



CASEMAKING FACT SHEET #3

SUPPORTING CHILD DEVELOPMENT IN THE EARLY YEARS THROUGH ART!

Learning through community-based art programs in the Early Years is crucial to childhood development and laying the groundwork for lifelong learning. Education for young children, reaches beyond cognitive development to the physical, social, and emotional aspects of a child's knowledge base. A holistic approach of art inspired play-based learning where young children explore numbers, sounds, and movement through the arts, engage children through the mind, body, and spirit. The physical, emotional, and language capacities along with fundamental art skills are experienced, and expanded as a result, preparing the way for lifelong learning, school readiness, and overall child development.



EARLY LEARNERS NEED TO BE INVOLVED IN THE ARTS BEFORE KINDERGARTEN!

Children can be considered ready to learn when the following questions are answered:

- **Does the child have enough energy to concentrate?**
- **Does the child have the skills to get along with other children?**
- **Can the child defer gratification, persist in repetitive exercises, or defer outburst of frustrations?**
- **Can the child understand and verbally communicate experiences, ideas, wishes?**
- **Is the child able to understand similarities and differences, and recite back specific pieces of information?**

"Evidence into Action Topical Paper-School Readiness" Dr. E. Farrar, Dr. S. Goldfield, Dr. T. Mppre Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth- February 2007, pg 8 (1)

... Then Children Are Ready for School, Life Long Learning, and Healthy Engagement.

THE ARTS CAN HELP BECAUSE:

Community arts addresses the whole child. The arts encourages cooperation, engages children physically, offers opportunities for language development

AND

FOSTERS EMOTIONAL MATURITY.

Dance, music, theatre and multi-media experiences at the pre-school level set the tone for life-long learning, promising child development initiatives and the acquisition of art skills.

LEARNING IN AND THROUGH THE ARTS GETS KIDS READY FOR SCHOOL

Music contributes strongly to "school readiness," a foundational education aim of the American people for all our children, as expressed in our National Education Goals. Music experiences can help children prepare to learn to become literate as it helps them become more aware of and focused on the phonemes that make up the language or languages they will need to excel in school. When children develop musical skill and understanding, they are developing basic cognitive, social, and motor skills necessary for success throughout the educational process. They are preparing skills that will apply to language, to literacy, and to life itself.

"Start the Music" B. Boston, Wordsmith Inc., Early Childhood Music Summit, July 14-16, 2000, Pg 1,(2)



“Recreational art helps children get along with others, develop their skills in movement, and physical coordination, all of which influence the wiring and sculpting of the brain and build their ability to acquire new skills.”

“Early Years Study: Final Report”, M. McCain, J. Mustard, Publications Ontario, April 1999, Pg 136. (3)

Arts Group Activity Engages , Encourages, and Encourages Excellence !

“Very early on, individuals and groups of children seem to develop a sensitivity to an aesthetic of knowledge. They exhibit the capacity to choose “what is best” among theories and to identify conceptual or formal solutions that advance the work of the group. They have a sense of excellence, both within a group and in their own work....The children look at each other’s work and choose Elisa’s horse as the model for the group” (4)

Group cooperation, expressing verbal statements in the first plural, using different aspects of body language are part of this engagement in a aesthetic experience which sets the stage for more formalized learning.

“Making Learning Visible: Children as Individual and Group Learners”, Project Zero, Reggio Children Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2001, Pg 255, (4)

Even Early Learners have a way of learning and do not possess a single intelligence but several different kinds: linguistic, musical, logical, spatial for example. For those children who process information differently the arts offers an alternative way of accessing knowledge and can stimulate an environment which is more compatible to their learning style before they reach the fairly rigid approach of traditional schools.

The Arts...provide critical tools for children and youth as they move through various developmental stages. Preschool children, before they are fluent in language, are powerfully affected by music, visual arts and dance. Preschoolers can paint, color, mold clay , sing songs and dance in order to convey feelings and ideas. These activities encourage young children to express themselves and learn through the use of non-verbal symbols.... the arts provide children with unique methods for developing skills and organizing knowledge”

“Coming Up Taller” Arts and Humanities Programs for Children and Youth at Risk” J. Weitz, Presidents Committee on the Arts and Humanities, 1996, Pg 16/17 (5)

PLAY-BASED ARTS CAN KICK START LEARNING IN EARLY LEARNERS, HOWEVER NOT ALL CHILDREN ARRIVE AT SCHOOL READY TO LEARN...

1 in 20 children enter kindergarten without the skills they need to learn.

“School Readiness to Learn”, Offord Centre for Child Studies Website, (SRLproject), www.offordcentre.com/readiness/index.html (6)

By age 2 all children require child-child interaction. Family bonding is obviously important, but so is the need for play-based learning. Play- based problem solving with other children stimulates early brain development through the sensing pathways. Yet many families can’t afford private preschools. This evidence is particularly alarming. Of the 900,000 children studied, 200,000 in Ontario were considered vulnerable. Those that need programs the most cannot access them.

