

Help your child develop literacy skills through the arts

For parents of students in junior and middle grades

Why the arts are important

Education in the arts is essential to students' intellectual, social, physical, and emotional growth. Through the study of music, visual arts, and drama and dance, students not only develop the ability to think creatively and critically, but also develop physical coordination and the ability to work both independently and with others. In addition, the creative and practical work encourages students to express themselves in both verbal and non-verbal ways, and can enable them to discover and develop abilities that can prove to be rich sources of pleasure later in life. *The Ontario Curriculum Grades 1-8: The Arts, 1998.*

Communicating about and through the arts

The arts provide ways for students to communicate their thoughts, feelings and ideas about themselves and their world. Literacy skills for reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing and representing allow them to learn *about* the arts and to share their new skills and knowledge with others *through* music, visual arts, drama and dance.

How you can support learning in the arts

Children learn best in the arts when they:

- create art and also view/listen to works from various historical periods and cultures
- make choices about their own artwork
- are helped to develop their special interests and talents
- experience a wide variety of art forms or deepen their appreciation of one or two (dance, drama, music, visual arts) have opportunities to share their work with others
- attend a variety of professional arts events
- benefit from professional artists who visit their classroom and school
- have teachers and parents that participate in and appreciate the arts

How to help your child

As a parent, you play an important role in supporting lifelong learning in the arts by:

- becoming familiar with the curriculum and classroom activities
- showing an interest in your child's arts activities and projects in other subjects that require the application of arts skills
- demonstrating a positive attitude to the arts and recognizing your child's artistic achievements
- taking your child to a variety of museums, art galleries, musical and theatrical performances (many are often free)
- providing time for your child to create spontaneously and imaginatively
- equipping a creative activity space at home where a variety of basic art materials are available
- talking to your child about his artworks and the processes he used to create them, rather than the final product.
- displaying her artwork and encouraging her to discuss it with you
- playing a variety of music in your home (from your own and other cultures, or music from your own generation)
- sharing your own positive experiences in the arts

Activities to help develop literacy through the arts

Develop *reading* skills by:

- examining or "reading" the illustrations from stories to see how they communicate and illustrate the printed words ("picture walk")
- introducing a variety of print forms including posters, scripts, charts and newspaper articles
- reading "out loud" as characters from stories, poems or plays
- introduce and collect stories that stimulate an interest in more reading about artists, musicians, actors, dancers, history and different cultures

- visualizing (creating an image) the text that is read
- reading reviews of various arts events
- using and reading representative symbols, graphics and notations specific to the arts (ex: music notation)
- using artistic vocabulary

Develop **writing** skills by:

- encouraging a planning process before the creative arts experiences begin
- creating new stories, charts and poems
- using reflective journals or diaries to record personal responses related to arts activities
- introducing new symbols, graphics and musical notations specific to the arts
- writing new lyrics to familiar songs
- writing story books, illustrating the text and binding them

Develop **speaking** skills by:

- reading “out loud”
- communicating feelings and emotions about specific musical, dramatic, dance performances and artworks.
- retelling stories from a variety of sources or folktales
- thinking out loud when brainstorming a solution to an artistic problem
- role-playing characters and situations from fictional and non-fictional events
- talking about ideas with others when planning and creating artworks
- sharing personal responses about artworks and positive arts experiences discussing preferences and defending points of view when reviewing artworks
- encouraging feedback for improvement from listeners

Develop **listening** skills by:

- listening to a variety of music in many forms and styles
- attending musical and theatrical performances
- interpreting “what was said” and “how it was said” in performances
- planning and creating artworks as a member of a group

Develop **viewing** skills by:

- paying particular attention to dramatic expression and body language
- interpreting emotion, feeling and meaning of movement in dance.
- studying the illustrations used to accompany fictional and non-fictional print materials
- applying critical thinking strategies for artworks including describing, comparing, analyzing, interpreting and evaluating
- developing criteria for selecting and evaluating print and multimedia images (e.g., posters, films, computer graphics)
- assessing the effectiveness of the decisions that were made when creating artworks

Develop **representing** skills by:

- creating artworks that communicate personal thoughts, feeling and ideas
- developing characters and ideas from print materials through role-playing, visual arts and musical composition
- applying the elements and principles of art when creating visual arts, music, drama and dance works
- interpreting the content from one artform into another (e.g., painting a mood suggested by a piece of music)

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