

PEARSON NEW INTERNATIONAL EDITION

**The Creative Arts: A Process Approach
for Teachers and Children**

**Linda Edwards
Fifth Edition**



Pearson New International Edition

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for Teachers and Children
Linda Edwards
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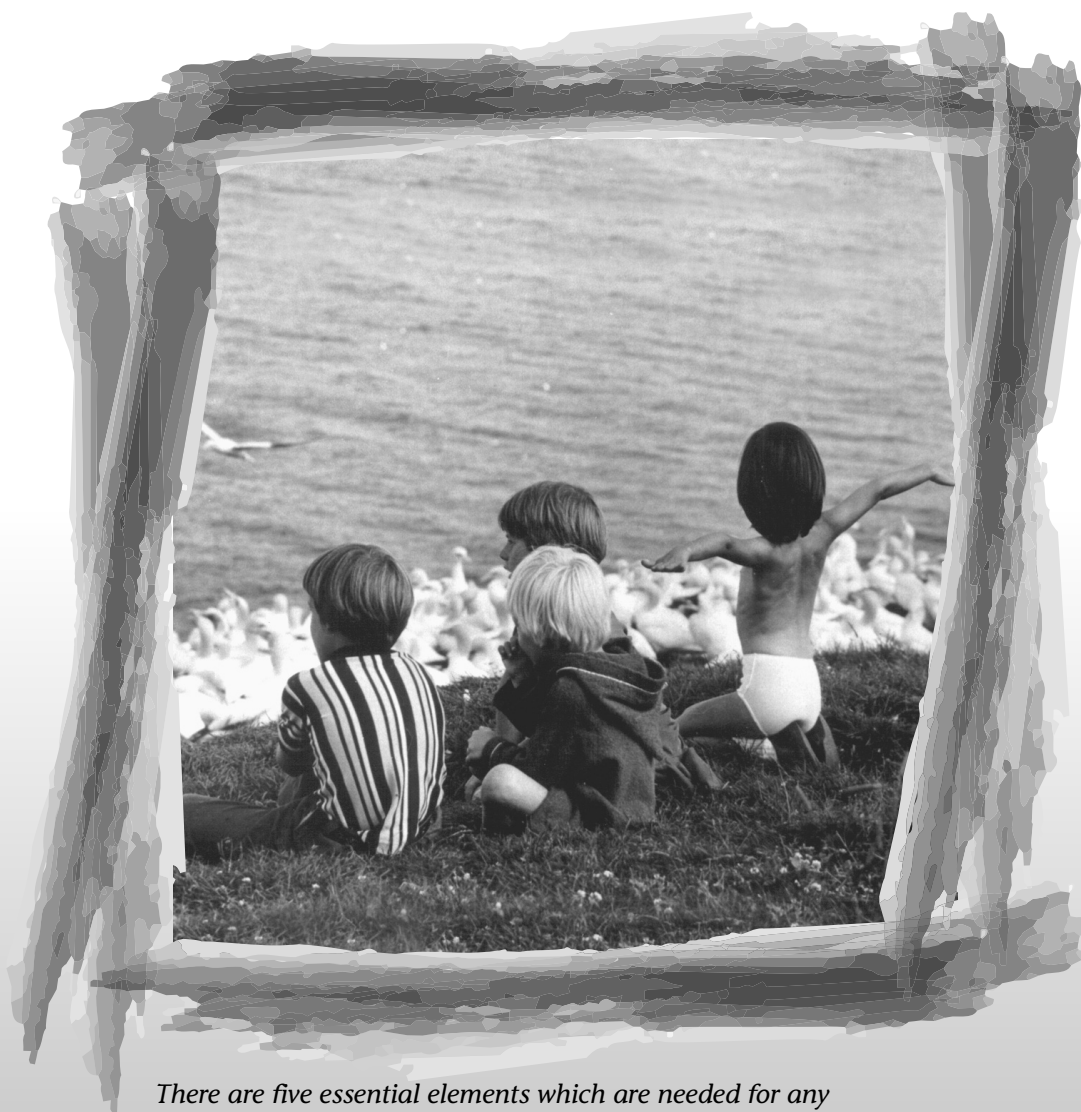
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Table of Contents

1. Beginning the Journey Linda Carol Edwards	2
2. Understanding the Creative Process Linda Carol Edwards	38
3. Introducing Music and Movement Linda Carol Edwards	66
4. Celebrating the Visual Arts Linda Carol Edwards	116
5. Encouraging Play and Creative Drama in the Classroom Linda Carol Edwards	154
6. Experimenting with Three-Dimensional Art Linda Carol Edwards	198
7. Beginning a New Adventure Linda Carol Edwards	232
Appendix: Literature Linda Carol Edwards	240
Appendix: Music Linda Carol Edwards	254
Appendix: Fingerplays Linda Carol Edwards	264
Appendix: Additional Guided Imagery Scripts and Extension Activities Linda Carol Edwards	272
References Linda Carol Edwards	280
Index	287

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Beginning the Journey



There are five essential elements which are needed for any society to survive and thrive: Truth, Beauty, Adventure, Art, and Peace.

