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BIRTH TO THREE SYSTEM

PRESCHOOL SPECIAL  
EDUCATION



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## “Young Children and the Arts: Making Creative Connections”

Adapted from “A Report of  
the Task Force on Children’s  
Learning and the Arts: Birth to  
Age Eight”

Full Credit Given to the Arts  
Education Partnership



*This article is translated into Spanish  
on page 2. Ver la versión española de  
este artículo en la página 2, y todos los  
artículos a [www.birth23.org](http://www.birth23.org)*

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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM  
*College of Agriculture and Natural Resources*

By Cathy Malley  
*Birth through Five News, Editor*

The arts are a wonderful way to help children learn, express themselves and have fun! The arts take many forms that include music, singing, dance, movement, drawing, painting, sculpting, storytelling, performing, and dramatic play. All young children need opportunities to create, participate in and perform a variety of activities in the different art forms. These experiences should reflect the child’s preferences and interests, developmental skills and culture.

### THE ARTS EXPERIENCE

Infants and toddlers readily enjoy activities and experiences in the arts that reflect their environment and every day life. Art related activities can be designed to be a one-on-one interaction with a parent, professional or other caregiver. Activities in the arts should encourage infants and toddlers to use their senses, curiosity and imagination, while reinforcing early language and literacy skills. For example, singing and playing, or even dancing to “the itsy bitsy spider...”. Encourage new words and reinforce the child’s language by providing as many experiences as possible to label objects used in an art form or even label works of art. For example, “These are shakers. Let’s shake them together to make some music.”

For preschool children, learning and imagination can be fostered through a greater variety of arts activities. The arts can provide new and different opportunities that allow a child to explore, create, reflect and make choices. The following tips offer guidance on enjoying arts activities with young children:

- Emphasize the process, not the product. The process of doing and creating is what is important, not the final picture, song, or performance.
- Make it fun! Use your imagination with a child to stimulate their imagination and play.
- Expose children to child-appropriate performances such as story-time at the library, children’s theatre, or concerts in the park.
- Accept and reinforce the child’s choices and what they like to do.
- Encourage children’s interest in stories, poems, or rhyming songs.
- Reinforce language and early literacy development.

### LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND ADULT INTERACTIONS


Through arts education young children can experience nontraditional ways of learning about their world. Arts activities are most meaningful to children when connected to their every day life and/or early childhood curriculum. There should be balance-- in child and adult initiated activities, quiet and active projects, indoor and outdoor

*(Continued on page 2)*

activities, and group and individual activities. Children like to make some of their own choices, especially when they see those choices acted upon. In addition to children's own creative efforts, expose them to performing and visual arts in their own community. This may include dance, theatre or music performances, and art exhibitions at museums and galleries. Be sure to include literature, poetry and stories in activities with children. This helps develop their language and early literacy skills. The public library is another community setting that may offer a host of possible activities in the arts. Exposure to positive experiences with any and all of the arts is the goal! Encourage a child's expression and imagination through arts experiences. The most successful projects are flexible in structure,

allow for improvisation and encourage spontaneity. Help children to enjoy the arts rather than focusing on tasks, skills or performance goals. Allow plenty of time for the child to repeat and practice new skills. Provide a variety of art materials including things such as: paper and crayons for scribbling or drawing, clay to create, musical instruments and music to listen and dance to, or a dress-up box for dramatic play. Have plenty of books and reading materials available to encourage creativity. Keep art activities fun by avoiding rigid rules. Be sure the activity is at a level that is developmentally appropriate for the child. Include cultural events, customs and intergenerational experiences in arts activities.

Parents and professionals can help young children by working

together to plan and implement a variety of arts activities, at home, school and/or in the community. Parents and professionals can work with arts and cultural organizations, arts educators, artists, parents and caregivers to plan a variety of opportunities for children to experience the arts. Parents are encouraged to talk with caregivers, professionals and teachers about their child's arts program. Being strong advocates for quality arts education helps everyone understand the value of high quality experiences in the arts. Parents and teachers should record and communicate each child's efforts, progress and interests in the arts. Adults should praise children's artistic efforts and "works of art" and, if appropriate, display them. Remember, it is the process of doing, whatever the art form, that is important! 

## “Los niños menores y las artes: formación de conexiones creativas”

Adaptado de “Informe del grupo de trabajo en el Aprendizaje infantil y las artes: Del nacimiento a los ocho años”

Se da pleno crédito a la Asociación de la educación con las artes

*Cathy Malley*

*Directora, Noticias del nacimiento a los cinco años*

¡Las artes son un modo maravilloso de ayudar a los niños a aprender, a expresarse y a divertirse! Las artes toman muchas formas e incluyen la música, el canto, el baile, el movimiento, el dibujo, la pintura, la escultura, la narración de cuentos, la representación y el drama. Todo niño de corta edad necesita oportunidades para crear, participar, y ejecutar en una variedad de actividades en las

diferentes formas de arte. Estas experiencias deben reflejar las preferencias, intereses, habilidades de acuerdo con su desarrollo, y cultura del niño.

