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Chapter 3
Significance of Adult Input in Early Childhood Artistic Development

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Artistic development in the early childhood years has received a significant amount of attention from psychologists, educators, and others concerned with the arts. The breadth and intensity of this interest are not surprising, for the tendency to create visual images in the relatively early stages of life seems to transcend cultural, social, and economic boundaries (cf., Gardner, 1976; Kellogg, 1970).

Viewing Artistic Growth

The phenomenon of artistic growth has been addressed from at least three perspectives. The first is centered around the natural, genetically preprogrammed unfolding of dispositions controlled by maturation. The second is based on considerations of the learning processes which interact with natural maturation and precipitate or alter artistic growth. The third is concerned with the nature of art, aesthetic value, and the unique properties of images produced by children. This chapter takes these perspectives into account while discussing a contemporary disparity between what is known about the nature of childhood and artistic development and the approaches that parents and preschool teachers take in addressing the issue of artistic growth.

For decades, Piaget's conception of developmental stages in human development influenced researchers in the area of developmental psychology. Piaget (1926, 1928, 1952, 1969) identified a sequence of developmental changes in children's mental structures associated with four fundamental, and qualitatively different, stages in human development. Piaget suggested that transitions between stages could be explained in terms of four factors which contribute to development: biological maturation, equilibration, experience, and social transmission.

Although Piaget was specifically concerned with the intellectual development of children, his theory indicated that cognitive structures formed logical groupings which together composed an integrated whole. It seemed logical to assume that the stages Piaget identified applied to other domains of human development as well. This position, however, has been questioned by several researchers (e.g., Gardner, 1976; Hardiman & Zernich, 1988) concerned with children's artistic development. Gardner (1976) argues that during the sensorimotor stage, infants and toddlers involved in sensory explorations and the mastery of motor skills are not in any way involved in the arts. Gardner's conception of the arts as integrally concerned with symbol systems precludes authentic artistic involvement before children come to understand the meanings of concepts and acquire the ability to manipulate them. Gardner also suggests that 7-year-old children, at the very onset of the concrete operational stage, possess structures necessary to become artists and that no qualitatively different stages are required to fully participate in the artistic process.

Other theorists, including Lowenfeld (1952), maintain that qualitative changes in artistic development occur well into the formal operational stage. Some researchers emphasize the role of quantitative changes as well. Hardiman and Zernich (1988) note the role of quantitative differences within qualitatively different stages and propose that the stages should be regarded "as being in the process of becoming and not ending" (p. 363). These researchers agree with Gardner (1976) that the formal operational stage in intellectual development has no equivalent in artistic development.

The crucial period in children's artistic growth, then, corresponds to Piaget's preoperational and early concrete operational stages. If, in fact, it is at some point between the second and ninth or tenth birthday that children acquire the structures that henceforward guide artistic endeavors, it is surprising how little attention is given to the active enhancement of artistic growth in the first half of this time span.

Explanations for this lack of active investment in preschool children's artistic development can be found

in the recent history of art education. Efland's (1976) review of changing positions on the issue of children's artistic development and their impact on art instruction describes some of the historical conditions that still bear on today's practice.

According to Efland, childhood was not recognized as a unique stage in artistic development until the end of the nineteenth century. In Walter Smith's Massachusetts Normal Art School, or in institutions influenced by the philosophy of Arthur Wesley Dow, children were seen as untrained and unskilled miniature adults, who needed to develop good habits and learn proper drawing skills. Teaching approaches were based on considerations of the nature of art (e.g., Smith, 1875) rather than the special needs of children.

The Child-Centered Approach

Only with the increase of interest in child studies at the turn of the last century did emphasis in art education begin to shift. As often is the case, what was previously unappreciated and neglected became the centerpiece of a new philosophy. The "child centered-approach" quickly became the doctrine to follow in art education. The philosophy of Franz Cizek (cited in MacDougall, 1926 & Rugg & Schumacher, 1928) was especially attractive to educators representing the progressive front. Cizek believed that "method poisons art" (Efland, 1976, p. 71) and that teachers should only "take off the lid" (Efland, 1976, p. 71) and allow the child to develop from within. Victor Lowenfeld (1952), whose views significantly influenced practice in art education after World War II, agreed with Cizek on many points, including the belief that any input from the outside world is potentially negative. Lowenfeld held that every child had an inborn creative impulse, which was inhibited by the outside world.

Much has been written and researched in the areas of education and art education since the first edition of Lowenfeld's *Creative and Mental Growth* appeared (e.g., Burton, 1980; Eisner, 1976; Wilson & Wilson, 1977). However, in many schools across North America, teachers continue to leave young children undisturbed, hoping that their art will unfold naturally with as few external influences as possible. This noninterventionist philosophy is even more universally held by preschool teachers. Tarr (1989) argued that Cizek's approach to early childhood art education coexists in today's North American schools with models influenced by Pestalozzi (1915) and Froebel (1887). Tarr observed that, in setting up art centers, preschool teachers often resort to art activities reminiscent of Pestalozzi's "gifts and occupations." They do so, however, while professing a noninterventionist philosophy.

The child-centered approach to education brought attention to the unique abilities and needs of young learners. However, it also carried several undesirable side effects. The philosophy of "unfolding" was instrumental in reinforcing the common (and convenient) belief that artistic development takes care of itself. Little or no art training was necessary for teachers who would subsequently expend little effort on behalf of artistic learning. The undeniable expedience of this approach may account for the fact that contrary recommendations by many contemporary leaders in the field (e.g., Eisner, 1976; Wilson & Wilson, 1982) seem to pass unnoticed.

The Role of Adults

Life provides strong evidence that artistic learning is not the automatic result of maturation and self-guided experience. Many young adults, graduates of child-centered programs and "products" of noninterventionist approaches to art education, complain of their lack of insight, understanding, and ability in the realm of artistic expression. They feel illiterate and inadequate in one of the fundamental domains of human experience.

Adult intervention may not only be useful, but essential, to children's artistic development. L.S. Vygotsky (1978) argued that many curriculum ventures are founded on major theoretical positions which do not adequately describe the role of learning in the developmental process. Vygotsky disagreed with Piaget's claim that the process of development was essentially independent of learning, dismissing the notion that learning was not actively involved in, nor influenced by, the pattern of development.

Vygotsky argued that the process of development lagged behind learning, resulting in what he called a "zone of proximal development." Vygotsky (1978) proposed that "learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when a child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with peers. Once these processes are internalized, they become part of child's independent developmental achievement" (p. 90).

According to Vygotsky, then, experiences which are tailored to children's actual developmental level do not sufficiently promote growth. A laissez-faire approach to learning encourages the child to stay in place rather than to move ahead toward areas well within the child's reach if he or she receives appropriate assistance. Vygotsky's theory supports educators' concern with the learner and his or her present developmental abilities, while it looks ahead toward the child's potential at any given point in time within a par-

ticular domain. In that sense, Vygotsky's theory is both child-centered and discipline-based.

The zone of proximal development can be seen most clearly, perhaps, in young children's language acquisition. Adults, including parents and care givers, are undeniably instrumental in early speech development. Although children may seem to invent their first sounds, linguists believe that most children are truly responding to external input. Undoubtedly, these sounds are mastered and acquire meaning through social interaction, as others interpret the child's intentions and respond according to these interpretations. Parents do not passively listen, but constantly present new and challenging tasks. Children are exposed daily to language rules and structures by listening to adult conversations. They are stimulated to venture into the zone of proximal development, rather than to remain at an already attained level. This form of instruction is remarkably efficient and effective. Rapid language acquisition in the early childhood years has been documented by Chomsky (1965), Nelson (1980), Bruner, Roy, and Ratner (1982), and many others.

