



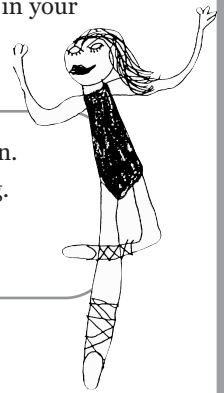
# How Art Helps Children Grow

**H**AVE you ever wondered what it is that makes some arts and crafts programs stand out from the rest? Have you ever wanted to make YOUR program more creative, more exciting and more interesting for you and the children you work with? You don't have to be an art specialist to run an exciting program that children WANT to come to—but it does help to know something about the value of art in child development.

Here are seven good ideas from art educators and developmental specialists that briefly explain what it is about ART that helps children feel good about themselves, helps them grow intellectually, emotionally and socially...and helps them master the world around them. And while you don't have to have an art background to help children feel creative, you DO need an open-minded attitude about the process of creativity and a willingness to explore, discover and learn new things. Since the process of art-making is the process of discovery, let's begin by looking at these seven good things and finding something that might help you in your work—something that perhaps you never thought about before.

## 7 GOOD THINGS for you to know:

- 1) Know the difference between “arts” and “crafts.”
- 2) Separate the art *process* from the art *product*.
- 3) Know how the arts teach developmental skills.
- 4) Know which skills are developed and how.
- 5) Know about the right side of the brain.
- 6) Know the theory of learning by doing.
- 7) Know how to define creativity.



### 1) Know the difference between “arts” and “crafts.”

The process of making art and the process of making crafts are related but different activities. Many people think of “arts” and “crafts” as if they are the same thing. However, practice with making a painting and practice with making a birdhouse show us that arts and crafts are really quite different activities. While art is an open-ended, or “unstructured,” activity, crafts are goal-oriented, or “structured.” In the above example, painting is an art activity, and the birdhouse is a craft activity. A good arts and crafts program provides both art and craft activities and allows children to explore and learn from both.

#### Craft Activities:

- Are product-oriented
- Engage cognitive skills and problem solving
- Require specific materials and instructions

#### Art Activities:

- Are process-oriented
- Engage imagination and feelings
- Use basic supplies and open-ended instruction

### 2) Separate the process of art from the product of art.

Children enjoy both the process and the product of art. One of the main goals of your enrichment program should be to help children experience the joy of creativity and the satisfaction of mastery; both concepts relate to the process of art. But while adults focus on the process of art, school-aged children are often concerned with the product. They want their project to look good—and be worthy of admiration. So it's important to keep both the process and the product in mind when you run an art activity. You can do this by providing a variety of art materials that are stimulating, age appropriate and easy to be successful with—and by providing just the right amount of instruction and inspiration.

### 3) Know how arts and crafts help children reach developmental goals.

In *Childhood and Society*, Erik Erikson wrote that the developmental goals of school-age children fall into four main categories: cognitive, emotional, social and sensorimotor. In order to become healthy, happy and productive teenagers (and later healthy, happy and productive adults) children from 5–12 years old must have lots of experience and repeated practice with tasks in each of these four areas. Arts and crafts help children experience and practice their skills in all four of these areas. How?