Godfrey, 1992

Lien captures her favorite activity, “swimming in the ocean,” by moving her paint-filled brush across the flat surface of the paper. A few days later, she creates an ocean and a dolphin from a formless lump of clay. When her teacher tells the class that they are listening to a recording of George Frideric Handel’s “Water Music,” this same five-year-old moves about the room leaping and diving. She explains to her teacher that she is a dolphin swimming alongside a sailboat, splashing water on the people aboard. In each case, Lien is using the visual and performing arts to explore ways of expressing her feelings and sensory experiences in tangible, symbolic form. This child is making a conscious effort to arrange colors and shapes, sounds and movement, and other sensory phenomena to communicate her ideas and feelings about herself and what she knows about the world.

Children need to express themselves and to communicate with others. They fulfill these needs most effectively through personal expression, creative exploration, and action. The visual and performing arts provide concrete experiences in which children may encounter and interact with the world in ways that are unique and special to them. Young children, in particular, are drawn to the arts because “messing about” with creative arts materials is both natural and satisfying. Children represent their thoughts and feelings as they become involved in the sensory pleasures of painting a picture,

For the most intimate, most profoundly moving universal experiences we needed a more subtle, more sensitive set of symbols than the written and spoken word. And this richer language we call the arts.

Ernest L. Boyer

molding clay into shapes, or listening to sounds that tap into their inner thoughts and feelings. This process encourages exploration and interpretation of what they know about the world. Children need to explore all of their senses and discover what they can do with them. It is through the process of exploring the arts that they build a rich storehouse of ways to express what they need to say. The primary importance of these experiences is their meaning for the child. These experiences have increased power and significance when their message is shared with and accepted by others as a means of communication.

One of the most significant needs of all human beings is a feeling of positive self-worth. Young children are just beginning to learn about the world, and because they are still amateurs, they make mistakes, they get confused, and they do not always get things just right. They need a positive reaction from the adults around them, and they need to be recognized for their own individual value. The creative arts process is wonderfully inviting to young children because the process does not require that they “know” how to create representational art forms or that they understand the specialized techniques involved in ballet. In creative and artistic expression for young children, there is no one correct response and no right or wrong way to re-create swimming with dolphins or any other creative means of expression they might pursue. The creative and artistic process is a safe way for young children to try out, explore, experiment, and learn about the most important thing . . . themselves. Experiences

that enable children to express themselves through the arts nurture their inner life. When children feel a sense of accomplishment and self-confidence through artistic exploration, they experience feelings of personal satisfaction and positive self-image. Nurturing the arts in the early childhood classroom should be considered essential simply because of the richness it brings to children's lives.



Setting the Stage

Appropriate experiences in the creative arts for young children depend in part on the knowledge each teacher brings to the encounter. Although most teachers of young children acknowledge the creative arts as a legitimate and essential component of the curriculum, many still rely on product-oriented activities rather than valuing the process of making art. What are and what are not creative arts for young children, and what can we do to ensure that our young children truly experience the creative arts process when they are involved in the arts?

Let's take a look into several classrooms. Too often we forget what it is like to let children's imaginations take flight. Children's imaginations soar automatically; unfortunately, many of us have been "educated out" of being creative and imaginative. Challenge your imagination to find your own pictures for the following early childhood classrooms.

The Toddler Room with the Yellow Door

We are in one of the toddler rooms at a local preschool. The teacher has placed several containers of finger paint in the art center, along with large sheets of paper and smocks. During center time, and after a brief introduction to painting with fingers, the center is available to any children who decide to use the material. The teacher observes as several toddlers begin to become intimately involved with the finger paint. As they taste it, their expressions reveal that these children have discovered that finger paint does not taste very good. Most of the children begin touching the paint with one finger, then two fingers, and then with their full senses. Before long, other toddlers join in the fun, and the art center is alive with paint, new color creations, and happy two-year-olds.

The Toddler Room with the Blue Door

In the toddler room across the hall, the teacher has been reading the story of *Frederick* by Leo Lionni to the children. Frederick, as you may recall, is a little mouse who uses his imagination to gather sunshine and colors when all the other mice are gathering grain and corn. The mice are gathering things that they will need for the upcoming winter. The teacher and the assistant are passing out colored paper cut into pink and brown circles. Each child also gets a small paper cup and a small container of white glue. The teacher shows the children a mouse that she made by gluing the colored circles onto the paper cup. Then she demonstrates the step-by-step process by which she made her mouse. The assistant shows the children the mouse that she made and tells the children that they, too, can use the circles and cups to make a mouse just like hers

Chapter 1

Creativity is feeling free to be flexible and original, to express one's own ideas in one's own way.



and the teacher's. She encourages the children to look carefully at the two little mice and then moves about giving guidance and directions. When several of the toddlers have difficulty getting the circles in the right place on the cup, the teacher and assistant finish the project for them.

The Kindergarten

The teacher and the children are rehearsing for a play that they will present at the upcoming parent/teacher meeting. The children have been practicing for weeks, and this is the final rehearsal before the big performance. Having memorized all of the lines from one of their favorite stories, they are ready to present *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* to their parents. The dress rehearsal begins, the curtain rises, and these five-year-olds give a perfect performance, complete with correct dialogue, staging, and costumes.