### LA EXPERIENCIA CON LAS ARTES.

Los infantes y párvulos disfrutan las actividades y experiencias en las artes que reflejan su ambiente y vida cotidiana. Las actividades relativas al arte pueden concebirse como una interacción con uno de los padres, un profesional u otro cuidador. Las actividades en las artes deberán estimular a los niños de corta edad a usar sus sentidos, curiosidad e imaginación, a la vez que refuerzan sus nacientes aptitudes de comprensión de palabras y la utilización del lenguaje hasta en la lectura y escritura. Por ejemplo, cantar y jugar, o hasta bailar al ritmo de los cantos infantiles de extrema sencillez. Estimule su aprendizaje de nuevas palabras y refuerce el lenguaje del

niño brindándole tantas experiencias como sea posible para rotular objetos utilizados en una forma de arte o hasta en obras de arte. Por ejemplo, “Estas son las maracas. Sacudámoslas para crear música.”

Para niños preescolares el aprendizaje y la imaginación pueden estimularse con una variedad de actividades artísticas. Las artes pueden proporcionar oportunidades nuevas y diferentes que permitan al niño explorar, crear, reflexionar y escoger. Los siguientes consejos son una guía para el disfrute de actividades de arte con niños de corta edad:

- Enfatice el proceso, no el producto. El proceso de hacer y crear es lo importante, no el dibujo, canto o actuación final.
- ¡Hágalo divertido! Use su imaginación con un niño para estimular su imaginación y juego.
- Exponga a los niños a actuaciones apropiadas para niños tales como la hora de cuentos en la biblioteca,

el teatro infantil o conciertos en el parque.

- Acepte y refuerce las selecciones del niño y lo que le guste realizar.
- Estimule el interés de los niños en cuentos, poesías o cantos.
- Refuerce el vocabulario del niño y el desarrollo temprano de sus aptitudes para el lenguaje hablado y escrito.

#### AMBIENTE DIDACTICO E INTERACCIONES CON ADULTO.

Mediante la educación con las artes los niños de corta edad pueden experimentar maneras no tradicionales de aprender de su mundo. Las actividades con las artes son las más significativas para los niños cuando están conectadas a su vida cotidiana y programas escolares de primera infancia. Debe haber un equilibrio en las actividades iniciadas por niños y adultos, entre las de tranquilidad y las de movimiento, entre actividades en interiores y en exteriores, y entre actividades en grupo e individuales. A los niños les gusta hacer sus propias selecciones, especialmente cuando ven que les hacen caso. Además de los esfuerzos creativos de los propios niños, expóngalos a artes de representación y visuales en su propia comunidad. Esto puede incluir la danza, el teatro o las ejecuciones musicales, y exhibiciones de arte en museos y galerías. Cerciórese de incluir literatura, poesía y cuentos en las actividades de los niños. Esto los ayuda a desarrollar su léxico y primeras aptitudes de lenguaje en sentido amplio. La biblioteca pública es otro lugar de la comunidad que puede ofrecer muchas actividades posibles en las artes. La exposición a experiencias positivas con cualesquiera de las artes es la meta.

Estimule la expresión e imaginación

del niño proporcionándole experiencias artísticas. Los proyectos mas exitosos son los flexibles en su estructura, los que permiten la improvisación y estimulan la espontaneidad. Ayude a los niños a experimentar el disfrute de las artes más bien que a enfocarse en tareas, aptitudes o metas de realización. Proporcione suficiente tiempo para que el niño repita y practique nuevas aptitudes. Proporcione variedad de materiales de arte incluyendo cosas como papel y creyones para garabatear o dibujar, macilla para crear, instrumentos musicales y música para escuchar y bailar, o una caja de disfraces para efectos dramáticos. Tenga abundancia de libros y otros materiales de lectura para estimular su creatividad. Haga que las actividades de arte sean divertidas evitando reglas estrictas. Cerciórese de que la actividad está al nivel apropiado para el desarrollo del niño. Incluya actos culturales, disfraces, y actividades intergeneracionales en las actividades artísticas.

Los padres y profesionales pueden ayudar a los niños de corta edad trabajando junto a ellos en la planificación e implementación de una variedad de actividades de arte, en la casa, en la escuela y en la comunidad. Los padres y profesionales pueden trabajar con organizaciones artísticas y culturales, educadores de arte, artistas, padres y cuidadores, para planear una variedad de oportunidades para que los niños experimenten las artes. Se anima a los padres a hablar con los cuidadores, profesionales y maestros sobre el programa de arte de su niño. Abogar por una educación artística de calidad ayuda a todos a apreciar el valor de las experiencias de alta calidad en las artes. Los padres y maestros deben documentar y comunicar los esfuerzos de cada niño, su progreso

y su interés en las artes. Los adultos deben elogiar a los niños por sus esfuerzos artísticos y realizaciones ('obras de arte'), y si es apropiado, exhibirlas. Recuerde, es el proceso de hacer lo que importa, en cualquier forma de arte.