Although most adults, especially parents, find great delight in listening to children's babbling sounds, they do not attempt to preserve such a state forever. Common sense dictates that the beauty and innocence of the young child's earliest speech should not be preserved at the expense of communication. No one suggests that early attainment of a verbal vocabulary is detrimental to a child's ability to use language in a creative fashion later in life. In fact, depriving a child of those essential early learning experiences would be considered an abusive practice.

Yet, artistic development seems to be regarded in dramatically different terms. The "discovery" of children's art in the beginning of the century, and particularly the fascination with the spirit and process through which children create, made admiration of young children's art a social phenomenon. Today few argue that children's art is devoid of natural beauty, that it does not have an enviable sense of directness, purity, sincerity, and intensity. On the other hand, it may be useful to consider to what extent admiration for, and fascination with, young children's art can blind parents and educators to children's actual needs: their needs to be stimulated and challenged; to acquire skills and abilities that permit fluent use of visual symbols; and to operate at the level of a zone of proximal development.

Some researchers draw clear lines dividing childhood into periods that should be approached differently, in terms of the necessity of adult intervention. Gardner suggests that "during the natural artistry of the preschool years, active intervention is unnecessary" (1982, p. 89) and that "during this period the approach of unfolding, or giving full rein to natural development, seems indicated" (1976, p. 108). Gardner implies that only children of school age benefit from or require active external investment in their artistic development. Gardner is certainly correct that when children between the age of two and five years are provided with materials, time, and opportunity to engage in artistic tasks, they do so readily. However, there is no evidence that appropriate external input would not enhance such "natural" unfolding.

The very idea of "natural" unfolding seems flawed, in that no matter how completely children are sheltered and protected from external influences, they do not grow up in a visual and aesthetic void. From the very beginning of their lives, children are exposed to and influenced by visual images, many of them produced by adults. Therefore, Lowenfeld's (1952) idea that "if children developed without any interference from the outside world, no special stimulation for their creative work would be necessary" (p. 1) cannot be tested. Nor can his call ever be answered: "Don't impose your own images on a child!" (p. 3). Aesthetic growth is subject to external influence if only because children's experiences with art occur in a social context. What matters, then, is not the presence, but rather the quality, of external input.

The possibility that adult assistance might foster aesthetic growth has been discussed and demonstrated. As early as 1931, Alma Jordan Knauber studied art ability of nursery-school to third-grade children. She concluded that "proper stimulation toward creative activity would produce more and better trained artists and also a people versed in the appreciation of beauty" (p. 71). Subsequent research supports this proposition.

Pemberton and Nelson (1987), for example, demonstrated that graphic dialogue facilitates children's acquisition of drawing skills. These researchers used two strategies based on paradigms designed for verbal dialogues with young children: "growth recast" and "challenge continuation." Growth recasts immediately followed a child's production and involved an adult making a drawing that maintained the same basic reference and some structural detail, but at the same time structurally varied or "recast" the forms, "so that the child was exposed to structures more complex than those in the child's current system" (p. 31). Challenge continuations, which also presented structures challenging the child's current level, did not closely follow the child's production, but instead evolved around the general topic of the dialogue. The idea of presenting children with graphic forms "slightly above the child's current level of performance" (p. 39) was influenced by language input studies (Nelson, 1980), as well as by the ideas of Wilson and Wilson (1982). In

Vygotsky's terms, Pemberton and Nelson's study represented an attempt to provide children with an opportunity to perform within the boundaries of the zone of proximal development.

Burton (1980) discussed the instrumental role adults play in the "beginnings of artistic language" (p. 6), describing verbal interchange between a child and a teacher as a means of enriching and expanding artistic learning. Burton demonstrated how a teacher, recognizing that the child is learning to control and vary actions and reinforcing the child's terminology through dialogue, can offer the child an opportunity to pause and reflect, which in turn intensifies the learning experience. The interventions that Burton recommended were intended not to tell the child what to do, or to provide specific directions, but rather to encourage conscious choice making.

Wilson and Wilson (1977, 1982) have been among the most vocal advocates of active involvement in young children's artistic development. They argue that children draw primarily from images derived from popular culture even before they reach school age. Wilson and Wilson conclude that learning from adult-made images is an integral part of the process of artistic growth. They suggest that:

> Without models to follow there would be little or no visual sign making behavior by children.... The child learns to form configurational signs of his own mainly through observation of the configurational-sign-making-behavior of others, by noting initially that other people make drawings, then observing the way in which they are made, the variety of configurational signs that are made, and the diverse forms that these signs take in our culture (1977, p. 6).

Evaluating Children's Progress

One of the major difficulties in promoting adult's active involvement in young children's artistic development is understanding what constitutes progress in terms of artistic growth in early childhood years. The value attributed to children's spontaneous art has created a situation in which any departure from this artistic convention is regarded as a loss. Extensive analysis and study of children's art (e.g., Arnheim, 1954; Golomb, 1974; Kellogg, 1970; Lowenfeld, 1952) created a number of taxonomies that define the genre of "child art". As Wilson and Wilson (1977) observed, the concept of child's art is often associated with "those things which fit our image of a 'natural' or a 'creative' or a 'spontaneous'" expression but "we are turning a blind eye to the very drawings—the copied ones—that could reveal the true nature of artistic learning" (p. 5).

Adults look at children's art much as twentieth-century audiences approach works of art from the past. Savile (1982) argued that works of art must be understood in the light of values and concepts relative to the period when they were created, and that any importation of ideas not present at that time for the purpose of interpretation is historically inappropriate. Richmond (1992) indicated, however, that this type of historical viewpoint was in reality impossible, as some essential factors shaping such an outlook are no longer accessible to a contemporary audience. Similarly, one may argue that adults' life experiences and expectations provide a perspective for interpreting children's art that differs greatly from a child's perspective. Is it possible to prevent adult ideas and conceptions from being imported into the process of interpreting children's art? Richmond's (1992) implication that "the modern viewer cannot, as a matter of logic, acquire the interpretive sensibilities and feelings for the qualities of life necessary for authentic understanding of artistic legacy" (p. 12) suggests that adult accounts of children's artistic efforts may never be fully accurate. Wilson and Wilson's (1977) observations are certainly congruent with this position.

The persistent influence of adult conceptions of children's artistic development is manifested in current educational practices derived, surprisingly, from child-centered philosophy. The model that emerged from this tradition, and which continues to influence many preschool teachers, recommends organization of art centers in children's play environments. The role of teacher is reduced to one of "dispenser of art materials and fountain of emotional support for the child" (Eisner, 1976, p. 7). It is assumed that the child will spontaneously approach the centers and explore the available media with little or no guidance or supervision. This is certainly what adults would do in a similar situation. Provided with several activity centers, most of us would circulate among them, often in a systematic manner, and take advantage of learning opportunities. Do young children, however, behave in the same manner?

Significance of Adult Input

For 9 months, I spent an hour-and-a-half each Wednesday morning at my youngest son's daycare. The program in which 12 children, 18 months to 3 years of age, were enrolled, was guided by child-centered philosophy. The facility's physical design allowed for organization of several "centers," including areas devoted to exploration of art materials. The teachers took great care to ensure that a variety of materials was offered on

different occasions: tempera paints, differing collage materials and glue, playdough with rolling pins, cookie cutters, and so forth.

Although opportunities for art materials exploration were plentiful, the children took little advantage of them. On many occasions the "art centers" remained untouched, and the amount of their use seemed to be closely associated with the teacher's physical presence at the table. Unlike the housekeeping corner or the car racing area, the art centers were rarely approached by children on their own, and even fewer children spent any significant amount of time at them. Most of the "explorations" that I witnessed involved dipping a brush in paint and making one or two marks, before embarking on a more exciting adventure in other areas of the daycare. Only when a parent or a teacher stayed with a child and became involved in a dialogue related to actions that the child was performing, did a child seem inclined to truly explore the available materials and tools, or to experiment with their use. Although more systematic observations and research are certainly needed to substantiate this claim, I would submit that the mere availability of materials in early childhood classrooms is not a sufficient condition for the enhancement of artistic growth. My observations clearly suggest that adult input is essential to young children's artistic explorations.