The Block Room

Next, we go into the block room. We see another group of five-year-olds building a bridge with hardwood blocks. As we listen more closely, we hear the children repeating the words "tramp, tramp, tramp" as they parade up and down their makeshift bridge. Their teacher moves closer to the group and tells them that they sound like the goats in *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. With that suggestion, one child crawls under the bridge, and the next words we hear are "Who's that tramping across my bridge?" Another child picks up a small rug and says, "Hey, this will be the meadow." The play continues for the next 20 minutes, during which time the story line is changed several

times. At one point the smallest billy goat starts describing how he and his friends can trick the troll with cake and ice cream!

Appropriate or Inappropriate Practice

Think about the first two rooms—the toddler room with the finger-paint activity and the toddler room where children are making a mouse. In the finger-paint activity the children were invited to experiment with finger paint. They had a choice to explore this new art material or to go to a center of their choosing. Those who decided to go to the art center had the freedom to experience the properties of finger paint; to organize the paint in ways that expressed a thought, experience, or idea; or to simply use the finger paint to find pleasure in using their fingers, hands, or elbows to move the paint all over the paper. They may even end up with a product. This activity enables the children to be involved in a process during which creative impulses can take shape. The teacher has opened the door for these children to become absorbed in what the process has to offer rather than in how their products will look at the end of the activity. The children have been given permission to respond to internal rather than externally imposed criteria. They are working with the art materials in ways that challenge their ideas rather than following step-by-step procedures to represent the teacher's thoughts and ideas.

In the mouse-making activity the creative process is, at best, questionable. The children are responding to a dictated, step-by-step procedure that expresses the ideas of the teacher or, more likely, those of a recipe in a crafts book, not their own child-like ideas of how they can glue shapes to cups to make something they have imagined. Step-by-step procedures that lead children toward a model finished product may help children learn to sequence or follow directions, but we cannot call that art, nor can it be considered a creative process. Having 18 or 20 cup-and-paper mice that the teacher probably had to finish anyway may give the children something to take home at the end of the day, but projects of this type are really not much better than coloring sheets. Children soon learn to accept the myth that they can never make, in this case, a mouse as “good” as the teacher's.

The five-year-olds in the block room are tramp, tramp, tramping over the block bridge and grazing on a rug meadow. These children are involved in dramatic play, which is appropriate for young children. Dramatic play must not be confused with creative drama. McCaslin (2000) defines both terms. She describes dramatic play as the

free play of the very young child in which he explores his universe, imitating the actions and character traits of those around him . . . it has no beginning and no end, and no development in the dramatic sense. Creative drama is more structured. It may make use of a story with a beginning, middle, and an end. . . . It is, however, always improvised drama. (p. 6)

What have these children (and their teacher) created out of hardwood blocks, an old rug, and the process approach to creating art? They made their bridge, a child suggested that they use the rug for the meadow, and now they are about to embark on the serious business of interpreting the story in ways that have meaning and purpose to them. As this process continues, new dialogue evolves and adds a different dimension to the story line; new characters appear; some parts of the story are omitted; and

a new, more interesting plot develops. These children are involved in a process of self-expression that facilitates movement, gesture, language, communication, flexible thinking, new approaches to an old idea, original ways of approaching the story line, and elaboration of original ideas. The play is child initiated and encouraged by a well-planned, creative environment. This is the process of developing the ability to think creatively. This is also the performing arts at their best.

As for the children involved in the dress rehearsal, this is a good example of the product approach. Expecting young children to memorize words and actions and then rigorously follow them is not the way to encourage the development of creative thinking. In addition, it gives children the clear message that the teacher's way is the right way, and the only way, to interpret the story. Who is to say that the troll cannot be tricked into submission with cake and ice cream? Children are the most natural and creative creatures on Earth, and when we set the stage in ways that are meaningful and appropriate, we open yet another window through which children can nurture what is already an innate gift. Let's look at a situation in which a child takes her creative expression one step further.

Isabella: Extending the Stage

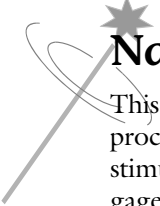
Six-year-old Isabella's favorite fingerplay is "Little Cabin in the Woods." She uses the power of her imagination, her feeling states, and her motor ability to make her own little rabbit for performing the fingerplay. She is not imitating her teacher or her peers; she creates her own version of a little rabbit in ways that please her perfectly. Now, when Isabella does her "Little Cabin in the Woods," what else is happening? Her actions could be viewed as an accomplishment in rote memorization that would satisfy one of the core objectives for first-grade children, or she could be showing us much more important aspects of development. In particular, she is not confined to the formal memorization tasks experienced by the five-year-old billy goats during their dress rehearsal.

When she is involved in this fingerplay, Isabella is using her imagination, her problem-solving skills, her knowledge of the world, and her feelings to show how her little rabbit looks, hops, experiences fear, and resolves a dilemma. Finally, Isabella decides what she will do to take care of and comfort her little rabbit. She is giving order and structure to her thoughts. She is clarifying concepts such as fear, safety, and security. She is gaining an understanding of how the little rabbit used reasoning and logic to get out of a somewhat frightening situation. And she is doing all of this creatively.

