



**December 2014:
The Creative Arts and Child Development**

Background

As a child, what were your favorite art activities? Did you like taking a small mound of clay and molding it into a work of art that you imagined? Or singing a song that shared the excitement that you were feeling? Or making up a dance routine with your best friends? It isn't surprising that research tell us there's a relationship between the creative arts and a child's development. Studies have shown that the arts help children develop fine motor skills, social and emotional skills, and cognitive ability. Asking children to describe their works of art not only fosters their language and literacy skills, but it teaches them how to express themselves in a healthy way. Process focused art allows children to expand their thinking by exploring the material, imagining a creation, and executing a plan. Beyond that, art, music, theater, dance can also be avenues for sharing diverse cultures with children and helping them understand the wide world around them.

For some Head Start programs, music integration has been a success. One great example is the partnership between [Music in Schools Today's MusicFirst! Head Start program](#), a 15-week early childhood education program designed to help students achieve literacy skills and school readiness, implemented with Head Start programs in Oakland and San Mateo, CA. The program collaborates with Head Start teachers and each class ties in music to age appropriate children's literature and instruments. The program has been well received by the Head Start community and the children that they serve.

To celebrate Head Start's 50th Anniversary through the creative arts, NHSA and Teaching Strategies are hosting the [Head StART: My Favorite PART Challenge](#). Classrooms of Head Start children from across the country are invited to create original works of group art to illustrate their favorite part of Head Start! Two national awards will be presented and the winning entries will be reproduced on a commemorative 50th Anniversary poster that will be distributed to all Head Start and Early Head Start programs. For full details, please review the [Application Toolkit](#) and the [Submission Form](#). All entries must be submitted by January 5, 2015. Please contact Jane Adams at jadams@nhsa.org if you have any questions.

Resources

[Creative Arts Expression](#)

Creative Arts Expression is one piece of the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework. Did you know that the ECLKC provides strategies, lesson plans, videos, and assessment tools to help with arts instructions? Check out those resources at the link above as well as additional activities and the research that backs them up [here](#).

[Making the transition from product to process focused art](#)

by Deborah J. Stewart

Art time is a great chance for children to use their imagination to create an original work of art. However many times classroom art activities are product focused rather than process focused, meaning they're less about imagination and more about all creating the same thing. In this blog post, the author highlights how to transition from product to process focused art. Most helpful, the author addresses key struggles that educators may have and explains how to articulate the learning process to parents and other staff.

[Child Development: Creativity in young children](#)

In this article the authors seek to help parents and adults that work with children understand the creative process. A brief overview of the developmental stages of children's art is provided along with examples of what they create in each one. It is important to note that children will enter and leave each stage on their own. A wonderful part of this article features creative materials and recipes for making fun and safe textures for children to explore and create.

[I've Got Rhythm! Fostering Child-Centered Musical Activities for Preschoolers](#)

by Rekha S Rajan, EdD

This brief article by a former early childhood music teacher guides the reader in creating child-centered musical activities. The author underlines nine criteria that the Arts Education Partnership believe that educators should consider when developing art activities. In addition the article provides examples of songs to use and listening activities for children to practice when listening to music. For additional resources, visit the [National Association for Music Education](#).

Research

Early Childhood Education Journal

[The Importance of Art Viewing Experiences in Early Childhood Visual Arts: The Exploration of a Master Art Teacher's Strategies for Meaningful Early Arts Experiences](#)

by Angela Eckhoff

Angela Eckhoff focuses on the how the visual arts can be a rich learning opportunity for young children. Experts support the idea of introducing young children to high quality works of art in museums in order to help them develop skills such as critical analysis. This article documents the strategies used by a master art teacher at the Denver Art Museum during a preschool arts program and the results of those efforts for how children were able to approach, discuss, and create art. The summer program was "designed to introduce young children to visual arts world through positive and meaningful art viewing activities and art making projects." The four strategies used included many that are effective across early learning: Game Play, Questioning, Storytelling, and Technical Talk, implemented both during visits to the museum gallery and in children's own creative work. Eckhoff underscores the need to integrate art education pedagogy in teacher preparation courses in order to maximize the learning experiences of children.

Early Childhood Research Quarterly

[Arts enrichment and school readiness for children at risk](#)

by Eleanor Brown, Barbara Benedett, and M. Elizabeth Armistead

In this study, the authors examined the use of an arts curriculum for full-day preschool instruction for low-income children in two ways. The Kaleidoscope Preschool model uses integrated arts instruction to embed school readiness skills in areas including language, literacy, and mathematics, into activities across the spectrum of the arts. Brown, Benedett, and Armistead first studied the effect of children participating for year or two in Kaleidoscope Preschool and found that two years got children more ready for school. Then they compared the program with another preschool with a more typical curriculum. The authors found that children who were exposed to more high-quality art education showed greater vocabularies and that there was no racial or ethnic achievement gap among the students, perhaps because the arts instruction encouraged such a range of ways for students to express their learning regardless of language differences and embraced many different cultures. The authors conclude that arts enrichment may advance educational outcomes for at-risk children.

International Journal of Music Education

[The power of music: Its impact on the intellectual, social and personal development of children and young people](#)

by Susan Hallam

Much research has supported the positive effect that music has on children's listening skills, especially for children with learning difficulties. This study explores the growing evidence of the impact of music on language development, literacy, numeracy, measures of intelligence, general attainment, creativity, fine motor coordination, concentration, self-confidence, emotional sensitivity, social skills, teamwork, self-discipline, and relaxation. For example, preschool aged children who received music training for 25 minutes for seven weeks showed increased cognitive processing. The author suggests that this evidence supports the need to improve music education pedagogy.

Discussion Questions

1. Pretend that you are speaking to your parent committee about creativity. The parents ask you for important things that they can do at home to enhance their children's creativity. Specifically, what three suggestions do you share?
 2. Do your classrooms spend more time on product or process focused art? What tips and tricks did you learn from the blog post [Making the transition from product to process focused art](#) that can help facilitate a more thoughtful art experience for children?
 3. In [Child Development: Creativity in young children](#), the authors give suggestions on how teachers and parents can help children navigate their creative experience. What strategies can your program use?
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Do you know of other recent research that may be of interest to the Head Start field? Do you have other questions, comments or concerns? E-mail Emmalie Dropkin (edropkin@nhsa.org).