According to Dr. Fraser Mustard, 42 percent of Ontario’s population has low literacy levels, which are directly linked to

the early years. He has advocated for funding for a system of early childhood development centers that is holistic in it’s approach and incorporates play-based preschool programs. We are starting to see play-based learning through the arts incorporated into early years in a variety of ways. Artists are being incorporated into daycare centres, community based arts organizations are offering early years art programming in the community, and subsidized housing offers unique arts programs geared to the special needs of their community.

BUT IT IS NOT NEARLY ENOUGH.

As it stands now, Canada ranks last among developed nations spending on early childhood development

BENEFITS OF INVESTING IN HIGH QUALITY EARLY YEARS PROGRAMS

In the U.S. the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project indicated the long term benefits of children's involvement in preschool. The data collected included education, work history, earnings, welfare dependence, marriage, social integration and arrest rates. On all measures, participants did better than non-participants.

"A cost benefit analysis, conducted in 1992 when the recipients were 27, concluded that the total (cost) benefit through lower subsequent rates of special education, higher employment rates, increased earning capacities, as well of reduced victim and criminal and criminal justice system costs amounted to U.S. \$88,433. per program participant."

*"Evidence into Action Topical Paper-School Readiness" Dr. E. Farrar, Dr. S. Goldfield, Dr. T. Mppre
Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth-February 2007, pg10 (7)*

Moreover, child development or the lack of it, effects future development of the individual child AND human development on a national basis which is key for economic growth.

"What children know and can do at the time they start school, helps determine their educational, and lifelong, success. This is never more true than today. Today's economy demands a high educated citizenry, meaning that children must be prepared for their futures more than any other generation in the past."

*"Evidence into Action Topical Paper-School Readiness" Dr. E. Farrar, Dr. S. Goldfield, Dr. T. Mppre
Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth-February 2007, pg4 (8)*

WHAT DOES CREATIVE PLAY LOOK LIKE?

Fostering an appreciation for and the desire to create art in the Early Years is not limited to day trips to museums or plays. Engaging children in the many facets of art at the community level allows them to explore, create, and experience hands on art-based projects which has the optimal effect.

ENGAGING THE EARLY LEARNER THROUGH ART

SAMPLE ART EXPERIENCES THAT PROMOTE LEARNING

- **Help develop language skills by reciting poems and finger plays.**
- **(Do this by making collages and developing a story around it)**
- **Number skills are developed through counting rhymes and beats when playing a musical instrument.**
- **(Hum tunes and let the children to add to the lyrics that go with the melody)**
- **Dance helps to build motor control**
- **(Let children observe themselves in the mirror while dancing or acting out a story)**
- **Spatial acuity is developed through drawing, sculpting, and other visual arts.**
- **(Limit the use of coloring books. They block creative impulses and do not teach fine motor skills)**
- **Social skills are encouraged by group activities such as singing, and dancing.**
- **(Engage children in interactive performances and exhibits)**

"Children's Developmental Benchmarks and Stages: A Summary Guide to Appropriate Arts Activities", Excerpt from "Young Children and the Arts: Making Creative Connections, Page 6-13, <http://aep-arts.org> (9)

"Through the Arts, early learners are ready for life long learning ."

FOOTNOTES

1. "Evidence into Action Topical Paper-School Readiness" Dr. E. Farrar, Dr. S. Goldfield, Dr. T. Mppre Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth-February 2007, pg 8 (1)
2. "Start the Music" B. Boston", Wordsmith Inc., Early Childhood Music Summit, July 14-16, 2000, Pg 1, (2)
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5. "Coming Up Taller" Arts and Humanities Programs for Children and Youth at Risk" J. Weitz, Presidents Committee on the Arts and Humanities, 1996, Pg 16/17 (5)
6. "School Readiness to Learn", Offord Centre for Child Studies Website, (SRLproject), www.offordcentre.com/readiness/index.html (6)
7. "Evidence into Action Topical Paper-School Readiness" Dr. E. Farrar, Dr. S. Goldfield, Dr. T. Mppre Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth-February 2007, pg10 (7)
8. "Evidence into Action Topical Paper-School Readiness" Dr. E. Farrar, Dr. S. Goldfield, Dr. T. Mppre Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth-February 2007, pg4 (8)
9. "Children's Developmental Benchmarks and Stages: A Summary Guide to Appropriate Arts Activities", Excerpt from "Young Children and the Arts: Making Creative Connections, Page 6-13, <http://acp-arts.org> (9)

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12. "The Contribution of the Arts to a Healthy and Creative Canada", Arts Policy, April 2004 Draft, Canadian Heritage

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3. <http://www.naeyc.org/ece/1998/04.asp> : Can You See What I see?"
4. <http://www.journal.naeyc.org/btj/200407/ArtsEducationPartnership.pdf> : Children's Developmental Benchmarks and Stages
5. www.aracy.org.au/AM/Common/pdf/Topical%20Papers/Readiness.pdf: "Evidence into Action Topical Paper-School Readiness"
6. www.offordcentre.com/ch/keepscore/reports.html : "Early Childhood Development in Hamilton"



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