Once the necessity of such input is recognized, the nature of adult intervention needs to be carefully defined. I agree with Elkind (1991) who opposes the idea of formal instruction in the early childhood years and insists that "the education of young children has to be in keeping with their unique modes of learning" (p. 183). There is, however, a great difference between total nonintervention and teaching 3-year-old children the rules of linear perspective. In the same way that parents and daycare teachers assist a young child in language acquisition, they can become instrumental in enhancing artistic growth.

Although several types of possible intervention have been described by researchers (e.g., Golomb, 1974; Pemberton & Nelson, 1987; Wilson & Wilson, 1982), there is an urgent need for more efforts to propose, implement, and test models which promote the artistic development of young children. Art educators must convince parents and preschool teachers of the significance of aesthetic growth in human development. We must also clarify and stress the fact that active adult participation in this process of growth need not be detrimental and may well be, in fact, absolutely necessary.

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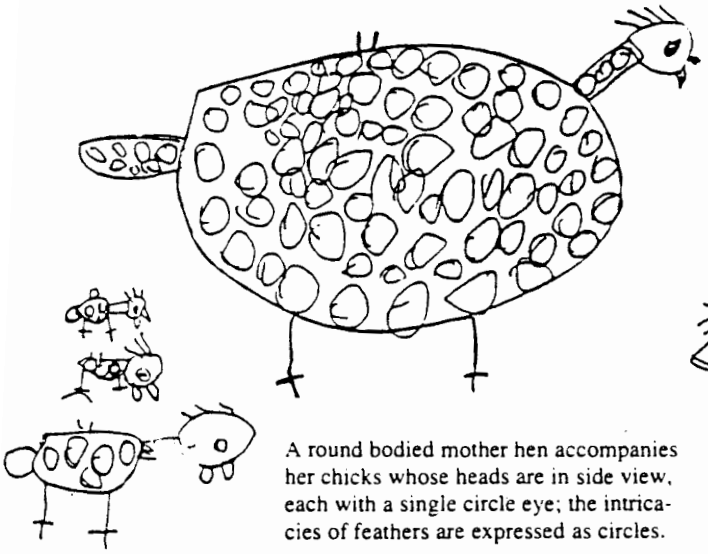
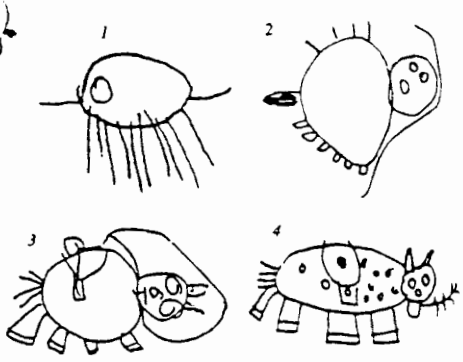
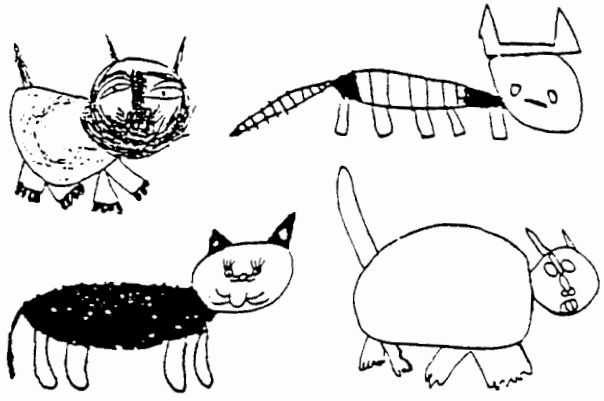
Three, four and five year old children eagerly apply the same structural rules in drawing animals. Their drawings flee chaos and are organized and clear. For them everything starts with the circle. All is visible, nothing overlaps or crosses and they use the simplest linear directions.



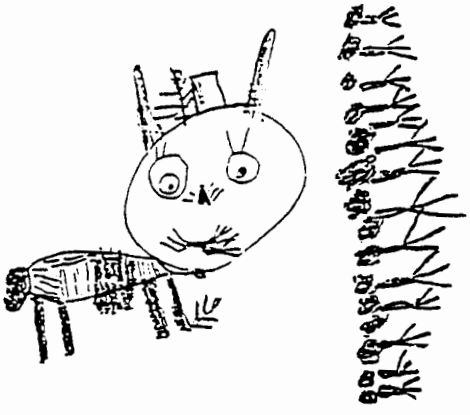
A round bodied mother hen accompanies her chicks whose heads are in side view, each with a single circle eye; the intricacies of feathers are expressed as circles.



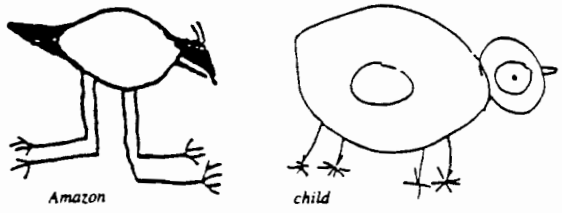
These four drawings of horses have round bodies and heads except that horse 1 is a circle with multiple legs. The child says it is a horse. Horse 2 has six legs and identifying mane, tail and reins. Horses 3 and 4 have ears, saddles, hooves, tails, and completely visible faces. One horse with a dappled coat eats a plant.



Four cats with round and oval bodies, one with five legs, mix treatments of facial features, ears, paws and fur.



A rabbit munches a neatly aligned vertical row of circular carrots with tops.



The fact that most animals have four limbs sometimes results in four legged birds. The bird, left, was drawn by a contemporary stone age Amazon forest dweller, the other by a contemporary five year old child.

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Chapter 7
Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Art Education

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More children each year enter kindergarten with several years of early childhood education already behind them. Visual arts educators must become familiar with the goals of early educational programs and the experiences that children are likely to have prior to kindergarten and first grade. Art educators also must assume a more active role in developing the visual arts education curriculum for early childhood education programs and in providing for the special developmental needs of children in the lower primary grades.

In recent years, there has been a national trend toward formal instruction of academic skills in early childhood programs, a trend based on what many experts feel are misconceptions about young children and how they learn (Elkind, 1987; Kamii, 1985). Well meaning parents, often ambitious for their children's academic success, demanded programs with stringent academic standards and content. These parents complain vociferously if worksheets involving mathematical skills, letter recognition, and letter formation are not sent home with their children regularly. Unfortunately, many schools complied with these parental demands, rather than trying to educate parents about developmentally appropriate practices that enhance their children's growth and development.

A growing body of research in early childhood education suggests that children learn most effectively when they engage in activities that are both concrete and playful. Learning activities for young children, offered in the context of play, should be concrete, real, and meaningful to the lives and the needs of children (Almy, 1975; Biber, 1984; Evans, 1984; Forman & Kuschner, 1983; Kamii, 1985; Kline, 1985; Piaget, 1972; Schickendanz, 1986; Seefeldt, 1986; Smith, 1985; Weber, 1984). Research studies such as these, supported by publications and texts addressed to parents (Elkind, 1987) and by the efforts of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), have initiated a national reappraisal of the needs of young children in educational programs. Pressures to discontinue inappropriate early academic instruction of young children are being felt in schools and in district and state offices of education.

