



Creative Development

How Do Preschoolers Express Themselves Creatively Through Play?

Creativity, curiosity, and imagination are essential for the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development of young children. “Creative experiences support the development of communication skills; being creative helps children to cope with their feelings and fears and to manage their emotional states and develop positive dispositions towards challenge, change and self-initiated learning” (Durham Commission on Creativity and Education, p. 46, 2019). Early care and education providers can enhance children’s creativity, innovative thinking and flexibility of thought by allowing them to make choices, think about or use materials in unconventional ways and to express thoughts, ideas, and feelings in a variety of media.

Creative Development

Artistic Engagement: visual arts; music and dance; process-based; exploration of techniques, tools, and materials; and open-ended

Expression: variety of media; unique; connection to natural world; and ideas and feelings

Creativity: imagination; innovative thinking; growth-mindset; and appreciation

Play: relationships; collaboration; cooperation; and problem-solving



Books to Inspire Creativity and Play

Creativity

- Another* by Christian Robinson
- Big Frog Can't Fit In* by Mo Willems
- Blue Chicken* by Deborah Freedman
- Dreaming Up: A Celebration of Building* by Christy Hale
- Elmer* by David McKee
- Ladybug Girl Dresses Up* by David Soman and Jacky Davis
- My Dog is as Smelly as Dirty Socks* by Hanoch Piven
- Perfect Square* by Michael Hall
- The Bear's Garden* by Marcie Colleen
- The Proudest Color* by Shelia Modir
- Round* by Jennifer Ward
- Round Trip* by Ann Jonas
- Ruby's Sword* by Jacqueline Véissid
- What If...* by Samantha Berger

The Arts

- A Boy Named Isamu* by James Young
- Alma's Art* by Roda Ahmed
- Anywhere Artist* by Nikki Slade
- Because* by Mo Willems
- Corduroy Takes a Bow* by Viola Davis
- Frida Kahlo and Her Animalitos* by Monica Brown
- Henri's Scissors* by Jeanette Winter
- I am an Artist* by Marta Altez
- I'll Go Rhythm* by Justin Webb
- Lines that Wiggle* by Candace Whitman
- Mix it Up* by Herve Tullet
- Music Is...* by Brandon Stosuy
- Singing in the Rain* by Tim Hopgood
- Sky Color* by Peter H. Reynolds
- To Be an Artist* by Maya Ajmera
- Too Much Glue* by Jason Lefebvre
- Violet's Music* by Angela Johnson
- We are Music* by Brandon Stosuy

Examples of Integrated Learning

How children may exhibit these skills	How early care and education providers can encourage these skills
<p>Create a collage at the art center using a variety of loose parts, such as buttons, leaves, shells, jewels, macaroni, stickers, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide a variety of interesting materials and media for exploration and child-created projects that highlight the process rather than the product. ▪ Encourage children to express their ideas by asking open-ended questions. <i>Example:</i> “I noticed you used heavy cardboard and glue with the seashells; can you tell us more about that idea?” ▪ Display projects in the classroom and in portfolios with child input. Invite children to share their work with the class and their families to expand their thinking.
<p>Play dress-up in the dramatic play area with a variety of materials, such as colorful scarves, costumes, shoes, handbags, props, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide dress-up materials and props that encourage different types of dramatic play. Invite children to dramatize and act-out scenarios for the class. ▪ Encourage innovation and imagination by allowing children to move and use materials in all areas of the classroom. For example, move wooden blocks to dramatic play to build a campfire. ▪ Joyfully engage in dramatic play with children daily. Smile, laugh and show pleasure in their creativity and expression of ideas.
<p>Build elaborate structures in the block area using a variety of materials and props, such as wooden blocks, zoo animals, felt pieces, rocks, etc. Tell stories and make up scenarios about their structure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide opportunities for children to explore areas such as visual arts, music, dance, creative movement, and drama in all areas of the classroom. ▪ Offer open-ended materials and experiences that promote discovery through interactions. Encourage and celebrate collaboration and cooperation. Provide guided support for problem-solving when needed. ▪ Extend creative experiences to the outdoors and explore the natural world. For example, draw with sidewalk chalk, use finger paint in the snow, build a fort with sticks and scarves, etc. Spend time outdoors exploring and appreciating the beauty of nature!

Tools and Resources

[Scholastic: Creative Development in 3-5 Year Olds](#)

[NAEYC: Supporting the Development of Creativity](#)

[First Five Years: Tips for Building a Child’s Imagination](#)

[We Are Teachers: 22 Ways to Use Loose Parts for Learning](#)

[Videos: Making Space with Christian Robinson](#)