Creative arts activities allow children to use individual ideas, feelings, and expressions engaging children’s minds, bodies, and senses. In the preschool environment, creative arts can be integrated into all curriculum areas to develop an appreciation for the arts, such as drawing tools with building materials, painting supplies outdoors, books about art, drawing software for computers, etc.

Creative arts foster creative and individual expression, self-esteem, imagination, and appreciation of cultural diversities. With the introduction of the various components—music, movement, dramatic expression, and visual arts—the preschool child is encouraged to listen, observe, discuss, move, solve problems, explore and express him/herself creatively. Creative arts help children learn to read by using materials and tools to create “pictures,” sculptures and other two and three-dimensional projects. Children develop skills in visualization and representation that are very important in the process of learning to read.

On a daily basis, young children are given opportunities for creative activities, emphasizing the experience rather than the outcome; it’s the process, not the product that’s important. These experiences should allow for choice, individual expression, and active exploration, offered in a risk-free environment where all children are encouraged to move freely through the creative process.
Music (CA.01)

Widely Held Expectations

- Child is able to sing, play, move and create music, expressing individual imagination
  - Takes the lead in music activities
  - Develops an appreciation for music
- Child responds to music through movement
  - Responds to the beat of songs or instrumental music with more complex movements (walking or jumping to the beat)
  - Uses music as an avenue to express thoughts, feelings, and energy
  - Describes and carries out movement sequences
- Child is able to distinguish between different types of music (loud/soft, fast/slow, happy/sad)
- Child uses music as a way of learning other concepts, (literacy, rhyme, math, weather)

Learning in Action: Examples

The Child:
- Participates in music activities, both indoors and outdoors (listening, singing, finger plays, games, performances)
- Uses props to respond with expression to music (scarves, streamers, instruments)
- Knows the words of often-repeated songs, humming or singing them during other parts of the day
- Makes up songs to accompany their play activities
- Imitates movement to a steady beat

The Adult:
- Encourages children’s interest in music, creative movement and dance
- Provides opportunities for children to experience movement through music
- Introduces children to different kinds of music (jazz, rock, classical, music from other cultures)
- Uses music for different purposes (moving, calming, learning, transitioning to a new activity or area, signaling a quiet work time)
- Provides props for children to use with music activities (rhythm and musical instruments, scarves)
The Environment Includes:

- Materials for children to create their own instruments (strings, rubber bands, boxes, cans)
- A variety of types of music for children to experience (lullabies, folk music, classical, jazz, children’s songs, and songs from other cultures and in other languages)
- Musical instruments for children to use during choice time to allow for creativity

Strategies to Support Music

Teaching with Intent Throughout the Day:

- Allow children to record their own songs and play them back.
- Play musical instruments of varying pitch and ask children to position their bodies according to the sound: stand on tip toe for high pitch and crouch down low for a low pitch.
- Incorporate different strategies to increase children’s familiarity with rhythms. Use poems, chants and songs with steady beats.
- Roll up paper sacks and tape them to create rhythm sticks. Emphasize beats with tapping the sticks to the music.
- Intentionally choose materials that add to the sounds of the room.

Supporting Children with a Wide Range of Abilities:

- Use multisensory adaptations, such as switch-adapted music and computer software, to support participation in music experiences including singing and listening to music.
- Modify musical instruments to allow children to grasp them and participate independently in making music.
- Communication boards can be used to make choices and express feelings about songs.
- Encourage participation at any level; allow children to stand, rather than sit, or vice versa.
- Consider the needs of individual children. For example, children with autism may be sensitive to some sounds.

Supporting English Language Learners:

- Play music as a way to help children feel welcome and introduce language through songs and games.
- Create ways for children to participate in activities in a non-verbal way (clapping, playing instruments).
- Play music to engage children and teach them language.

Supporting Children from a Variety of Cultures:

- Invite family and community members to share and teach children about their culture’s songs, music, musical instruments, and dances, and provide or create similar props for individual exploration.
- Provide music and instruments from different cultures, and songs in different languages, including sign.
- Have music available in the home language of the children.
Art (CA.02)

Widely Held Expectations

- Child progresses in exploration and experimentation with new materials and techniques
  - Uses materials to make a simple representation and describes or demonstrates how it was made
- Child gains experience in making shapes and linear patterns
  - Draws or paints images with a few details
- Child broadens artistic exploration
- Child develops confidence in own creative expression through experiences that celebrate what child learns through the process, rather than creating a product
- Child uses materials to build and create a three-dimensional structure to represent another item (blocks become a castle, clay becomes a snake)

Learning in Action: Examples

The Child:

- Participates in individual and group art activities that reflect thoughts, feelings, experiences or knowledge
- Uses new materials to paint (cotton swabs, straws, twigs, marbles, trucks, feathers)
- Tries a variety of materials and ways of using the materials (overlapping tissue paper, using a big brush to paint broad strokes, combining colors, developing patterns)
- Attaches materials using a variety of methods (tape, stapler, string, pipe cleaners, glue)
- Discusses own creations and those of others

The Adult:

- Provides opportunities to discuss art that the child has created and others
- Provides opportunities for exploration of the relationship of space and objects as well as color, balance, texture and design
- Points out various forms of media found in books, photographs/prints in a variety of settings
- Provides opportunity to observe various artists who use different techniques and art media
- Encourages child to appreciate the process of creating rather than the end product

The Environment Includes:

- A variety of art materials (paint, crayons, markers, watercolors, collage materials, paper, scissors, glue, stamp pads, templates, stencils, clay, playdough, computer paint programs) that are easily accessible to children
- Space to display children’s artwork, and works by various artists in the program/community
- Children’s art displayed at child's eye level
Strategies to Support Art

Teaching with Intent Throughout the Day:

- Take a nature walk or bring in natural pieces from outdoors and encourage children to use different materials to recreate what they see, in both 2-dimension and 3-dimension.
- Ask children to share their discoveries about art materials and tools. Their insights will inspire innovation in their peers.
- Challenge children to combine art materials and use tools in unconventional ways; using scissors to cut play dough, stitching paper with large tapestry needles.
- Provide illustrations and reproductions that highlight a feature of line or bold colors.
- Use craft sticks and twigs to make line drawings in mud or patches of snow outdoors, or trace shapes on fogged windows.
- Encourage children to view artwork from various perspectives or positions (up close, far away, from the side, squinting) to see whether things look different in relation to one another.

Supporting Children with a Wide Range of Abilities:

- Respect needs of individual children who might not tolerate some textures or materials.
- Encourage participation at any level; allow children to stand, rather than sit, or vice versa.
- Adapt materials to children’s needs and abilities: crayons or markers (with ping pong ball on the end to hold on to and draw) for children unable to grip, paintbrushes made easier to grasp (lengthen or shorten handle), attach to a mitten with Velcro, or build up with pipe insulation, tape paper onto table or use table-top easel.
- Provide children with materials for painting that are easier to grasp such as sponges or containers you can squeeze paint out of, and textured or thick-handled tools.
- Use materials with visual contrast: dark paint on white paper for children with visual impairments.

Supporting English Language Learners:

- Create interesting centers with creative materials (art supplies, musical instruments, etc.) which give children opportunities to practice their oral language skills and express themselves creatively.
- Use pictures and real world objects to teach basic words like “paintbrush,” “marker” and “book.” Ask families to share the same words in their home language.

Supporting Children from a Variety of Cultures:

- Invite family and community members to share and teach children about the art from their culture: quilts, weaving, clay pottery, and provide similar materials for individual exploration.
- Display and discuss artwork from around the world.
Movement (CA.03)

Widely Held Expectations

- Child expresses strong emphasis, steady beats and changing dynamics in various musical tempos and styles through movement
  - Responds to the beat of songs or instrumental music with more complex movements (walking or jumping to the beat, clapping)
- Child demonstrates a sense of balance and body coordination
  - Demonstrates a wide variety of positions (stretching, bending, rocking, twisting, etc.)
- Child represents experiences through movement
  - Demonstrates movement concepts (feelings, directions, words, ideas, etc.)
- Child understands the value of movement to stay healthy

Learning in Action: Examples

The Child:
- Uses movement to interpret or imitate feelings, animals, and such things as plants growing, or a rainstorm
- Shows creativity using his/her body (dance, march, hop, jump, sway, clap, snap, stomp, twist, turn)
- Uses props to create special movements and dances (scarves, streamers, instruments)

The Adult:
- Provides opportunities for children to move their bodies to various rhythms and musical tempos
- Introduces games and activities that involve balance and body coordination
- Plans indoor and outdoor activities involving balancing, running, jumping and other vigorous movements, to increase children’s understanding of movement

The Environment Includes:
- Materials, equipment and experiences that allow children to practice developing skills in movement and rhythm
- Materials that encourage movement (scarves, hoops, flags, wands)
- Adequate, safe space to move without infringing upon others’ space
Strategies to Support Movement

Teaching with Intent Throughout the Day:

- Give children hula hoops, scarves, etc., to help them discover relationships between themselves and objects: walk around the hula hoop, hop inside it, or have one child hold an edge of the hoop while the other child crawls through it.

- Use inexpensive party streamers and help children tape them to craft sticks and encourage them to move to the rhythm of the music and create their own dance movements.

Supporting Children with a Wide Range of Abilities:

- Adapt the environment to promote participation, engagement, and learning using easy-to-grip materials and room arrangement to provide enough space (wide aisles, smooth surfaces).

- Provide adaptations to floor, include rugs, large balls and beanbag chairs to support movement, wedges to support rolling and indoor swings for low energy movement.

- Have children work with a friend to guide each other through movement activities.

- Provide earmuffs or headphones for children who are sensitive to sound if the area gets too noisy.

- Provide picture communication board to allow children to make choices and tell how they want to move (fast/slow).

Supporting English Language Learners:

- Encourage children to model movement language and actions with each other.

- Work with interpreters, cultural mediators and/or other community members if staff does not speak the children’s home language.

- Incorporate movement games having English-speaking peers demonstrate all movements to help increase understanding of movement.

