

## Ideas for Parents: The Arts

There are many ways that you can help support the growth and progress of your child in the ARTS.

Any one of the following activities may be shared with your child. Many can be done in very short periods of time, some even in a minute.

The value for the Arts and the suggestions that follow are based on several basic principles:

- that children learn best when they are actively involved
- that problem solving, discovery, & creative thinking are vital to learning
- that integrating or blending subjects together enhances learning (examples: **math** with music or **reading** with drama & art)
- that each child is an "artist" who has something important to "say" through music, dance/movement, drama/theatre, and the visual arts.

### Observation & Awareness

Artists in every area of the ARTS are **constantly observing**—paying attention to the details of the world around them. Help your child to do this. Not only will the sensitivities of the artist be encouraged, but there will be **tremendous carryover to the skills needed for math and for reading**. Share some of the following kinds of activities with your child:

- When you look at a sunset, a flower, a pile of trash, pictures in a book, sets of math problems on a page, ASK: "**What do you see?**" Take turns telling what you see. Keep doing this until you have exhausted every possibility.
- Do the same thing with sounds. Close your eyes for a minute and listen carefully. Ask: "**What did you hear?**" and take turns sharing your responses. Do this in a variety of settings: at the beach, in the kitchen, waiting in line for a movie, etc.
- Have your child make a collection of objects with **different textures**. Feel the objects with eyes closed. Use words to describe **how the objects feel**.

- Work as a family to focus on **smells and tastes**. Use words to describe them.

### Use Books and Stories

- Read **stories both to and with** your child. Then "play" with the stories. Example: be one of the characters in the story and have your child be another. Then have a conversation together using words that these characters might say. Create these conversations to go with **small portions of the story**.
- Form your body into a statue to communicate a character, or a character's feeling. Example from *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*: Show Charlie as he opened his candy bar and found the golden ticket.
- Make simple stick puppets for the characters in the story. Help your child plan, rehearse, and perform one or more **short sections of the story** for the family.
- Make up tall tales and fantasy adventures. Start a story and take turns telling what happened next. Example: When we were at the fair, my mother made us go through the plant section. We were so bored. Then suddenly, \_\_\_\_\_.
- Do the same activity but do it all in pantomime, without words.
- Make up a sound effects story using vocal sounds (without words) and found sounds (using common objects in the house). Examples: in the forest, in a deserted house.

### Draw from Real Life or Observation

Use any available paper and a pencil. Sit down with your child. Pick an interesting object that you will both draw from observation. First look at the object together. Study and talk about its shapes and lines. Draw the outline of the object with your finger in the air. Then each of you draw the object on paper. Stay very quiet while you do this. Keep the drawing time short at first, perhaps only 10 minutes. Put your name and date on each and every drawing. Save them all. You will be amazed at how this skill of looking and drawing what you see will develop with practice. This activity will not only enhance artistic skill

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but will reinforce decoding skills for reading (recognizing shapes of words & finding clues in the illustrations). Remember, drawing is like writing. It is a skill and takes practice.

### **Make, Listen, Play, Sing**

- Use large, empty water bottles or boxes as drums. Play a short pattern. Copy the pattern.
- Have a drum “conversation.”
- Gather a set of similar sized bottles. Fill them with varying amounts of water. Blow into the bottles to create melodies. Practice melodies going up and melodies going down.
- Listen to any kind of recorded music. Share what you heard.
- Establish a list of favorite family songs. Sing together in the car, while doing dishes, etc.

### **Imagine! Imagine! Imagine!**

- Listen to music and make pictures or stories in your mind. Share and compare.
- Draw, paint, construct a Tomorrow Land.
- Try out different ways of moving. Examples: walk like you are a huge dinosaur, move as if you were a feather floating in air, move like the color red.

### **Respond! Respond! Respond!**

- Whenever you share a work of art or an arts performance, reflect and respond. Use and finish statements such as:  
I liked the \_\_\_\_\_ because  
it was \_\_\_\_\_  
I would have liked it better if \_\_\_\_\_.

*MaryEllen O'Malley, Curriculum Coordinator  
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## **On Reading and Books**

### **Reading Aloud**

You may have tangible wealth untold:  
Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold.  
Richer than I you can be -  
I had a Mother who read to me.

from *The Reading Mother*  
by Strickland Gillilan

The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children

*Becoming a Nation of Readers*  
(page 23)

For the majority of children, reading from books occupied 1% of their free time, or less.

*Becoming a Nation of Readers* (page 23)

Books provide nourishment for the soul.

Carl Sagan

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## **Why Teachers Give Homework**

Think back to your school days. Surely you remember homework, don't you? You probably remember some of it as something you tried to get out of having to do. Some of it was a bore... real drudgery. But you must admit that occasionally some assignments were challenging and interesting.

### **Homework as an Extension of Class Work**

Teachers assign homework as an extension of classwork. There are only so many minutes in a class period. Your child's teacher will present the heart of a concept as part of a classroom lesson plan, and then assign supplementary work for further study at home.

Practice makes perfect? Homework provides the opportunity for your child to practice what is learned in class.

You should not do your children's homework. If they are struggling with an assignment and have difficulty completing the work within a reasonable period of time, don't allow the frustration to continue. Instead, contact the teacher and discuss the difficulty your child is having. In this way, a mutual plan can be developed to help your child succeed. If the assignments appear too easy and you feel that your child is not being sufficiently challenged, again, contact the teacher to discuss your concern. Teachers welcome this kind of feedback. It helps them to ensure that the work they assign is appropriate for the ability level of their students.

Excerpt from *Partners in Learning: Teachers, Parents, and Students*: San Diego County Office of Education