

# Guiding Preschool Learning in the Arts

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The goal of arts education for young children is to develop and sustain the natural curiosity, expressiveness, and creativity that very young children often display. Arts education begins with a foundation that emphasizes exploration, experimentation, and engagement of the senses, and discussion as paths to understanding. Young children use the arts to explore sensation and their understanding of real and imagined events. They try to find out all they can about the expressive qualities inherent in different forms of communication. Through what they choose to dramatize, sing, or paint, children let others know what is important, trivial, appealing, or frightening in their lives. Depictions of faces and forms develop fairly predictably in young children. Although “realistic” products should not be the goal, preschool-age children can learn some basic techniques and begin to develop aesthetic preferences.

A portfolio of children’s artwork can be started at the preschool level, to be expanded throughout the early elementary years to produce a wealth of evidence about a child’s profile of emerging artistic preferences and strengths. The arts also often serve as a vehicle for children to demonstrate their understanding in other content areas, and teachers should be alert to children’s artwork as potential evidence of learning in mathematics, science, and other subject areas.

To promote challenging and stimulating art experiences, teachers should be able to say “yes” to the following four questions:

- Are children able to experiment freely with art materials and explore what happens?
- Will each child’s work look different from the others?
- Is the goal of the activity the children’s enjoyment rather than a product to please adults?
- Will the child’s effort lead to something that is satisfying to the child at his or her level of development?

## Movement & Dance

### Learning Guidelines

**1. Explore activities and vocabulary related to movement, balance, strength, and flexibility.**

*Link to Movement Elements & Dance Skills 1.1, 1.2*

**2. Respond to a variety of musical rhythms through body movement.**

*Link to Movement Elements & Dance Skills 1.3, Reading and Notation 2.1*

**3. Participate in simple sequences of movements and dance to various kinds of music.**

*Link to Movement Elements & Dance Skills 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, Choreography 2.2, 2.3, 2.4*

### Ideas for Learning Experiences

- experiment with locomotor movements that move the body from one place to another including crawling, creeping, walking, running, jumping, hopping, galloping, sliding, rolling, climbing).
- try out non-locomotor movements while standing, sitting, kneeling, or lying (e.g., bending, turning, twisting, rolling, stretching, shaking, curling, swinging, rocking, swaying).
- walk on a low balance board or a real or imaginary tightrope (e.g., a line of masking tape, string or chalk on the floor or playground), and as skills increase try moving sideways, backwards.
- push, pull, or lift heavy objects or equipment (e.g., a wagon, wheelbarrow).
- use large outdoor equipment (e.g., climb a ladder or jungle gym, hang from a trapeze).
- move to many different styles of instrumental music (e.g., classical, jazz, country and western, disco, swing, rhythm and blues).
- play “statues” and “freeze” when the music stops.
- explore contrasts in force (hard/soft; strong/light) such as stamping, clapping, tapping feet; moving softly “like a feather floating;” being stiff like robots or floppy like rag dolls.
- imitate simple (2 or 3 step) movement sequences (e.g., “tap, tap, tap your foot, clap, clap clap your hands”).
- change one part of a simple movement sequence (e.g., from tap, tap, clap to tap, tap, stamp).
- sing songs that contain sequences of body motions (e.g., *Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes*).
- play traditional games and dances (e.g., *Loobie Loo, Hokey Pokey*).



## Learning Guidelines

### 4. Express themselves freely through movement.

*Link to Movement Elements & Dance Skills 1.9, Choreography 2.1, Dance as Expression 3.3, Performance in Dance 4.2*

## Ideas for Learning Experiences

- move to music at their own pace and style.
- invent original ideas through dance, movement, or games such as *What Can You Do PUNCHINELLO?* or challenges such as “Shake something—shake something different.”
- invent various ways to move from one point to another (e.g., across the mat or playground).

### 5. Use props to explore space and movement.

*Link to Movement Elements & Dance Skills 1.4, 1.5; Choreography 2.5*

- use balls, hoops or beanbags to explore the concepts of over, under, around, in front of, behind.
- use carpet squares, hoops, masking tape to limit personal space and move around without touching others.
- explore how far can they reach up/down, side to side, in front of and behind them. How many ways can they move their arms in their space?
- experiment with various ways to move scarves, streamers, or ribbons (e.g., moving them in small/large circles, swinging, zig-zag, making various shapes in the air, etc.).
- jump in and out of hoops; step in spaces of a ladder placed on the floor.

