

Why Arts & Crafts Time Matters

What subjects do you place the most importance on your child learning in school? There has always been much discussion about the significance of educating children in math, science and writing.

Alternatively, how often does your child just take time to pick up crayons, glue materials together or paint? When there is a struggle to meet a school budget, it is common to hear of art programs being cut from the curriculum. However, art can help children in their success in school and develop important life skills.

1) Allows for Self-Expression

One factor that distinguishes art from other subjects such as math is that there is no wrong answer. Art allows for those of all ages to freely use their imagination rather than focus on logic and memorization. Instead, people are able to explore their minds and think about how they see things or would like things to be.

It is not uncommon to have a problem at times understanding how your child is feeling. This can be an issue particularly if your child doesn't know how or is not comfortable expressing their feelings with words. Therefore, one option to consider is asking your child to draw their thoughts through pictures. If they need help getting started, consider asking them to draw things such as the best or worst thing about their day.

While art can help people express themselves without words, it can also aid in their verbal expression. For example, when children are asked to describe what they have created, it can help develop their language skills.

2) Encourages Decision-Making

Whether or not you realized it before, there are a lot of decisions that go into making a piece of art. The first decision involves thinking about what is going to be made. Once that is decided, it is time to think about what colors or materials to use. The artist is also the one who decides when the project is complete!

Art projects are a perfectly safe way to give your child the power to make decisions. When children get the opportunity to make even small decisions it can help them feel independent. Also, when their art is complete they can feel proud of themselves seeing the result of their decisions.

3) Encourages Planning Skills

There are a lot of different situations in life where order and organization matters and art is no exception. Imagine if you were to glue two pieces of paper together and then try to cut only one of those pieces of paper to a different size. Adults can work with children to help them organize their thoughts before they begin for a smooth process.

Those working with young children can first work with them to sort materials of different shapes, sizes or colors. Once children are older, adults can ask children to describe how they plan to complete their project.

Consider Asking Your Child:

- What supplies are needed to complete this project?
- What do you think needs to be done first, second and last?

4) Develops Fine Motor Skills

A child's development comes from more than just the big things that they do. In fact, when children pick up a paintbrush or crayons, it helps them develop motor skills they need for other tasks. For example, the controlled movements they get used to making are also necessary to be able to button a coat and to write.

Often, working on an art project requires a lot of focus to make things look just how one would like them. As a result, there are many small movements that one makes when they are working. In addition to paintbrushes and crayons, there is another tool children use at craft time that improves their fine motor skills. As early as preschool, the ability to use scissors is emphasized as it can also help children with dexterity needed for writing.

5) Incorporates Math and Science

When children create art, there are many things that they can learn, especially when parents take part in the process. In terms of math, young children can practice counting different materials. Older children can work on measuring the length of materials such as string, yarn, ribbon or cloth.

Consider Asking Your Child:

- How many (triangles/circles/squares) do you see/ do we have?
- How many more yards of material do we need?

Parents can also use art to get young children excited about science by teaching them about experimentation and cause and effect. For example, parents can mix two colors together and show that it results in a different color. Furthermore, adults strengthen their older child's observational skills by instructing them to study an animal, plant or object and then draw it.

Does the thought of your child making an art project instantly make you think of a big mess? Instead of dreading clean up, use this time to enjoy your child's youth and explore your own creative side!