Supporting Children from a Variety of Cultures:

- Invite family and community members to share and teach children about their culture’s songs, music, musical instruments, and dances, and provide or create similar props for individual exploration.
Dramatic Play  
(CA.04)

Widely Held Expectations

- Child participates in a variety of dramatic play activities
  - Uses creativity, words, actions and materials to portray a role, situation or setting
  - Engages in role play with two or more children
- Child imagines and clearly describes characters, their relationships and their environment in dramatic play situations
  - Assumes the role of someone or something else, or talks in language relevant to the assumed role
- Child recognizes difference between pretend/fantasy and reality

Learning in Action: Examples

**The Child:**
- Expresses creativity using puppetry, storytelling, dance, plays, pantomime and theater
- Participates in discussions after attending a dramatic performance
- Acts out or retells a familiar story
- Talks to and plays with pretend friends, stuffed animals and other toys
- Engages in role play in various activities such as dramatic play, block play, outdoor play

**The Adult:**
- Provides opportunities for children to act out books, nursery rhymes, and assume roles in other ways
- Encourages children to tell and act out stories, stressing beginnings and endings to introduce sequencing
- Participates with children in various forms of dramatic expression including those from other cultures
- Arranges field trips (to art events, concerts, dance and theatrical performances, cultural fairs, nursing home or other facility that has people with disabilities, etc.)

**The Environment Includes:**
- Items used by people with disabilities, such as a cane, wheelchair or braces
- Dress up clothing with a variety of fasteners, some Velcro, some large and small buttons as well as snaps and buckles
- Dolls and images representing diverse cultures and abilities in the dramatic play area
- A well-equipped dramatic play center for active imaginative play with a variety of props (home-living, fire station, fast food restaurant, hospital, school)
- Materials representing various cultures (flags, pictures, foods, dolls, books, clothes, toys)
Strategies to Support Dramatic Play

Teaching with Intent Throughout the Day:

- Provide non-stereotypical visual examples and props to encourage children to role play different occupations.

- Props in the outside area (dishes, wallets and purses, pretend food, maps, clothing) help children engage in dramatic play throughout the day.

- Use parallel talk (providing language for children’s actions). Adult: “You are putting a dress on that baby doll and making her very warm and all dressed up. I wonder if you are going to pretend to take her somewhere.” Child: “We are going to the store.” Adult: “Getting dressed before going to the store is a good idea. I wonder what else you will need to do to get ready to go to the store. Do you have a list of what you need to buy at the store?”

Supporting Children with a Wide Range of Abilities:

- Use adaptations, such as pictures of sequence in activities, videos, and social stories to support play in daily routines.

- Adapt the environment to promote participation, engagement, and learning using easy-to-grip materials and room arrangement to provide enough space.

- Provide picture communication board to allow all children to make choices and express ideas and needs.

Supporting English Language Learners:

- Make connections with community leaders and members who speak the child’s language and ask them to come to your environment to talk about what they do. Encourage children to pretend to have their jobs.

- Provide and teach language for dramatic play in both the home language and English if possible.

- Provide materials from a variety of cultures for cooperative play such as cooking and eating utensils, and play food.

- Learn how to read the meaning of gestures and facial expressions. Is a child asking for a word? Does she want to play with a particular child?

Supporting Children from a Variety of Cultures:

- Invite family and community members to share and teach children about their jobs, talents, hobbies, art, or traditions, such as songs, music, musical instruments, dances, games, or traditional stories/poems traditional clothing, jewelry, hats, scarves, shoes, or family heirlooms, and tell why they are valued and provide similar props for dramatic play exploration.

- Ensure the environment and materials include such things as dolls, pictures, books and kitchen items that represent the people and objects which accurately reflect children’s cultures in a respectful and authentic way.
Print Resources

Active for Life: Developmentally Appropriate Movement Programs for Young Children, Stephen W. Sanders (2002).

Art in Universally Designed Preschool Environments DVD, Designing Curriculum to Meet Standards with Evidence-Based Practices, Arlitt Instructional Media, University of Cincinnati (2011).

The Big Messy Art Book: But Easy to Clean Up, Mary Ann F. Kohl (2000).

The Bilingual Book of Rhymes, Songs, Stories and Fingerplays, Pam Schiller, Rafael Lara-Alecio and Beverly J. Irby (2004).

Cha, Cha, Cha: Spanish Learning Songs (CD), Jorge Anaya (2010).


Creativity and the Arts with Young Children, Rebeca T. Isbell and Shirley C. Raines (2012).


De Colores and Other Latin American Folk Songs (CD), Jose-Luis Orozco (2009).


Sand and Water Play: Simple, Creative Activities for Young Children, Sherrie West and Amy Cox (2001).


These resources, and many others, may be available for Nebraska residents to borrow from the Early Childhood Training Center’s Media Center by visiting http://www.education.ne.gov/oec/mediactr.html or by calling 1-402-557-6885 or 1-800-89CHILD.
### Online Resources


Up Down and All Around: A Fun and Exciting Program and DVD for Kids and Adults to Creatively Move Together (2008) [http://leapinglegs.com/about.html](http://leapinglegs.com/about.html)
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