



Art, Literacy and Learning

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Art Therapy & Sensory Play
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ART activities are some of the best ways to promote literacy and brain development in early childhood. Early childhood is an especially important time for hands-on, self-directed learning. Art engages children's senses in open-ended play and develops cognitive, social-emotional and multi-sensory skills. Meaningful art experiences provide children with authentic self-expression—the freedom of choice, thought and feeling.

The Synergy Between Art and Literacy

Spatial Relations/Visual Literacy: Art promotes print awareness and the ability to differentiate scribbles, markings and shapes—as well as directionality and position.

Eye/Hand/Brain Coordination: Art promotes the ability to interpret visual information, alter that information and respond to a continuous flow of new information being sent from eye to hand to brain.

Verbal Creativity: Combining literacy and art activities allows children to expand their oral communication skills and learn a wide range of sensory-rich vocabulary words.

Visual Creativity: Combining literacy and art experiences allows children to represent their ideas and feelings visually, and enhances imagination, visual language, and spatial relations skills.

Aesthetics: Combining literacy and art allows children to have daily opportunities for aesthetic expression.

Self-Esteem: Self-esteem is enhanced when children's emerging literacy skills and art explorations are valued and respected.

Developmental Goals of Art

Physical Development

1. Fine-motor development
2. Visual/perceptual development
3. Eye/hand/brain coordination
4. Spatial awareness

Cognitive Development

1. Decision making skills
2. Problem solving skills
3. Cause and effect understanding
4. Non-verbal communication

Social Development

1. Social and oral language skills
2. Sharing materials and taking turns
3. Respect for own work and work of others
4. Multicultural awareness

Emotional Development

1. Independence in making choices
2. Creative self-expression
3. Sensory pleasure and satisfaction
4. Self-esteem



Practical Ideas for Your Classroom

- Create a rich literacy environment by putting books, print materials and writing materials in all areas.
- Organize field trips to libraries and post offices, so children can experience real-world literacy concepts.
- Organize field trips to local artists' studios, and expose children to real artists at work in their community.
- Provide visual stimulation with pictures, photos, art posters and children's art throughout the classroom.
- Combine art and language activities to create books, posters, charts and dramatic play/storytelling props.
- Introduce a wide variety of art experiences, such as construction, collage, drawing, fingerpainting, modeling, outdoor art, group mural painting, watercoloring, printmaking, stitchery, sculpting.