The last line of the fingerplay is "safely you'll abide." When Isabella and her friends are playing in the housekeeping center, their teacher, Miss Pepita, notices that they are moving blocks from the block center into the housekeeping center. They use the small hardwood blocks to make very small beds. The children then repeat the fingerplay, rocking the little imaginary rabbits, gathering imaginary blankets, and kissing the rabbits good night. After "little rabbit come inside," they sing instead, "safely on your side." Miss Pepita observes perceptively that, although the children have changed the words, the mood, feeling, and affect are the same. These children are nurturing and taking tender care of an imaginary rabbit. They have

simply substituted “safely on your side” for the more abstract and complicated vocabulary of “safely you’ll abide.” Just think about the language skills Isabella is developing. She substitutes familiar vocabulary, and does it in context, for a word she does not understand! She interpretes the song based on her own experiences and knowledge of reality. This probably would not have occurred had she been forced to memorize her “lines” for a performance.

This book introduces a wide range of ways for looking at creative abilities, creative processes, the arts, and the role they play in creativity. As adults, we cannot bring experiences to children, nor can we make them meaningful or important. What we can do is provide the setting and invite children to create experiences that have meaning and importance to them. But this book is not just about children and your role as their teacher; it also focuses on the artistic, creative, and affective development of you as an adult and how you view your own artistic, creative, and affective potential and abilities.



Nature of the Book

This book is about children and adults. It is about children and the artistic, creative process, and it is also about you, the artistic and creative adult. The text is designed to stimulate personal reflection, self-exploration, and self-expression. It invites you to engage in the processes of creativity so that you can better foster creative and artistic growth and participation in your classroom. My goal is to enhance the creative and artistic abilities you bring to the experience, your perceptions, memories, feelings, concerns, attitudes, and values about the arts. The emphasis is on process rather than product as you learn how to tap into your own creativity. When you have found your own creative and artistic spark, you will be better equipped to help children engage in the creative process. The creative arts experiences you will encounter throughout the book may not make you into an accomplished artist, musician, actor, or dancer, but they will encourage you to move away from a reliance on prescribed activities and uniform, prescribed products. A process approach to exploring the creative arts will move you toward a more secure sense of your own ability to engage in the creative process, regardless of product.

A process-oriented approach to the visual and performing arts involves a heightened sensitivity and awareness of what you are doing while you are doing it. A product approach is more concerned with the final outcome or product than with the experience of creating. When we are concerned about how our art compares with that of others, we are focusing on product. When we experiment with and discover new ways to work with art materials or think of a new and different way to move our bodies to a musical recording, we are focusing on process.

How successful we are at encouraging the creative process in children may depend in large part on our own experiences in the arts. I found the following quote especially insightful:

I want to thank so many people, but especially my mother Brandy, who taught me that all my finger paints were Picassos and I didn’t have to be afraid. (Jodie Foster’s acceptance speech after winning her Academy Award for Best Actress, 1988)

Different people approach the creative arts in different ways, depending on what their particular experiences have been. The following section illustrates the differing perceptions developed in adults with different experiences.

Adult Development in the Arts

Several college students stand outside a classroom waiting for the first class of the course Creativity and the Arts to begin. They have heard through the department grapevine that they will be expected to paint and dance and write scripts for plays in which they will have to act out different parts. One or two of the students are genuinely excited about the possibilities for involvement in the arts, but most exhibit a certain reserved panic:

“I can’t draw.”

“I don’t have a creative bone in my body.”

“I couldn’t carry a tune in a bucket.”

“I am so clumsy, if she grades me on my dancing, my G.P.A. is shot.”

Overall, their feelings range from reluctance and hesitancy to fear of being judged on their talent or lack thereof.

Is innate talent a prerequisite for being creative? The answer is an unequivocal no. **Creativity is not a synonym for talent.** Does a teacher have to be an actor to engage children in improvisation or a musician to bring meaningful musical experiences to children? Do you have to be an accomplished artist to express ideas through shaping a lump of clay? The answer, again, is no. Experiences that lead you to use your creative abilities when bringing the arts effectively to children can also lead you toward increased understanding of the nature of the arts and a heightened sensitivity to your own expressive and creative potential. You do not need to have great talent to be a creative person. However, you must be willing to take some risks, to try new ways of doing familiar things, to open yourself to the possibility of discovering something new about yourself, and to trust yourself enough to try.

A teacher who has never gone through the process of creating in a specific art material may never understand the particular type of thinking that is necessary to work with clay, paint, or whatever. This means that the teacher must have been truly involved in creating with materials, not in dealing with them in an abstract way by reading or mechanically carrying out some project. The material and the expression should be as one. (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987, p. 62)

Lowenfeld and Brittain’s words, although they may seem dated to some in the profession, have significant meaning for those of us embarking on a teaching career. If we do not have personal experiences with the arts, we really cannot understand how our children feel when they enter into the process. For that reason, and for more reasons discussed later, the creative arts encounters in this book are written to be experienced by you. They are carefully designed to encourage you to refresh or rekindle, or maybe discover for the first time, the importance that the arts and the creative process have had or can have on you, both professionally and per-

sonally. Many activities in this book emphasize the process rather than the product. As a result, your understanding of the creative process and the arts will take on new dimensions. Fears and the old notion that you need to be a “real” artist to bring the world of the arts to children will begin to disappear; excitement about working with arts materials and art ideas will emerge, and you will discover your own expressive and creative ways of entering this wonderful process. Alfred Balkin (1990) put it another way:

Be it music, or art,
or theater, or dance,
Creativity hinges on
taking a chance. (p. 31)

Let’s take a chance together.