A developmentally appropriate curriculum is one that meets the needs of children within the class grouping and is implemented in a relaxed, comfortable, and playful fashion with attention to children's general and individual needs, interests, and development. The developmentally appropriate curriculum offers an integrated approach to education, addressing children's physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development. The NAEYC promotes developmentally appropriate practice encompassing instruction that is

1. Age appropriate, based on the universal sequences of growth and development that occur during the first 9 years of the child's life.
2. Individually appropriate, acknowledging that each child is unique and that the child's growth, learning style, and family background should be considered (Bredekamp, 1987).

A developmentally appropriate art curriculum for young children reflects many of the same concerns.

This chapter focuses on visual arts education for early childhood settings and on fitting this education into the philosophies and suggested practices for educating young children. Quality early childhood programs center on the child, rather than the content of the instruction to be introduced to the child. The child-centered approach in visual arts education stays with the historical wisdom of the field, following the ideas of Lowenfeld (1947), Kellogg (1969), and others who emphasized the child's abilities, interests, and needs in relation to the visual arts. Subscribing to child-centered approaches to visual arts education does not mean abandoning the study of art as a discipline nor eliminating the experiences that encourage children to talk intelligently about art. It is possible to reconcile the field's current shift toward subject-centered approaches with the specific needs of children; to accommodate children's interests, skills, and abilities, and to fol-

low the practices that best meet their needs while offering substantial information about the visual arts.

Recommendations for Appropriate Practices

The following recommendations for appropriate practices in curriculum development and instruction have been selected from the NAEYC guidelines, *Developmentally Appropriate Practices in Early Childhood Programs* (Bredekamp, 1987), and feature research findings that address issues of significance to the teaching of art to young children.

Guidelines for the development of appropriate curriculum for young children

A. Developmentally appropriate curriculum addresses all areas of children's development through integrated approaches to learning.

While important for study in its own right, art lends itself well to integrated approaches to learning. The use of language skills in describing spatial relationships in works of art and the introduction of art concepts such as symmetry and asymmetry help children develop a general understanding of spatial concepts and a vocabulary to describe spatial relationships. Because spatial concepts are a focus of early childhood programs for preliterate children, many early childhood teachers enjoy using art experiences to encourage students to demonstrate their understanding of spatial concepts and art reproductions in guided discussions of spatial concepts such as near, far; inside, outside; above, below; in front, behind (Frostig, 1961; Salome, 1968).

Young children benefit from opportunities to use art materials in the early educational setting. The introduction of art concepts and the use of art reproductions with young children is appropriate and has been shown to enhance children's acquisition of an art vocabulary, increase perceptual awareness, and strengthen descriptive powers of language. Researchers have also established relationships between drawing and language development in young children (Colbert, 1984; Golomb, 1974; Goodnow, 1977; Litt, 1977; Lowenfeld, 1947; Willats, 1977).

Self-awareness and self-esteem can be enhanced by focusing on the self in many art experiences. The relationship of artistic and aesthetic development to language, reading, perceptual, and math skills is well documented in research conducted by both art educators and early childhood educators (Colbert & Taunton, 1990, xix).

B. Appropriate curriculum planning is based on teachers' observations and recordings of each child's special interests and developmental progress.

Teachers can set realistic curriculum goals and plans based on their own continuous assessment of individual and class strengths, needs, and interests. Through teachers' own assessments of children, they can plan activities that enrich and broaden the curriculum for all children. If, for example, children become excited about mixing colors using tempera paints, the teacher might plan to extend that unit of study for several additional class periods so that students could have time to further their explorations. If students have had relatively few experiences in modeling three-dimensional forms and the teacher noted students experiencing some difficulty in modeling, he or she might include additional playful experiences with clay or dough that involve students in rolling balls and coils and patting flat forms. This would be added to the curriculum based on the teacher's observations that students needed more experiences with clay prior to modeling three-dimensional forms. Teachers monitor students' progress and adjust their plans according to the students' needs. For this approach to work in the classroom, teachers need to be confident of their opinions of student needs based on their observations and they must remain flexible in their approach to planning lessons and units. Flexibility might include allowing a group of children to continue with one activity while encouraging another group to work on a different one.

C. Curriculum planning emphasizes learning as an interactive process and is based on children's development and interests.

Research has shown that young children are capable of creating, perceiving, and discussing the visual arts (Taunton & Colbert, 1984). Young children need guidance in using materials to create art and in looking at art works—whether their own, their peers', or the work of a professional artist. Children benefit from searching for visual elements in their environment and discussing what they see and what they value. A strong, systematic approach to planning instruction that focuses on young children's natural abilities to perceive, create, and appreciate the visual arts will engage, excite, and perhaps introduce children to a lifelong interest in art (Colbert & Taunton, 1990).

The sequence of lessons within and between units of study should accommodate children's interest spans, skills, and capabilities. Art experiences should be varied enough to sustain children's interest, yet organized so that concepts and skills introduced in one unit are reinforced and built upon in later units of study. Selected

concepts and skills from the early part of the curriculum should be reintroduced in a new context later in the year.

The art curriculum should provide young children many opportunities for learning to create art, to experiment with a variety of media, and to create both two- and three-dimensional work. Children can begin to understand the importance of selecting, controlling, and using a variety of tools and processes. Children need to experiment with a variety of sources of inspiration for creating works of art, such as observing nature and the constructed environment, using imagination and memory, and trying experimental approaches to materials.

Children also need to learn how and why other people create works of art, what place art holds in everyday life, and why people value art. Learning to perceive and respond to works of art helps children to better express themselves verbally and to develop language and vocabulary skills. Viewing and discussing works of art encourages children to share their ideas about what they see, to listen to other children, to learn from what others see, and to become aware that other people may have views that differ from their own (Colbert & Taunton, 1990).

D. Learning activities and materials should be concrete, real and relevant to the lives of young children.

Learning takes place when children interact with materials and people. It occurs as they touch, manipulate and experiment with materials. Learning is especially meaningful when children have a part in deciding what they will do and how they will go about doing it. Children's active participation in self-directed play using concrete and real-life experiences has been found to be central to motivated and meaningful learning in the preschool and early elementary school years (Bredekamp, 1987).

Because art activity at the early childhood level often involves manipulating art materials to create two- and three-dimensional forms, concreteness offered in visual arts instruction is easily demonstrated. Much of young children's art activity is hands-on, using a variety of materials intended to stimulate the senses and the creation of images and forms. Children's ideas and memories take concrete form when they are transformed into symbols that are drawn, painted, or modeled. When art instruction involves children in talking about works of art, those works or reproductions of them should be present to be touched and closely viewed by the children.

Teachers are cautioned against using worksheets, coloring sheets, workbooks, and adult-made models for children to copy. Although this is especially true for children younger than six years, older children have also demonstrated benefits from being actively engaged in concrete, real-life experiences (Bredekamp, 1987; Kamii, 1985).

E. Programs provide for a wider range of developmental interests and abilities than the chronological age range of the group would suggest. Adults are prepared to meet the needs of children who exhibit unusual interests and skills outside of the normal developmental range.

In any classroom, the age will vary from 9 to 12 months. And the normal developmental-age range for any group may be as much as 2 years. In some classrooms the range will be even greater. This means that teachers must be prepared to offer materials that vary in complexity and that reflect the age span of the group (Bredekamp, 1987). Units of study must be planned in a open-ended fashion that allows children with varying skills and abilities to interpret the goals of the lessons for themselves. Teachers need to offer a range of materials and to plan variety in room arrangements and in grouping students to work together. Again, teachers must be confident in using their observations of student progress to plan educational experiences that meet the needs of all students.

F. Teachers provide a variety of activities and materials; teachers increase the difficulty, complexity, and challenge of an activity as children are involved with it and as children develop understanding and skills.