*Note: Safety factors should always be considered in advance (e.g., beanbags should be filled with safe items and have reinforced stitching; scarves or ribbons should be trimmed so children won't trip on them; hoops should be molded in one-piece).*

### 6. Act out ways that movement and dance can show feelings or convey meaning.

*Link to Dance as Expression 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 4.1; Performance in dance 4.3*

- express emotions (e.g., tapping feet or clapping hands like they're happy, angry).
- act out various objects, animals, or characters in various conditions (e.g., moving like a snake, spider, turtle, cat, elephant, frog, dinosaur, a bowl of jello; a very cold person; a leaf in the wind; a washing machine, an egg beater, a magical elf).
- listen or move to music that evokes emotion and talk about how it makes them feel (e.g., *The Sorcerer's Apprentice, Carmen*).

### 7. Develop audience skills by observing performances or artists at work in various aspects of the Arts.

*Link to Critical Response in Dance 5.4, Music 5.2, 5.5; Theatre 5.1*

- attend performances in settings outside the classroom (e.g., a trip to a local rehearsal or performance, puppet shows).
- talk about, observe, and use appropriate audience behaviors (respectful watching/listening).
- watch the teacher or a guest dance, play an instrument, sing, demonstrate art.
- observe artists in action by visiting studios or inviting various kinds of artists to visit the classroom and demonstrate their work (e.g., painters, dancers, composers, singers, sculptors, craftspeople, architects, writers, instrumentalists).



# Music

## Learning Guidelines

- 8. Sing a variety of songs within children's vocal range, independently and with others.**

*Link to Singing 1.1*

- 9. Sing expressively.**

*Link to Singing 1.2*

- 10. Sing songs with repetitive phrases and rhythmic patterns.**

*Link to Singing 1.3, 1.4*

- 11. Listen to various kinds of instrumental music and explore a variety of melody and rhythmic instruments.**

*Link to Playing Instruments 3.1, 3.3, Critical Response 5.4*

- 12. Play instruments using different beats, tempos, dynamics, and interpretation.**

*Link to Playing Instruments 3.2, 3.4; Critical Response 5.5*

- 13. Listen to, imitate, and improvise sounds, patterns, or songs.**

*Link to Improvisation and Composition 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4*

## Ideas for Learning Experiences

- sing songs with clear, easy melodies.
  - sing fingerplays (e.g., *Eensy Weensy Spider*, *Two Little Blackbirds*, *Where is Thumbkin?*).
  - sing independently while music is being played (e.g., during center times and free time).
  - listen to and sing many nursery rhymes, lullabies, and songs from around the world.
  - sing in groups that allow children to respond individually (e.g., good morning songs).
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- use soft and loud voices at appropriate times when singing.
  - sing chants, action songs and songs that use intonation to set the mood (e.g., *If You're Happy*, *The Wheels on the Bus*, *Five Little Pumpkins*).
  - sing songs that have personal meaning (e.g., songs about their names, body parts, clothes, feelings, animal songs and home and family, songs to celebrate special events and occasions).
  - sing songs that use gestures to illustrate or substitute for words (e.g., *Grey Squirrel*, *Six Little Ducks*).
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- sing songs with dominant rhythm patterns, repetition and nonsense syllables (e.g., *Miss Mary Mack*, *Wibbledy Wobbly Wee*).
  - sing songs with rhythmic body movements (e.g., finger plays, *Head Shoulders, Knees and Toes*, *London Bridge is Falling Down*).
  - sing call-and-response songs (e.g., *Did You Feed My Cow? Yes, M'am*).
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- explore the sounds made by various rhythm instruments (e.g., wood blocks, sand blocks, notched rhythm sticks, rain sticks) and melody instruments (e.g., tone bar, xylophone, hand bells, piano).
  - create hand-made instruments (e.g., pie tin cymbals or guitars, tin can maracas, shakers made with plastic eggs, sandpaper blocks, drums made from boxes).
  - listen to music made by a wide variety of instruments including wind, string, and percussion.
  - invite parents and other visitors to demonstrate music, instruments, and dances from various cultures.
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- play instruments while marching to various tempos and dynamics (fast/slow, loud/soft; e.g., *March of the Toys* from *Babes in Toyland*, marches by John Phillip Sousa).
  - imitate simple melodic or rhythmic patterns (e.g., use rhythm sticks, wood blocks or tambourines to keep time with a music with a strong beat such as march or samba).
  - use guided imagery to imitate sounds or a musical beat (e.g., what would a frog jumping sound like? a rabbit hopping? a clock ticking?).
  - experiment with playing instruments in different ways (e.g., muffling the sounds of instrument; holding instruments in different positions; striking an instrument hard/softly).
  - use musical instruments to enhance storytelling (e.g., ring bells in response to *The Doorbell Rang* or the *Polar Express*).
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- create responses to call-and-response songs (e.g., *Little Sir Echo*, *Old MacDonald*, *Wheels on the Bus*, *What Do the Elephants Say Today*, *Down By the Bay*).
  - listen and imitate sounds (e.g., recordings of environmental sounds such as a squeaking door, a door bell, howling wind, a babbling brook) with voice, body, or musical instruments.
  - make up songs about their experiences or make up new words to familiar songs.