One easy way to begin getting comfortable with the idea of expressing creativity yourself is through an activity that comes naturally to most teachers: reading literature to children. To that end, several related pieces of literature are introduced in each chapter. The children’s literature featured in this chapter is “Children’s Literature and Creative Teachers.” It presents books through which teachers encourage children to discover or express their own creativity. The children’s literature features in other chapters focus on the specific content of the chapter. For example, in Chapter 4 the literature focuses on children, teachers, and music.

Children’s Literature and Creative Teachers



My Great-Aunt Arizona by Gloria Houston, HarperTrophy, 1997.

Arizona is a teacher who teaches generations of children in the same one-room schoolhouse that she attended. Arizona’s quiet yet meaningful life reminds us of the magical place a special teacher can hold in our hearts.

The Art Lesson by Tommy dePaola, The Putnam & Grosset Group, 1989.

Tommy wants to be an artist when he grows up and is excited about meeting his first-grade art teacher. Then he finds out that she expects him to copy her pictures. This wonderful picture book is a shining example of one little boy’s quest to fulfill his own ways of artistic expression.

Ruby the Copycat by Peggy Rathmann, Scholastic, 1997.

Ruby has a very perceptive teacher who helps her discover her own creative resources, which keep Ruby literally jumping for joy! This book is fun, expressive, character-oriented, and done in colorful pencil-and-ink drawings.

Chapter 1

Think of a course in creative arts education as a magic door opening to show the magnificent beauty of all the arts.



Themes of the Book

This chapter introduces some central themes and ideas about the arts and the creative process that are woven throughout the text:

- ◆ The creative arts are essential to the intellectual, affective, social, and physical development of children and adults.
- ◆ An awareness of self and an acceptance of differences are facilitated by personal experiences in the creative arts.
- ◆ The creative arts encourage an awareness of the important role of the affective domain in the development of sensitivity, values, and perceptions of self and others.
- ◆ The integration of creative arts content with an emphasis on the affective development of teachers facilitates understanding of creative processing and heightens teacher sensitivity to the creative efforts of children.
- ◆ A culturally sensitive approach to introducing children to art from around the world helps young learners to construct a worldview of cultural similarities and to value differences.

As these themes are developed and expanded, you will begin to see that the educational process outlined in this book is systematically and deliberately designed to facilitate a continuous interchange between the teacher, the student learning to become a teacher, and the child. We are all involved, no matter what our ages, our abilities, or our backgrounds, in a never-ending process of discovering our creative potential. Creative arts education continues throughout our life span, whether we are young children, experienced teachers, or students. Throughout our lives, we move continuously through remembered childhood experiences, the contrasting needs and demands of learning to teach young children, and the awareness of our-

Group sharing and reflection are an integral part of the process of artistic discovery.



selves as creative teachers. The dynamics of these interchangeable roles, and the processes involved, require an awareness of the *élan vital*, the spirit whose very essence infuses the interplay balancing this triangle.

What Are the Arts?

Defining “the arts” sounds like an easy task: We all know what the arts are, we have an idea about what artists do, and we know what art looks like. However, providing a concrete definition of the visual and performing arts turns out to be far more involved than you might imagine.

For the scope of this book, the arts are defined as dance, drama, music, visual arts, and literature.

Dance: body awareness, fundamentals of movement, creative expression, multisensory integration

Drama: creative dramatics, pantomime, improvisation, characterization, play production

Music: sound, pitch, rhythm, singing, playing, musical games, listening, creative movement

Visual Arts: self-expression, visual and tactile art, print and craft media, analysis and interpretation


Literature: poetry, illustrations, writing, award-winning books, storytelling, reading, speaking

Additional definitions of the varied components of the arts are aesthetic perception (impression), creative expression (interpretation in action), historical and

Chapter 1

Children naturally combine movement, drama, and sound to interpret stories in ways that are right for them.

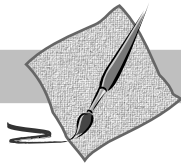


 To obtain a copy of National Standards for Arts Education: What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts (ISBN 1-56545-036-1, MENC stock #1605), please contact Music Educators National Conference. (Contact information is provided at the end of the Chapter 2.)

cultural heritage (exposure to art from around the world), and aesthetic valuing (appreciation). Together, these aesthetic lenses encompass a wide range of knowledge, concepts, and skills in the arts, including basic arts concepts and skills, factual or contextual learning about the arts in history and culture, and higher-order or critical thinking skills required to solve aesthetic problems and analyze works of art (President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership, 1999). Table 1–1 presents a graphic overview and serves as a summary for this discussion.

TABLE 1–1 Components of the Arts

Aesthetic Perception	Creative Expression	Historical/Cultural Heritage	Aesthetic Valuing
Impression	Interpretation in action	Exposure to art from around the world	Appreciation
<i>All encompass a wide range of knowledge, concepts, and skills in the ARTS</i>			
◆ Basic arts concepts and skills	◆ Factual or contextual learning about the arts in history and culture	◆ Higher-order or critical thinking skills to solve aesthetic problems and analyze works of arts	



NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR ARTS EDUCATION

In a policy statement written for *Arts Education Policy Review* (1996), Thomas A. Hatfield, Executive Director of the National Art Education Association, addresses basic questions in educational reform. He states, in part, that

what is needed is a nationally coherent vision of what it means for all our students to become artistically literate . . . the phrase “all students” reflects the social commitment that standards apply to students regardless of background (gender, ethnicity, or economic condition), circumstances, or ambition. “National” means a nationwide agreement on what defines successful arts learning and the school practices that support that learning. (Hatfield, 1996, p. 15)

A Brief Look at History

It is useful at this point in your reading to consider recent historical events that have had an impact on arts education in general and on the role of the arts in schools in particular. As funding for the arts continues to dwindle and financial support for the arts seems to be at an all-time low, we will all be well advised to be familiar with the changes that have occurred in arts education just in the past 10 years. This brief history focuses on contemporary arts education and the people in power who have the most influence on the future of arts education in this country.