Teachers can observe, listen, make notes, and interpret the work of children as they are engaged in manipulation of materials or other activities. Teachers become facilitators of children's involvement in an activity by asking the children questions or by making suggestions or adding more complex ideas or additional materials to the learning environment (Bredekamp, 1987).

Art teachers usually work in just this manner. They introduce the major concepts and demonstrate an activity or discuss a visual attribute before encouraging children to work on their own. As children begin their work, the art teacher circulates, asking probing questions and offering encouragement. Art teachers push students who they know can add more to a piece and they probe for students' ideas about their work (Taunton, 1983). Teachers may offer further examples of different ways of working as they go around the room and see how various students have interpreted the activity for themselves.

G. Teachers provide opportunities for children to choose among a variety of activities, materials, and equipment, and time to explore through active

involvement. Teachers facilitate children's engagement with materials and activities and extend learning by asking questions or making suggestions that stimulate children's thinking.

The teacher's role in settings where children can choose their own activity is to create an environment that is inviting, stimulating, and challenging for the children and to facilitate their engagement in the activities offered. Teachers also set the limits for the amount of time children can become involved (Taunton, 1983). Children need periods of uninterrupted time to pursue their involvements. In art activities, children need time to experiment, to plan, to create, to revisit, and to evaluate their work. Time for reflection and use of peer verbalizations during art activities have been found to influence the evaluative processes of children (Cocking & Copple, 1979).

When providing choices for children, teachers should take care to provide variety in the art activities. In early childhood settings, a teacher might invite children to choose between drawing from observation, creating a collage, or developing a modeled figure. Although this may be difficult in art instruction in the primary grades, it is advisable to offer young children the opportunity to work in both group and solitary settings. Activities should be offered repeatedly for those children who want to practice or refine skills and for those who want to revisit a piece of art work to add to or complete the work.

H. Multicultural and nonsexist experiences, materials, and equipment should be provided for children of all ages.

Teachers, with the help of school and district administrators, should provide a wide variety of culturally diverse and nonstereotypical educational materials that are developmentally appropriate for young children. Textbooks, picture books, art reproductions, filmstrips and other materials should meet standards for cultural diversity and gender equity. Further, the curriculum should strive to enhance the self-esteem and self-confidence of every child. It should support the integrity of the child's family, strengthening ties between home and school. The curriculum should extend children's experiences to include the ways of others, particularly the ways of people in the community, and present these differences with respectful acceptance and appreciation of the similarities and differences of all people (Bredekamp, 1987). Reproductions of works of art are effective in introducing children to the images and ideas of people from a variety of ethnic origins, as is the study of the work of local artists, architects, craftspersons, and designers.

Summary

Young children need meaningful, developmentally appropriate, playful, and engaging visual arts experiences that address the arts in substantive ways. Teachers need not try to teach every lesson in the curriculum guide, nor do they need to use every medium and art reproduction available. A select group of well developed, appropriate experiences with time available for children to return to their work if needed and time to discuss, reflect, and enjoy the work created will provide more opportunities for personal meaning and will invite children to develop a lifelong interest in the visual arts.

Teachers of the visual arts who work with young children need to nurture children's individuality and artistic development in a calm, unhurried, thoughtful, and unobtrusive manner that conveys to children that they are respected and their artistic efforts are valued. Good teachers of young children focus on what children can do, not on their limitations, and plan experiences that meet their capabilities and stretch their visions of what is possible.

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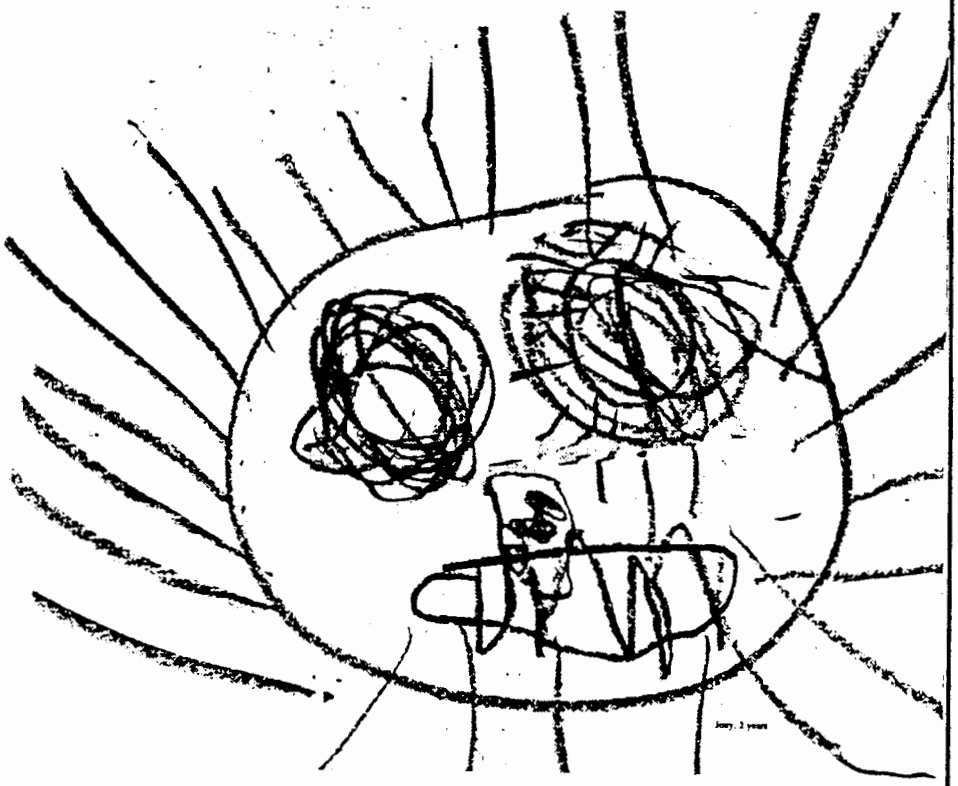
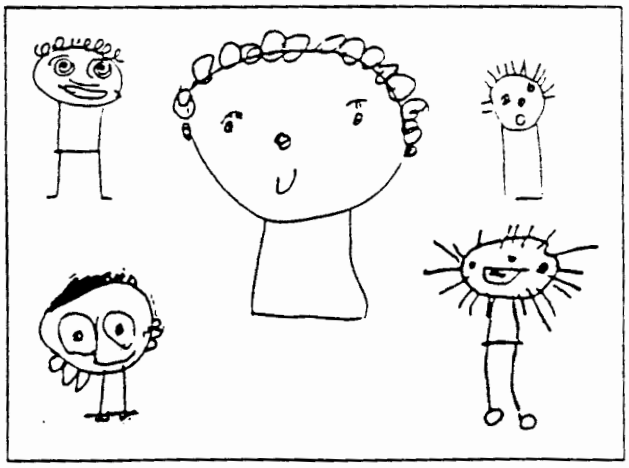
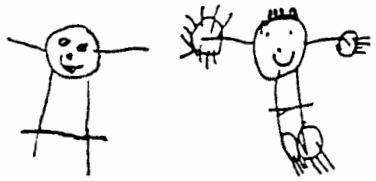


Sylvia Fein, *First Drawings: Genesis of Visual Thinking (Piesant Hill,CA: Exelrod Press,1993).*

When children draw parallel lines descending from a circle, they discover a new way to enclose space by joining the bottom ends of the parallels. This new rectangular body area permits inclusion of raiment, sexual distinctions, details of body parts and color infills for emphasis.

