

Visual Arts

Accomplished early childhood teachers sensitively interpret the ways young children use symbols and patterns of artistic expression to communicate their ideas and feelings. They promote children's awareness and creation of the visual arts in ways that are developmentally and culturally appropriate. Teachers have a broad background in the arts which allows them to make visual arts an integral part of the early childhood curriculum; they are familiar with the unifying concepts of the visual arts, which include color, texture, line, symmetry, light, and shape. They are also familiar with various visual media, including drawing, painting, sculpture, and film, and they know some of the history of art in cultures throughout the world.

Accomplished early childhood teachers understand that creativity is at the heart of children's artistic expression. They provide opportunities for each young child to experiment with various tools, processes, and media, and they mirror children's joy and excitement as children share their resulting artwork with others. Teachers use art

materials, media, and concrete props with children as catalysts for talking and thinking about compelling design questions. They support artistic investigation and provide opportunities for children to observe, reflect, explore, and create using the visual arts. Accomplished teachers understand the ways in which eye-hand coordination and body-brain development are enhanced when children explore the visual world, and they can explain the many benefits of the visual arts to colleagues and families.

Accomplished early childhood teachers help children look at art, talk about art, create art, and develop an awareness of the visual arts in their everyday lives. They create environments in which play, both natural and virtual, serves as a context for engaging in artistic activities. Teachers help children analyze and evaluate the visual arts. For example, accomplished teachers of younger children might have them peruse multiple books by a single illustrator to highlight the use of color or line, whereas teachers of older children might engage them in comparing styles among multiple illustrators.

Accomplished early childhood teachers help children understand that there are many valid aesthetic approaches and responses to the visual arts. Whereas some children may consider a particular work of art appealing, others may find it unsettling. Teachers use examples from a variety of cultures to expand children's understanding of different approaches to beauty and aesthetic expression. They also help children appreciate beauty in the world around them and begin to manipulate their own aesthetic environments. For example, children may be encouraged to select and display their work throughout the community. Accomplished teachers value each child's developing appreciation of the visual arts and incorporate children's artwork in the classroom.

Accomplished early childhood teachers use the visual arts to extend other aspects of children's learning. They seek opportunities to creatively integrate visual arts content and skills in children's daily activities and learning. For example, in mathematics, teachers may have children draw or paint patterns. In social studies, children might design a flag or represent an aspect of their culture through various artistic media.

Music and Drama

Accomplished early childhood teachers recognize that the performing arts enable forms of emotional expression that may not be available in other parts of children's lives. They strive to support meaningful and developmentally appropriate opportunities for children to engage in both drama and music. They design activities that reflect the diversity of the children in the educational setting and the local community, and they involve families in performing arts activities.

Music is one of the first ways children experience communication—through lullabies, rhymes, or simple humming. Accomplished early childhood teachers know that music brings people together through song, movement, communication, storytelling, and performance. They provide young children with multiple opportunities

to explore music through singing, dancing, and listening as well as through the use of instruments. Early childhood teachers use music to enhance learning and development across the curriculum, and as a medium to develop skills such as body coordination and awareness, language, reading, memory, spatial reasoning, number concepts, and timing. Accomplished teachers also use music as a mnemonic device when teaching concepts such as counting, colors, relationships among ideas, and social skills.

Accomplished early childhood teachers know that listening is a fundamental musical skill to develop in young children. Listening is a nonthreatening way for a child to participate in music because no performance is involved, and listening to music helps children learn patterns of sounds and rhythms. Teachers provide frequent opportunities for children to listen to and appreciate music so that they can expand their store of musical experiences and develop a vocabulary for talking about music. Teachers introduce various rhythms, melodies, and tones and help children to discriminate differences in pitch, beat, and volume. They select music that represents the vast range of human experiences and musical traditions. Accomplished teachers also use music to enhance the study of other cultures and languages and to help children appreciate various musical forms and styles.

Accomplished early childhood teachers are familiar with the basic elements of music: rhythm, tempo, pitch, tone quality, dynamics, and harmony. They understand that music is a uniquely human enterprise which represents cultural, patriotic, and religious values; as well as the sense of a particular time or place and widely shared emotions and experiences associated with music. Teachers strive to integrate elements of music into the curriculum and daily routines. Accomplished teachers know that by listening to music, singing, playing instruments, and moving to music, young children develop healthy ways to interact and express themselves.

Accomplished early childhood teachers provide time, space, and materials so that young children can explore sounds and rhythms. Teachers provide young children with opportunities to practice vocal and instrumental sounds through solos and ensembles. Most children spontaneously express whole body rhythm activities through creative play, and accomplished teachers use this expressiveness as a transition to drama and the performing arts. They encourage children to create and move to music as well as listen to it. They may provide opportunities for children to express themselves by singing and playing musical instruments. Teachers help children to improvise short songs and instrumental pieces using a variety of non-traditional sounds such as paper tearing or pencil tapping; body sounds such as hands clapping or fingers snapping; and electronic sounds such as keyboards or synthesizers.

Accomplished early childhood teachers understand that drama is a process through which individuals enact ideas, wishes, and conflicts, often in symbolic form. They are familiar with the basic elements of drama, including plot, theme, character, language, music or rhythm, and visual elements such as scenery, costumes, and props.