Throughout the nation, the vital role of arts education is being acknowledged. After its initial omission, the federal government has recognized the arts as one of the eight core subjects American students should be taught. In February 1994, Congress passed the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, which finally gave the arts the status that Sir Herbert Read had demanded as long ago as 1926. In our lifetime, this status is being recognized! The Educate America Act states, among other goals, that “By the year 2000, all students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography” (Getty Center for Education in the Arts Newsletter, 1994–1995, p. 8).

In anticipation of this new law, the Consortium of National Arts Education Associations was formed to write voluntary national standards for what the outcome of arts education should be—that is, what students should know and be able to do in the arts at various grade levels. The professional arts education associations that comprise the Consortium—the American Alliance for Theatre and Education (AATE), Music Educators National Conference (MENC), National Art Education Association (NAEA), and National Dance Association (NDA)—have been active participants in reshaping the image of art as a “soft” subject and giving the arts their place in the curriculum along with mathematics, science, and languages. (Addresses for Consortium members are included at the end of this chapter.) Several initiatives set forth by these professional organizations include developing standards in the arts, supporting states in the creation of K–12 curriculum frameworks based on the national standards in the arts, and expanding the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) to include the arts.

Chapter 1

Less than a month after the passage of the Educate America Act, the Consortium presented the new standards to U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley. There were three sets of measurements for each art form:

1. one for the end of the fourth grade,
2. another for the end of the eighth grade, and
3. a third for high school graduation.



In your local newspaper or on the Internet, find the listings for arts organizations in your community. Select a performance that sounds interesting to you, and make a date with someone in your class to attend the event.

The work of the Consortium was published as *National Standards for Arts Education: What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts* (1994). The standards stress that students should create art as well as become proficient in performing or producing in at least one art area, and they should have a basic understanding of the content of arts from the perspectives of history, culture, and aesthetics. The idea of having national standards and a systematic evaluation of children's accomplishments may sound like an impossibility to some. However, we can look to these standards as challenges for bringing the arts back into the mainstream of essential subject areas, and as teachers, we are in a unique position to do just that. In a 1994–1995 publication, James M. Clarke, past president of the NAEA, reflected on the meaning of standards in the arts and challenged every school and each teacher to attend to the long-term implication of these national goals:

[These standards] are intended to raise the quality of visual arts education, but they can do that only if they are adopted in every school. We know children will work to the level of expectation that is put before them, and the standards are a way of turning this to the student's long-range advantage. (Clarke, 1994–1995, p. 9)

In a report written by the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, John Brademas, Chairman of the Committee, describes a vital cultural life as essential to a functioning democracy. In this document, *Creative America*, Brademas (1997) reflects the conviction that "a thriving culture is at the core of a vital society . . . the creative force of the arts and the humanities strengthens our democracy [and] unlocks the human potential for creativity and lifts us beyond our isolated individualism to shared understanding."

The interconnection between the arts, culture, and democracy is described by Benjamin Barber (1996), who believes that we

share a dependency on one extraordinary human gift, imagination. Imagination is the key to diversity, to civil compassion and to commonality. The arts and humanities are civil society's driving engine, the key to its creativity, its diversity, its imagination and hence its spontaneousness and liberty. (p. 12)

What do decades of research tell us about how the arts contribute to this view of arts, society, and our shared humanity? We know

- ◆ that an arts education contributes significantly to improved critical thinking, problem posing, problem solving, and decision making;
- ◆ that, as with language and mathematics, the crux of an arts education involves the communication, manipulation, interpretation, and understanding of complex symbols;

- ◆ that developing fluency in artistic expression and understanding fosters higher-order thinking skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation;
- ◆ that the arts are multimodal, addressing and fostering the multiple intelligences of student (spatial abilities, for example, develop through drawing and sculpture, mathematical-logical abilities through producing and listening to music, kinesthetic or physical abilities through dance, interpersonal skills through drama); and
- ◆ that the arts develop a person's imagination and judgment, permitting each individual, in Maxine Green's classic phrase, to create "as if" worlds, places where we see the world afresh (Cortines, 1997, p. 5).

Art is an important part of our common culture in that it—like the humanities—provides us with some of our most salient examples of the breadth and depth and complexity of human nature. And art, no less than philosophy or science, issues a challenge to the intellect.