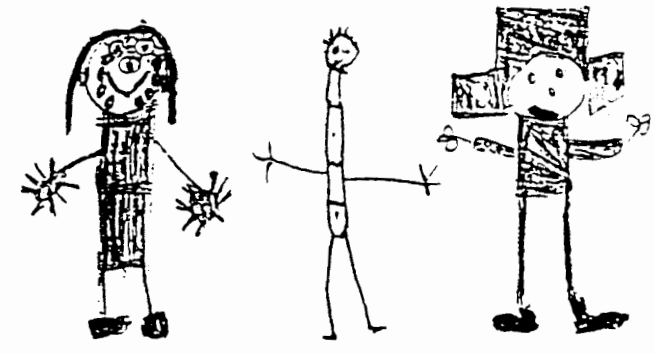


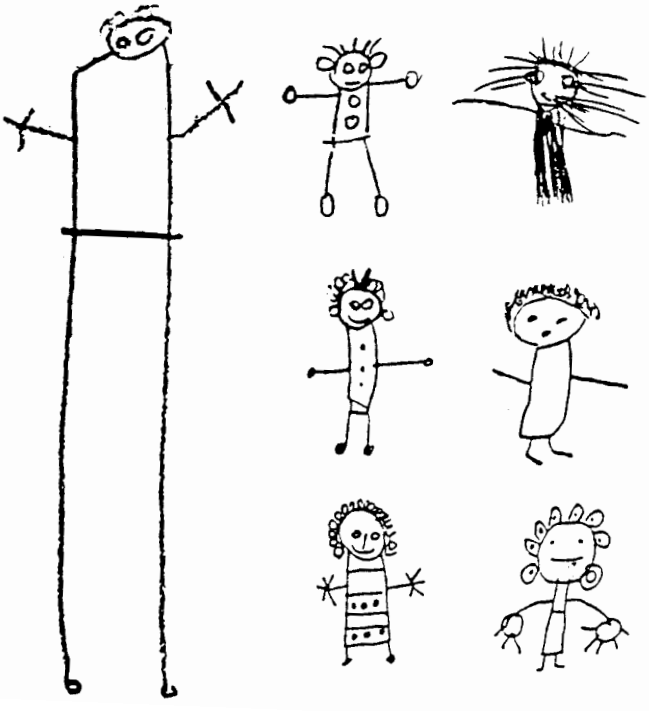
In the beginning of this adventure some children forget to draw arms or do not yet know where to put them.

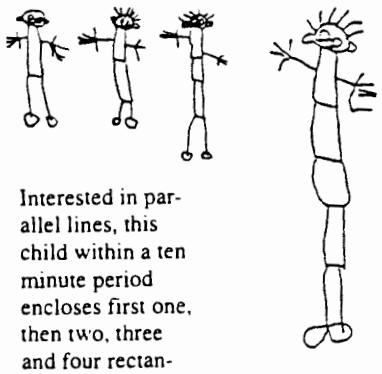


When arms are drawn, their placement follows the same process as that applied to single line and round bodied figures. Arms issue first horizontally from the circular head.

Gradually, four, five and six year old children move arms down to the jointure between head and body, then downward to the new body shape, relating arms to it in perpendicular or sloping direction. Legs remain extensions of the parallel sides of the body but some are drawn independently perpendicular to the horizontal bottom line.







Interested in parallel lines, this child within a ten minute period encloses first one, then two, three and four rectangular spaces for the bodies.

Arts and Academic Achievement in Reading: Functions and Implications

BY ALLAN G. RICHARDS

Academic achievement, particularly in reading, for some students in Fayette County Public Schools in Kentucky has been a concern (Honeycutt, 2000). Over the past 6 years, I have been working with an excellent classroom teacher, from the above school district, who has a passion for the arts and who has a deep respect for their power to enhance learning in different areas and disciplines. Along with parents and this classroom teacher, I have been assisting in the efforts to make students literate in the arts, which puts them in a good position to make connections to reading and writing concepts. At the end of the 1998-99 academic school year, test results show that approximately 90 % of the kindergartners who were involved with the arts literacy strategy read on or above grade level. The following year, students in the Title One program showed remarkable improvement. Title One is a federally funded program that provides services to help socio-economically disadvantaged students, including teaching them how to read. Associating the arts with improving students' academic achievement is not a new phenomenon.

Arts and Students' Academic Achievement

Various studies have shown that the arts are successful in improving students' academic achievement in many areas, including reading. Catterall (1998), after analyzing data from the United States Department of Education, indicates that students who are involved in the arts score in the top 2 quartiles on standardized tests and have

lower dropout rates than students who are not involved. Further, 10th graders who are involved in the arts score in the top 2 quartiles in reading, history, citizenship, and geography. A later study by Catterall, Chapleau, and Iwanaga (1999) suggests that the gains made by grades 8-10 students from arts involvement persist to 12th grade. Cooper-Solomon's (1995) research suggests that if the curriculum of a school would devote 25% or more of its school day to teaching the arts, students would have superior academic abilities. With no equivocation, April (2001) says, "...the arts do indeed increase students' achievement when achievement is conceived in rich and complex ways—authentic connections between the arts and the rest of learning..." (p. 26).

Other studies find that the arts do not improve students' academic achievement, but even in some of these studies there is indication that they do. Eisner (1998a) selects and analyzes several studies. He suggests that improving students' scores through the arts is inconclusive. Hetland and Winner (2001) analyze 188 reports and find some areas where arts involvement improve academic achievement and some areas where they do not have significant influences on academic achievement. In many of the areas where the results are not significant, there is evidence that the arts boost academic achievement, but the samples are too small to be reliable.

The Goal

Improving the academic achievement of students in reading is the goal for the arts literacy strategy. To achieve this, students are exposed to the different skills and values that the arts so naturally provide. During this process, the experiences gained are valuable in helping students establish connections to reading and writing concepts. The key to the success of the arts literacy strategy in helping students to make these critical connections to reading and writing concepts lies with the application of the arts.

Applying the Arts

When teaching kindergartners and first graders, the classroom teacher with whom I have collaborated uses one of the top research-based reading curricula that emphasizes phonemic awareness, decoding, comprehension, fluency, and writing skills (Adams, et al., 2000). To prepare the very young students to be observant, distinguish sounds, look for details, expand vocabulary and comprehension, recognize colors and shades, and enrich critical thinking skills, they begin the school year with the arts. On the classroom walls hang framed prints of Monet, van Gogh, Rembrandt, O'Keeffe, Lawrence, Rockwell, and other masters. The shelves are filled with various sculptures such as Rodin's *Thinker*; the *Samurai Warrior* by Hannya Junuchin; ceramic and sculptural pieces from India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Mexico, Peru; CDs by master composers Bach, Debussy, Tchaikovsky, Majors, Monk; books about musicians and artists for young people; and numerous picture books of works by Europeans, African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, Latin Americans, and other artists.

The emergent kindergartner and first-grade readers who study the elements of art, the principles of design, and then study composition in art remove the guessing game from decoding a word or a sentence. The knowledge gained from listening to different types of music and the sounds associated with them make it easier for students to blend and segment letters by sound. Kindergartners and first graders learning to read have the tendency to look at the first letter of a word and call out any word that begins with that letter. But the young arts students would look at the entire word the same as they look at art pieces and quickly try to put meaning to it. They do the same with sentences and soon become fluent readers with sound comprehension skills.

Throughout the year, students explore the arts of great artists and cultures of the world. They develop an understanding and an appreciation for art and classical music that spill over into a passion for reading literature. The creative arts activities are not only hands-on practice but they build artistic skills and give students an avenue for self-expression that builds their self-esteem. These applications strengthen the children's expression in writing as well. They do not struggle with what to put down on paper. Although they still haven't mastered the spelling and other mechanics of writing, their thought process is strong, the vocabulary is extensive and appropriate for their age level, and they enjoy creating and critiquing their compositions just as they do in art production.

