise-a-versa. Children learn to produce expressive forms, invent new ideas, draw from their experience and also form symbols from images of perceptions.

They also learn to use their imagination through art. Development of Uniqueness and Individuality Uniqueness and individuality also develops while performing an art activity. Each individual has his special ways of seeing, of thinking, of inventing and of expressing. Art activity enhances this individuality by providing the freedom to express. Education of the Senses Art requires forming concepts from experiences. But to form those concepts children need to develop their senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, touching and taste. Through art they learn to make use of their responses.

Devi Prasada wrote a book, " Art the basis of Education" in which he explained about how intervention in child education should be the basis for real social change. He said that one can express his feelings in a non violent manner through art. Many Indian artists like Rabindranath Tagore (1861 - 1941) and Nandlal Bose (1882) also considered art very important and a creative way to express. Sri Aurbindo (1872 - 1950) connected ' Art' to ' Spirituality'. He explains that the great quest of the mind is knowledge and the seeking for perfection the mind is never satisfied with what is; it always want to improve, organize and optimise.

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Management, planning, strategy and analysis are necessary. And I can say that all these skills are developed through art. Apart from these developments many researchers have also found some strong correlations between arts training and several cognitive functions. They believe that if a child is open to a specific art form, and receives training in it, the child will develop strong motivation to sustain attention to learn it. With highly sustained attention, the child essentially walls out competing things, and the child's cognitive abilities are generally enhanced.

Art is the way to strengthen abilities to focus attention that could benefit learning in general. Dr. Vivek Benegal from NIMHANS, Bangalore made a terrific presentation on the brain "on art" in which he explained that different art forms, such as music or dance activate quite distinct neural networks. But if students remain open to the experience and stay interested, all the art form seems to interact with the attention network. When a child performs an art activity, he explains, how different areas of his brain are activated like: Orbitofrontal cortex - attention & judgement

Cingulated gyrus - learning Nucleus accumbens - pleasure Amygdala, extended limbic system - emotional value Hippocampus, precuneus - memory Visual areas Various studies and reports indicate that students involved in the arts exhibit higher academic achievement than their peers who are not involved in the arts (Smithrim & Upitis, 2005). Performing arts like music training is also correlated with cognitive abilities such as reading. As a result, researchers began to look at science, specifically the breakthrough in cognitive science, as a possible link to the influence of the arts on learning.

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Few among the researchers and practitioners who have been doing research and development in cognition as it applies to education are Geoffrey and Renate Caine (1997), Diamond (1998), Jensen (1998), Kovalik (1999), Silver (1995), Stevens (1999), Sylwester (1995), and Wolfe and Sorgen (1990). Findings of Hurley and Eisan (1997), measuring affective impacts from integrating the arts, note that there is increasing research which supports the belief that arts helps to develop cognitive abilities & that the arts can enhance learning in other subjects.

Tishman, MacGillivray & Palmer (1999) found that children who were able to draw inferences (logical judgement) about fine art were able to transfer their reasoning to images in science. Lopez, Takiff, Kernan and Stone (2000) found a strong relationship between academic and artistic efficacy; findings suggest that " there is a significant cognitive transfer from arts education to other academic areas". Further research on this is the monumental work of Winner and Hetland (2000), particularly their meta-analysis of the arts and academic achievement as a special issue of the Journal of Aesthetic Education.

In 2004 the Dana Foundation brought together cognitive neuroscientists from seven U. S. universities to study the question of why arts training are associated with higher academic performance. Findings allow for more understanding of how to define and evaluate the possible causal relationship between arts training and the ability of the brain to learn in other cognitive domains (Gazzaniga, 2008). Dr. Brian Wandell of Stanford found that the amount of music training children had in the first years of his three year

study directly correlated with the amount of improvements in children's reading fluency over those three years.

Another correlation between music training and cognition, specifically memory, was made by Dr. John Jonides at the University of Michigan. His research demonstrated that people intensively trained in music apply rehearsal strategies - especially cognitive strategies rather than brain changes - to maintain information in working (immediate) and long-term memory more effectively. Dr. Jonides also looked at the effects of training in acting on memory. He similarly found that trained actors don't have better verbatim memory than non actors.

Rather they are better able to extract the general gist from an experience - a cognitive strategy - and this skill is transferable to other verbal cognitive skills. And through dance, Dr. Scott Grafton (the University of California), found that learning to dance by effective observations closely related to learning by physical practice. Even more recently Stevenson and Deasy (2005) found that, through the arts, students become more engaged in school and learn to make meaning of the world from different perspectives, which then helps them make sense of other kinds of information. Conclusion

As we consider engagement in the arts and home-based as well as community-based factors we find the work has just begun. Art is not just a three letter word but has a vast meaning and influence on the whole development of the child and intern reflects the society. Art is a beautiful way by which a person can channelize his energy in a positive manner. The education of art is a way of teaching children to become better person and

better citizens. It is a way of exercising, self expression, training to notice, (sensitivity and empathy) and practicing to understand emotions. Art is a way to undersatand ourselves in a better way.