William J. Bennett

This position represents only one of the many reasons that a commitment to the arts is essential in today's educational arena. However, if we listen to John W. Gardner (1996), we begin to realize that every healthy society celebrates its values. They are expressed in the arts, in song, in ritual. They are stated explicitly in historical documents, in ceremonial speeches, in textbooks. They are reflected in stories told around the campfire, in the legends kept alive by old folks, in the fables told to children. . . . Indeed, the Constitution, in addition to being an instrument of governance, is an expression of pledged values. (p. 2)

The arts in education are an absolute necessity. If, in this day and time, we do not tap into the creative side of a young person's brain in every possible way, then we will not have the innovation and the economic and cultural growth experience that this country must have (Riley, 1998). In 1999 Richard Riley spoke to the National Assembly of Music Educators National Conference in Reston, Virginia, and gave a personal and important message to those of us in the audience. He said, in part:

As a child, I took piano lessons for three or four years. I was not destined to become a great musician. But I know that, through music, children learn to reach for their very best. You have all witnessed the intensity with which children prepare for a recital. They practice and practice until they can play the piece without errors. Imagine if, when they are a few years older, they approach a geometry test with the same intensity. Then imagine if they continue to strive for excellence as college students, as citizens, and as parents. (p. 1)

When the arts reside at the core of educational programs, experiences that result in articulation through art—through music, dance, drama, the visual arts, and literature, and all communicative and expressive thought—broaden and enrich the child's potential as an individual and as a member of society.

Art Education and the Young Child

The National Art Education Association (NAEA) states that art is one of the most revealing of human activities, as well as one of the richest sources for understanding cultures, because the earliest things we know of ourselves are recorded in visual forms and images. A comprehensive arts education promotes the attainment of knowledge, understandings, and skills that contribute to the student's intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development.

MyEducationLab



Go to MyEducationLab, at www.myeducationlab.com, and select the topic “Visual Arts.” Under Activities and Applications, watch the video Creative Arts.

A comprehensive arts education program also is the perfect place to begin increasing children’s awareness of a variety of cultures, and it plays a key role in affecting children’s long-term beliefs (Boutte, 2000). Saul and Saul (2001) caution teachers to move away from the “tourist approach” (p. 38) to teaching multicultural education wherein we “visit” different cultures, never to discuss them again. Multicultural experiences for young children should become a part of their artistic awareness throughout the year.

Ernest Boyer, of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and a noted expert on the arts, emphasizes the importance of arts education and identifies three reasons we need arts education in our schools. It is difficult not to pay attention to his view of art as “one of mankind’s most visual and essential forms of language, and if we do not educate our children in the symbol system called the arts, we will lose not only our culture and civility, but our humanity as well” (Boyer, 1987, p. 16). Figure 1–1 presents a summary of the reasons Boyer feels that the arts can make such a difference in a child’s school experiences.

Boyer’s points go directly to the heart of what we, as educators, believe is important to a child’s artistic development. Art education for children is providing a variety of materials and opportunities for self-expression. The impulses to explore, to manipulate, or to change ways of expression or the way the body moves, all find outlets in the arts. Young children can organize materials—be it paint, a story line in a book, or props for improvisation—to express ideas, feelings, and concepts. These are not separate entities; they are interrelated, and the more knowledge a child has of the nature and structure of creative expression, the more each of these entities enriches and nourishes the other. The creative arts process provides a pathway for children to reach into a new creative unfolding and understanding of themselves.

As children experience the arts, they discover new ways of representing their world in ways that can be seen, felt, and heard. We need only to sit back and watch children creating to see that they bring their own personal feelings, experiences, sensory impressions, and imaginations to the artistic experience. They also enter into the process in ways that are unique, different, and right for them. This process is a transformation of each child’s inherent artistic potential, and the result is a wonderful, exciting, and significant reflection of the child as artist.

FIGURE 1–1 Boyer’s Vision for Creative Arts Education

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- ◆ Arts education helps children express feelings and ideas words cannot convey.
 - ◆ Through the language of the arts we can help integrate our splintered academic world. Students are not gaining insight or perspective or a sense of wholeness. They urgently need to see connections, and finding patterns in the disciplines can be accomplished through the arts.
 - ◆ Arts education is necessary because the arts provide the child with a language that is universal.
-

As children manipulate and explore the properties of paint, music, clay, or movement, they begin to develop concepts about their experiences. Through the arts they discover the hardness and plasticity of clay, the smoothness and roughness of different textures, the soft and sustaining bell tone of a suspended triangle, and the floating weightlessness of a silk scarf. Touching, seeing, and hearing are all intricately intertwined in these experiences of the creating child. The intimate involvement of children with sensory exploration heightens sensory awareness and provides a solid base for future artistic creation.

The Goals of a Process Approach

A process approach to creativity can be viewed in several different ways. Torrance (1995) views the process as a way of sensing problems or gaps in information, forming ideas or hypotheses, testing and modifying these hypotheses, and communicating the results. Davis (2000) expands on Torrance's views:

It can refer to a sequence of steps or stages through which the creative person proceeds in clarifying a problem, working on it, and producing a solution that resolves the difficulty. The creative process can refer to the techniques and strategies that creative people use, sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously, to produce the new idea combinations, relationships, meanings, perceptions and transformations. (p. 60)

Regardless of how mysterious these ideas seem on the surface, there are some relatively straightforward ways to approach the creative process. More specifically, the following goals deserve your full attention. Take some time to identify those goals that already come easy for you, and mark those that you perceive as a personal challenge.

