

PRIMARY GRADE ART EDUCATION:
CHILD DEVELOPMENT, CURRICULUM AND MEDIA

by 6791

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INTRODUCTION

Art is a creative process by which experiences of all kinds are expressed and communicated. Experiences also arise out of this process. Drawing, painting and creative crafts can provide the child with rich experiences derived from no other source. Art provides the child with means of expression- a visual language- for his own personal and social experiences. Experience is essential to education and art.

What makes art unique? Few, if any, other areas of the curriculum provide such rich experiences in problem solving, critical examination, esthetic awareness, and personal expression. The potential which art holds for the growing child may not be clearly understood, even by the adults who work with children. In most subject areas children can verbally demonstrate what they have learned. The major and unique values of art education are less obvious but more important.

Although each child may be given the same materials for an art project, the likeness of each child's experience ends at this point. The child may appear to be working very quietly, but the thought processes going on are many and varied. He may be examining personal relationships, making visual observations, expressing emotions, or solving design problems which are many in number and variety.

The teacher may give suggestions occasionally, but he can't possibly anticipate or answer even a fraction of the

questions that a child might ask himself during one art project. Usually children make choices that are satisfying and personally expressive for them. Sensitive teachers can aid and encourage the process without imposing adult solutions and directions.

Art is both a process and a product. Physical, intellectual, and emotional activity are involved when the child manipulates art materials. The product is visible and tangible and for a period of time may be of great value to the child as his own personal expression and property.

Another important aspect of the art program, particularly at an early age, is freedom of expression not commonly associated with other areas of learning. Expression in art is not hampered by limitations of language or by the lack of special skills. Pleasure and enjoyment are important ingredients in the art experience. Another facet is that the hands which create an object can feel it, hold it and experience it again and again as a source of satisfaction and beauty. In a world of mechanical wonders, the hand-made object becomes a prized possession.

Art can also be used to motivate children in other subject areas. It can enrich a learning situation and make it more vivid and memorable. Art can also unite ideas and show relationships; however, in these related roles, art must not be made to lose its creative character. Creative experiences must be provided by the art program and the child must see and experience many situations to understand the full and unique contribution of art to the educational process.