# Theatre Arts

## Learning Guidelines

### 14. Listen to storytellers and watch puppet shows.

*Link to Acting 1.1; Reading and Writing Scripts 2.3, 2.4, 2.5*

### 15. Use dramatic play, costumes, and props to pretend to be someone else.

*Link to Acting 1.3*

### 16. Create characters through physical movement, gesture, sound, speech, and facial expressions.

*Link to Acting 1.4, 1.5*

### 17. Create scenarios, props, and settings for dramatizations and dramatic play.

*Link to Technical Theatre 4.1, 4.2; Acting, 1.6, Reading and Writing Scripts 2.1, 2.2; Directing 3.1*

## Ideas for Learning Experiences

- listen to visiting storytellers.
  - talk about the characters in puppet shows and what each one said or did.
  - listen to stories in small and large groups, and tell stories to each other.
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- retell or act out stories or folktales through dramatic play, puppets, flannel board.
  - create a character based on stories or through improvisation.
  - play out roles with dolls, prop boxes, costumes (e.g., picnic items; post office material: stamp pads, envelopes, crayons, pencils; supermarket items: cash register, play money, grocery boxes).
  - role play characters from familiar songs, stories and nursery rhymes (e.g., *Three Bears*, *The Three Little Pigs*, *Humpty Dumpty*).
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- pantomime various characters using body movement, facial expression and gestures.
  - use various kinds of puppets to experiment with ways to express different characteristics (e.g., hold it in different ways, experiment with different voices, movements).
  - use movement, gesture, voice and facial expressions to convey characteristics or roles of a character (e.g., pretend to be a cook, doctor, ballet dancer, lion, bear, butterfly).
  - act out dialogue from familiar stories (e.g., "Who's been sleeping in my bed?" "Little pig, let me come in, I'll huff and I'll puff...") using dramatic play, puppets.
  - make up dialogue in dramatic play (e.g., act out a grocery store clerk saying, "It will cost 10 cents.>").
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- play with other children in dramatic play (e.g., decide who will play various roles).
  - act out familiar rhymes in pairs or small groups (e.g., *Five Little Monkeys*, *Little Sally Walker*).
  - create simple puppets out of fabric, paper tubes, paper plates, popsicle sticks, buttons, yarn.
  - make hats out of paper, fabric material, boxes.
  - paint large appliance cartons to create houses, vehicles.
  - create group-constructed murals (paint on large wallpaper) for use as a backdrop.
  - discuss and create settings of stories (e.g., a farm using blocks and models of people and animals in the block area; the cottage of *The Three Bears* in the kitchen area).
  - arrange furniture to create specific effects for scenes (e.g., set chairs in rows with aisles to recreate a bus or plane; arrange dramatic play area to represent a hospital, grocery store.)