- ◆ Play around with ideas.
- ◆ Explore a wide variety of materials and methods for using them.
- ◆ Take advantage of accidents, such as mixing the wrong colors.
- ◆ Seek out activities that provide sensory pleasure.
- ◆ Welcome discoveries about media.
- ◆ Cooperate in the give and take of ideas.
- ◆ Honor the unexpected.
- ◆ Solve problems or dilemmas through trial and error.
- ◆ Allow your feelings and emotions to lead you in the process of creating.
- ◆ Create change in your old ways of approaching artistic challenges.
- ◆ Appreciate your own point of view.
- ◆ View the process as a way to communicate your thoughts and feelings without words.
- ◆ Acknowledge your insights and give them value.
- ◆ Initiate a new way of creating; suggest an idea for alternatives.
- ◆ Find something positive to say about your work. (Edwards, 2002, p. 17)

Torrance, in his manifesto for children (1983), provides us with enlightened goals for our art education approach with children. His manifesto challenges us to nurture creativity in our classrooms and to find appropriate ways to honor and support the development of creativity in our children and in ourselves. The following points are included among the challenges in his manifesto:

- ◆ Don't be afraid to fall in love with something and to pursue it with intensity.
- ◆ Know, understand, take pride in, practice, develop, exploit, and enjoy your greatest strengths.
- ◆ Learn to free yourself from the expectations of others and to walk away from the games they impose on you. Free yourself to play your own game.
- ◆ Do what you love and can do well.
- ◆ Learn the skills of interdependence. (p. 78)



Diversity and Multicultural Art in Your Classroom

There has always been diversity in children's classrooms. Differences in cultural origins, lifestyles, abilities, needs of individual children, gender, religion, and ethnicity all bring a richness to classroom settings that few other environments hold. What works for one child may not work for another, and vice versa. For example, children with physical disabilities may have different ways of moving their bodies to music than children who have hearing disabilities. Children with cultural backgrounds different from your own may give interpretations to creative drama experiences that differ from the ones you expect. What is needed and valued in a creative arts program in an urban school is very different from the creative arts program that guides the one-room school in Ingomar, Montana, where teacher Chris French, a former student of mine, has only four children this year. But for all the differences our students encounter in early childhood settings, our role is that of facilitator. We provide the materials in the environment for our children to create, question, explore, and experience their own ideas in action.

Because of the growing diversity in our classrooms, it seems imperative to begin the development of world understanding during the early years, while children are most impressionable and receptive. Children need to become sensitive to the diversity of the classroom culture, to the diversity in their neighborhoods and community, and to the diversity of the world's cultures. One way teachers can facilitate this process is by introducing children to a wide variety of visual and performing art activities from around the world.

Chapters 3 through 8 describe activities that allow children to create and explore multicultural art ideas within the cultural context. These global activities are based on customs and celebrations, and each focuses on the process of learning about the world, not the product. They provide the steps for exploring and creating, which we all know is the most important process for growing children. With each of these activities, you and your children will discover the contributions of many cultures to the world of art.

The key to bringing meaningful, appropriate, and relevant global arts experiences to children is to focus on your attitude toward diversity and your willingness to learn about global arts education. I have always found it to be an interesting and informative exercise to delve into my own cultural background and more recently into the background of some of my closest friends. As teaching profession-

als, we cannot nearsightedly stay within the bounds of our own experiences, nor can we divorce ourselves from the backgrounds and differences of the children in our classrooms. When your class includes children with disabilities and children from varied ethnicities and cultures, you may have to modify your plans for creative arts experiences to accommodate these differences, but this should not, in any way, hinder your ability to bring the arts to each child in your class.

As you begin to think about the diversity of your children and presenting multicultural and global arts within a cultural context, examine your own attitude and biases about other countries. You might think of this in terms of your own background—your race, your culture, your genealogy and region of ancestry. As you reflect on your own cultural history, you will be able to move from the artistic process or task to what art in a cultural context means to you personally.

Art from Around the World

What Is Your Role?

Recently, when I was visiting a local school to observe a student teacher, I was invited to have lunch with a lively group of five-year-olds. During our conversation over the cafeteria lunch table, I asked one of the children if he had always lived in Charleston. With a puzzled look, the kind that implies how dumb adults can be at times, he replied, “I don’t live in Charleston. I live in Sandy Ridge.” I asked him if Sandy Ridge was in Charleston, and again, he gave me a look of total exasperation, tapped his finger firmly on the table, and with the tone of voice that only a five-year-old can effectively use, said, “I said I don’t live in Charleston. I live in Sandy Ridge!” I found out later from his teacher that Sandy Ridge designates a rural area of Charleston County and gets its name from the Sandy Ridge Community Center.

Is it any wonder that when we introduce young children to art from other parts of the world, they have little, if any, idea of where that part of the world is located? We can show them on a map, or we can point to another continent on a globe, but young children have a limited concept of space and what they do understand is usually centered on the space in their homes, their neighborhoods, and the route they take each day to and from school. Because we know from a developmental perspective that this is true, how can we introduce the art of cultures beyond and including the Western Hemisphere to explain the customs, mores, and thoughts that different cultures offer through their art? Too many well-meaning early childhood teachers have, in the name of multicultural art, presented children with exotic curios from India, Africa, Central America, and other cultures rich in visual arts traditions without providing ample historical background of the art or the cultural reasons for creating the art. The goal of multicultural art understanding is knowledge, and this knowledge lies with you, the teacher.

Multicultural Art in Context

To effectively teach young children about art from around the world, you must learn as much as possible about why a particular art exists, how it is made, what purpose its