The arts feed the souls of students. The arts provide a context for empathy, understanding, meaning, and a genuine interest for the human drama they read in selected literature. One of the books on the reading list is *The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles. Before they are introduced to this story, students analyze the painting by artist Norman Rockwell, *The Problem We All Live With*. This image is about school desegregation. It provokes many questions from students, but they are most concerned with why people did not want the little girl to go to school. In reading the story and watching the movie, the art image becomes the standard against which authenticity and details were established. In the final analysis, it is the arts that drive enthusiasm for exploration and learning.

An excellent testimony for this is the writing of Phillip, a fifth-grade student. Fifth-grade students visited the campus of the University of Kentucky, and the Director of the Singletary Art Museum gave them a lesson in art appreciation. Upon returning to the classroom, students had to write their responses to one of the paintings discussed. Phillip chose *The Knight of Santiago and His Lady*. Here is an excerpt from his paper.

> "Who'd of thought that one picture could tell a whole story?! It seemed as if everything in the painting told me something, and everything had a meaning."

He went on to analyze the painting and asked many substantive questions. This is not surprising because Richards (1988) has already told us about the essence of training in the arts. But from this, I am reminded that the arts are the heart and soul of high quality learning experiences, particularly in reading.

Understanding the Functions of the Arts in Reading

Learning to read is a complex process. It involves students' knowing how to manipulate symbols (letters) of the alphabet in concert with the fundamental concepts and principles of the language of the teacher, the classroom, and that which is used in their textbooks (Engelmann & Osborn, 1999; Adam et al., 2000). This knowing is what Eisner (1998 b) refers to as *literacy*, and he continues to say that there are multiple forms of literacy that tend to amplify knowledge and understanding through a broad spectrum of literacy skills. Many of these skills are developed through the arts. Being literate in the arts affords students a greater advantage in learning to read. From my observation, I suspect that the experiences gained from studying lines, shapes, colors, unity/space, and emphasis heighten print awareness and facilitate the comprehension of words and the development of other reading skills (Adams et al., 2000).

Lines

Lines enhance the writing of letters and the training of the eyes to be accustomed to the unique rhythm in reading. First, let's look at how lines enhance the writing of letters. Children learn about different lines and their functions in a picture, but there are four special lines that are stressed because of their characteristics, especially at the outset of the study of lines in this art program. The lines are horizontal, diagonal, vertical, and curved. These lines are important in the creation of symbols, especially those that are associated with the letters of the alphabet. For example, the uppercase "Z" is written using two horizontal and a diagonal line; "E" is written using one vertical and three horizontal lines; "R" is written using one vertical line, a curved line going clock wise, and a diagonal line; and "O" is written using enclosed curved lines. Through practice using these four lines, children learn to write each letter and learn to associate the appropriate name to the right letter.

Secondly, some of these lines help to train the eyes in movements that are associated with reading. In Western societies, reading is done by moving the eyes from word to word across the page from left to right, and when the eyes reach the end of the line they move diagonally to the next line. This zigzag movement of the eyes is repeated until the reader reaches the bottom of the page. In art this movement is associated with rhythm where the eyes move from one motif to the next. Horizontal lines tend to focus attention either from left to right or vice versa, and diagonal lines direct our attention along the slant of the line. The study of horizontal and diagonal lines trains the eyes to be cognizant of the zigzag rhythms that are associated with reading.

Shapes

The identification of letters and words are associated with positive and negative shapes. When we speak of positive shapes in art, we refer to a shape or shapes that are the focus of attention in an artwork, and negative shapes are the areas that surround the positive shapes (Lauer & Pentak, 2000). Letters of the alphabet and the words they make create positive and negative shapes. The actual written letter represents the positive shape and the space around it the negative shape; the same is true for words. No two different letters or words have the same positive and negative shapes. For example, "B" forms different positive and negative shapes from the letters "C," "D," "E," and the rest of the letters in the alphabet. Consequently, letters of the alphabet and the words they create can be identified from specific positive and negative shapes. Studying positive and negative shapes in art makes students aware of these associations, and this awareness leads to the formation of a more concrete mental image of the characteristics of letters and words.

Colors

Comprehension is enhanced when children know their colors. Colors have a natural tendency to attract our attention and are associated with specific objects, i.e. the tree is green, the sky is blue, and fire is red. When colors are incorporated into pictures, they become more specific in identifying different things in that picture, i.e. Carmela is the girl wearing the red outfit, Mika is kicking the yellow soccer ball, and Rosalind is the girl with the blue tennis racket. One of the stories in the *Open Court Reading* series for first graders further illustrates. At first glance, the picture reveals a bright sun illuminating the ground on which a prominent purple cow stands. On the foreground, to the bottom of the page, there is a boy sitting on a couch reading a purple book. The text reads: "I never saw a Purple Cow, I never hope to see one; But I can tell you, anyhow, I'd rather see than be one!" (Adams et al., 2000). By knowing their colors, children are able to identify and link objects to words in the text, i.e. the purple cow. This connection is important because it helps students to better understand what is being said in the written text. Understanding is at the heart of comprehension.

Unity and Space

Unity and space give children a sense of how words, sentences, and paragraphs appear spatially on a page. To understand this connection is to know the role of unity and space in a picture. To illustrate, I describe two compositions (A & B). Composition A has four geometric shapes, and each of them is placed in a corner of the rectangular picture plane. A picture plane is another phrase used for an area on which a drawing can be made. For composition B, the placement of similar shapes is different; they overlap and touch each other activating the center of the picture plane. The first composition shows shapes that have no relationship with one another, and the second composition gives a feeling that there is a relationship between the shapes because of their proximity. In other words, the closer symbols are placed to one another, the greater the relationship appears to be. Composition B demonstrates unity through spacing. While letters in words might not touch one another, their closeness establishes a relationship whose outcome is commonly recognized as a "word" as opposed to a grouping of letters. Lauer and Pentak (2000) suggest that reading would be impossible without this relationship. By studying unity and space in art, students recognize that the spaces between letters are different from those between words and paragraphs. This orients them to distinguish among words, sentences, and paragraphs, as opposed to a series of just letters.