# Visual Arts

## Learning Guidelines

### 18. Explore a variety of age-appropriate materials and media to create two- and three-dimensional artwork.

*Link to Methods, Materials, and Techniques 1.1, 1.3*

### 19. Observe the safe and appropriate use and care of art materials.

*Link to Methods, Materials, and Techniques 1.4*

### 20. Explore and experiment with wet and dry media in a variety of colors including black and white.

*Link to Elements and Principles of Design 2.1*

### 21. Explore how color can convey mood and emotion.

*Link to Elements and Principles of Design 2.1*

### 22. Explore various types of lines in artwork and in nature.

*Link to Elements and Principles of Design 2.2*

## Ideas for Learning Experiences

- use different types of paints (e.g., tempera, water colors, finger paints) and various textures of paper.
  - use a variety of painting techniques and tools (e.g., various size brushes, sponges, cotton balls, Q-tips, fingerpainting, printing with found objects such as sponges, corks).
  - use found materials to create collages (e.g., feathers, buttons, wool fabric, steel wool, recycled materials).
  - construct assemblages using wood, glue, and other three-dimensional materials.
  - make sculptures out of play dough, clay, or plasticine.
  - make impressions in clay or play dough with common objects (e.g., clothespins, pine cones, shells).
  - play with various kinds of modeling materials including play dough, clay, plasticine, pipe cleaners and wire to construct shapes/objects (e.g., twisting, coiling, wrapping).
  - experiment with combining various materials and media.
  - listen to and use appropriate vocabulary related to materials (e.g., clay, wire, fabric, yarn, watercolor, tempera, crayon, chalk) and techniques (e.g., collage, painting, drawing, building, sculpture).
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- discuss how tools such as scissors and brushes should be cared for properly and used safely.
  - take responsibility for caring for various art media respectfully (e.g., make sure lids are on play dough, paint and paste containers securely to prevent evaporation; replace caps on markers).
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- listen to and use the names of primary and secondary colors including black and white in various media (e.g., tempera, fingerpaint, watercolors, crayons, markers, chalks).
  - combine primary colors to discover secondary colors using tempera, watercolors, or food coloring.
  - paint with black and white and combine them with other colors to achieve shades of light and dark.
  - use various media of a single color and compare the effects in each medium.
  - create tissue paper collages by cutting, pasting and overlapping paper of various colors.
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- talk about how different colors make them feel.
  - paint to music that evokes various moods using a variety of colors.
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- draw lines of various sizes (e.g., thin, thick, straight, crooked, curved) using a variety of sizes of paint brushes, markers and crayons and chalk.
  - take a "line walk" to observe and label various kinds of lines in the environment (e.g., jagged, straight, curved, thick, thin) on walls, ceilings, buildings and fences or explore architectural lines in environmental photographs.
  - examine objects in nature to find naturally occurring lines (e.g., lines on sea shells, in wood, on leaves).



## Learning Guidelines

### 23. Experiment with the use of texture in artwork.

*Link to Visual Arts/Elements and Principles of Design 2.3*

### 24. Use basic shapes and forms of different sizes to create artwork.

*Link to Elements and Principles of Design 2.4*

### 25. Explore concepts of pattern and symmetry in the environment and artwork.

*Link to Elements and Principles of Design 2.5*

### 26. Create artwork from memory or imagination.

*Link to Observation, Abstraction, Invention, and Expression 3.2*

### 27. Choose artwork for display in the classroom, school or community or for a personal book, class book or portfolio, and explain why they chose it.

*Link to Drafting, Revising, and Exhibiting 4.1, 4.2; Critical Response 5.1*

## Ideas for Learning Experiences

- use a single texture theme to create collages (e.g., soft, hard, fuzzy, rough, smooth, shiny).
  - create collages using materials of various textures (e.g., pieces of sand paper, fake fur, velvet, mylar, hard plastic, cotton balls).
  - use paper or wallpaper of various textures for painting, weaving, printing.
  - make crayon rubbings by placing shapes or textures under paper and rubbing over the surface.
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- create artwork with a theme of circles, squares or triangles or using natural forms.
  - print with sponges cut into shapes or objects that are circles, squares and triangles.
  - paint on easel paper cut into basic shapes.
  - use shapes as a starting point in a drawing or design (e.g., "What can you make with a circle? A triangle?")
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- look at books that illustrate patterns and symmetry.
  - create "ink blot" drawings by folding paper in half, dropping paint in the fold and pressing the refolded paper.
  - create patterns using shape stickers.
  - explore quilts and observe patterns; then create a class quilt on a mural using shapes/strips of patterned or colored paper.
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- create drawings, sculptures (e.g., of their pet or of an animal they saw in a zoo).
  - create props for use in imaginary play or performance (e.g., wings, magic wands, snakes).
  - illustrate a story.
  - draw a picture documenting what they did at school.
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- create personal books of their artwork (e.g., photographs of their art in process, actual examples of their artwork).
  - work collaboratively to create art work for display (e.g., mural, large fence painting, table top crayon rubbing).
  - explain their choice of personal works of art with a teacher, classmate, or parent, and describe how they were made.
  - describe elements of their artwork using words for color, line, textures and shapes with teacher prompts (e.g., "Tell me about your painting, sculpture, building...").