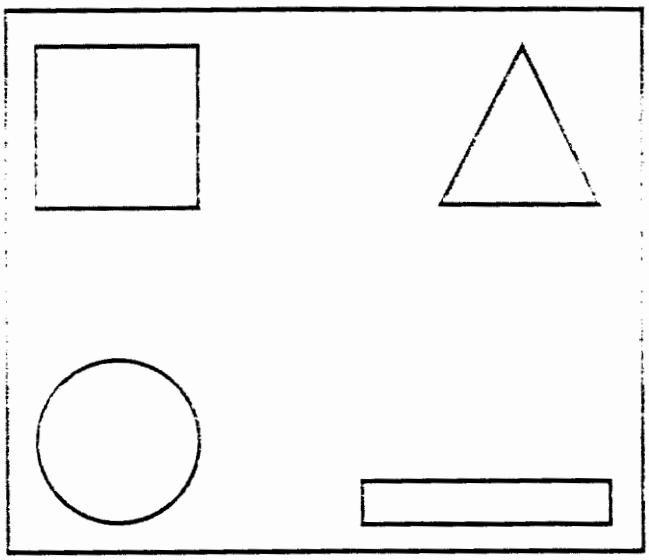
Emphasis

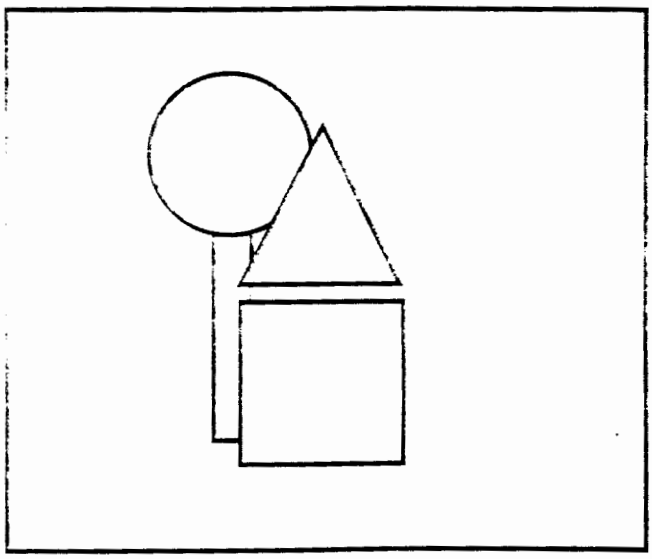
Emphasis focuses on devices that help to interpret an author's intended expression in a particular piece of work. In art, one device that is used for emphasis is contrast—contrast in the size of shapes, contrast in the tones of shapes, contrast in the lines used to construct shapes, and contrast in the spacing of shapes demonstrate emphasis (Lauer & Pentak, 2000). This emphasis focuses our attention on what the artist wants us to view; it may be a religious message (Rembrandt), it may be a story about the horrors of war (Picasso), or it may be anything. As in art, there are devices that can be used in literature to create emphasis. Capitalization of certain letters in a word, the total word, or a letter by itself, along with various punctuation marks are also devices that are used to focus attention on what is being said in a written text. In this case, they are necessary for the interpretation of the author's intent. The study of emphasis in art makes students cognizant of what they must do to communicate effectively. This expectation carries over into literature once the connections are made to the written text. Furthermore, it makes more sense to students why capitalized letters and punctuation marks are important.

Cognitive Implications

The arts have cognitive implications for reading because they assist in learning. Sousa (1995) suggests that the brain receives information through the senses from the surroundings, and when this information becomes a part of memory, learning has taken place. Connections between art elements, design principles, print awareness, and word comprehension are observed. Students recognize positive and negative shapes of letters and words, the types of lines used to write particular letters, the necessity for emphasis in writing, and the importance of unity/space in the written text. These are all part of the learning process for children learning to read, and, ultimately, their reading performance indicates that print awareness and the comprehension of words have become part of their memory.

Rehearsal is an important function of learning (Sousa, 1995). Lines, shapes, colors, unity/space, emphasis, and other elements are studied through making art (production), discussing the works of masters (history), and discussing the works of students (criticism and appreciation). As children explore the arts through these avenues, their understanding of the art elements and design principles is reinforced. By being involved with the arts, this constant reinforcement of the various cognitive





competencies in print awareness and comprehension takes place. In other words, the arts are a rehearsal process that facilitates changing abstract concepts to concrete ones in reading.

Comprehension shows that children are able to change abstract concepts to concrete ones when learning through the arts. Lowenfeld and Brittain (1975) say, "To really know a rabbit a child must actually touch him, feel his fur, watch his nose twitch, feed him, and learn his habits" (p. 5). The arts afford children hands-on experiences through different art forms, media, subject matter, and motifs so that they can explore their environment. Not everyone learns in the same way, and in our society some children are left behind because their logical/mathematical and verbal/linguistic intelligences are not developed. The arts help students to learn in their own ways and at their own paces developing their intelligences (Gardner, 1993). Activating the different intelligences makes children more aware. This awareness indicates the learning of the various competencies that are required to recognize printed letters and comprehend words that are essential for students to learn to read.

Final Thoughts

This article shares my experiences as an art educator working with a classroom teacher to help students learn to read. I strongly believe that the values and the integrity of the arts must be protected. However, I also believe that if experiences gained from studying the arts can help students learning to read, it should be encouraged. Teaching reading within the arts is another possibility that should be embraced. Removing the boundaries around some disciplines may not be popular with those who like neat little categories, but recognizing the rigidity of the boundaries around disciplines reminds me of the increasing compartmentalization of curricula even at the elementary school level. The arts are multifaceted and can break down these boundaries and help students to learn to read. This important work should not be ignored.

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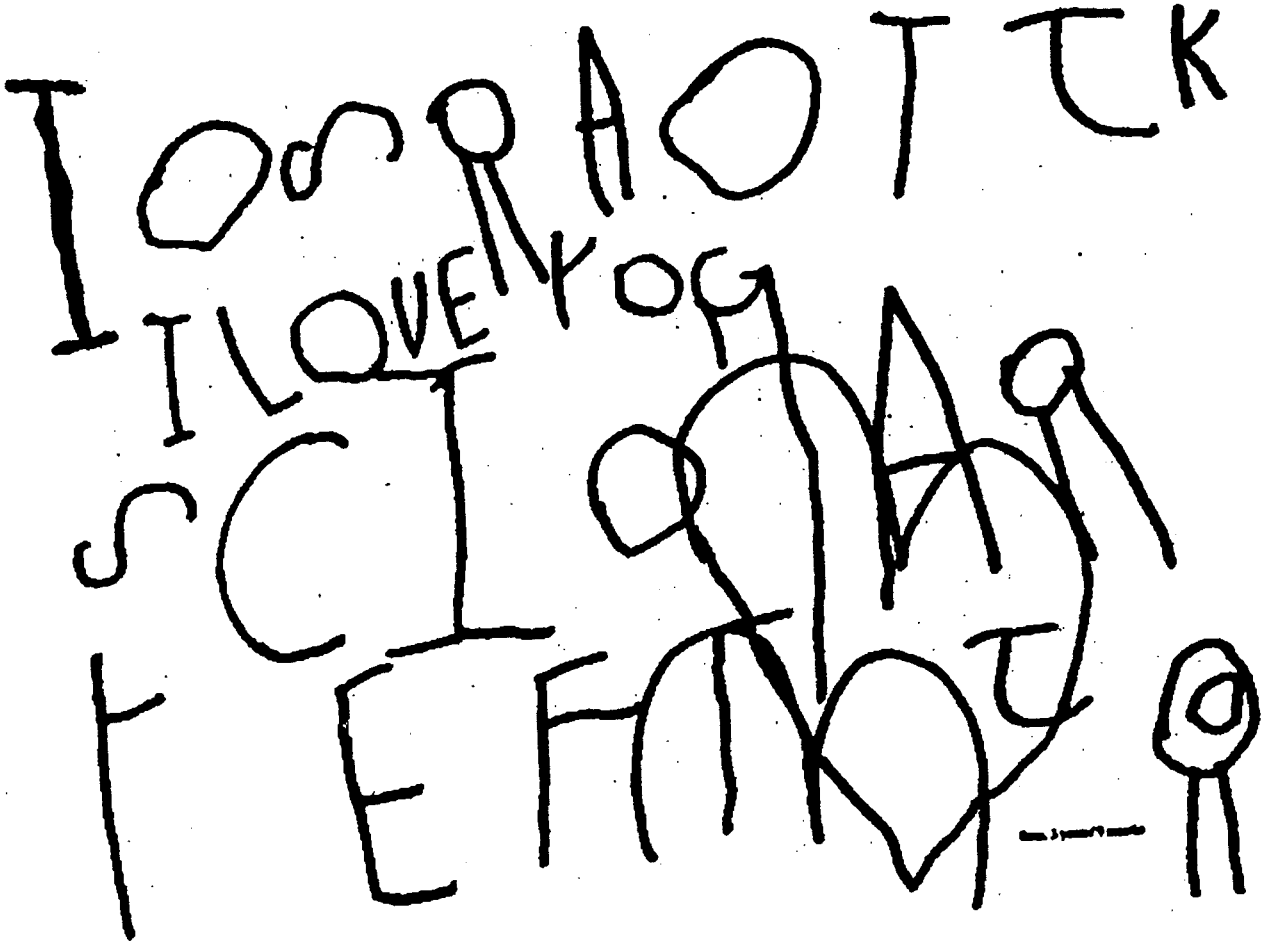
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