## BIRTH through 5 news

### Information for Families and Professionals

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# A Summary Guide to Appropriate Art Activities

Adapted from *A Report of the Task Force on Children's Learning and the Arts: Birth to Age Eight*  
Full Credit Given to the Arts Education Partnership

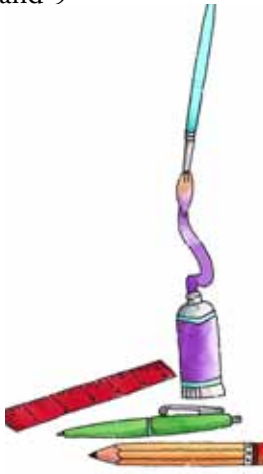
By Eileen McMurrer, Coordinator, Birth to Three System and Maria Synodi, Coordinator, Preschool Special Education

This chart offers information about arts activities that children and adults can enjoy together at different stages of development. The examples provided reflect the different developmental domains of children (e.g., cognitive, language, physical and social-emotional development) with illustrations of the types of activities that are appropriate for young children.

Since all children grow and develop at different rates, adults should follow children's cues as a signal for matching their developmental needs.



Age and Stage	Sample Art Experiences that Promote Learning	What Adults and Children Can do Together
Young babies	Develop ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ visual perception with black and white or colored images and auditory development with speaking and singing voices</li> <li>■ awareness of space, movement and sound by hanging mobiles, playing soothing music, and making funny faces</li> </ul>	Have fun by ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ watching for baby's cues and signals, such as smiling when music is played or reaching toward objects</li> <li>■ listening to birds singing, water babbling, other soft sounds</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ recognition of the environment by touching objects and hearing adults name them</li> <li>■ a sense of discovery by swaying to musical rhythms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ placing rattles or textured toys into baby's fist</li> <li>■ encouraging babies to laugh and smile by rhyming, singing, and using pat-a-cake movements</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ understanding of different senses by touching, seeing, hearing</li> <li>■ motor skills by clapping hands or feet and banging on pots or toy drums</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ repeating patterns in voice, movement, and sounds</li> <li>■ providing safe opportunities to finger paint, or splash in water</li> </ul>
Toddlers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ imagination and pretend by asking the child to "move like a jungle cat" or "dance like a butterfly"</li> <li>■ awareness of feelings through songs, poems and stories</li> <li>■ different concepts such as loud and quiet, hard and soft, light and dark</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ holding hands, dancing and moving while listening to music</li> <li>■ using socks as puppets or animals while dressing the child</li> <li>■ incorporating singing, story-telling and dance into daily experiences; identifying shapes, colors and textures in foods and clothing.</li> </ul>

Age and Stage	Sample Art Experiences that Promote Learning	What Adults and Children Can do Together
Preschoolers age 3 and 4	Develop ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ language skills by reciting poems and engaging in finger plays</li> <li>■ number skills by using music to count rhythm and beats when playing a musical instrument</li> <li>■ awareness of self and space through drawing, sculpting and other visual arts</li> <li>■ social skills by using group activities to learn dance and sing songs</li> </ul>	Have fun by ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ constructing collages using paper, glue, scissors and magazine cut outs. Talk with children about the collage and/or create a story together using the collage.</li> <li>■ humming tunes to familiar songs and allow children to add the lyrics that go with the melody and song.</li> <li>■ providing opportunities for children to see themselves in a mirror when they dance or act out a story.</li> <li>■ pantomiming characters from books read to children.</li> <li>■ taking children to child-friendly museums, libraries and live performances to introduce them to different aspects of the arts in their community.</li> </ul>
Preschoolers age 4 and 5 	Develop ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ cognitive skills by encouraging children to describe people in their world by using pictures, body movements and mime.</li> <li>■ pre-reading skills through activities such as making up stories, reciting poems, and singing songs.</li> <li>■ memory by repeating stories, poems and songs.</li> <li>■ ability to make choices and make things happen by using clay and other art supplies and materials.</li> </ul>	Have fun by ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ creating music with children using empty containers and other materials.</li> <li>■ recreating drawings from favorite books and stories.</li> <li>■ making a patchwork quilt with scrapes of materials and illustrate stories based on the quilt.</li> <li>■ writing and recite poetry and paint pictures that depict themes such as nature, school and family. Ask questions and encourage discussion.</li> <li>■ making scrapbooks or portfolios to keep favorite stories, photos and artwork.</li> </ul>



## Do you know someone who may want to start a new LICC in their part of Connecticut?

The Birth to Three System is looking for people who want to improve community connections across agencies for the benefit of families with children up to age 6 who have developmental delays or disabilities. Local Interagency Coordinating Councils (LICCs) are currently operating in Danbury, Greater Hartford, Lower Fairfield, Meriden, Middlesex County, New Haven, Torrington and Waterbury. There is no limit to the number of LICCs allowed throughout the state. Support funds may be requested. Contact Eileen McMurrer at eileen.mcmurrer@po.state.ct.us or 860-418-6134 for more information.



## Birth to Three System Update



By Linda Goodman, Director  
CT Birth to Three System

All year-round, but especially in the summer, families of toddlers seek out play groups in which their child can begin to socialize with other toddlers. Although children of this age seldom play cooperatively with another child and more often play “next to” each other, it is still a valuable way for them to learn the rules of social interaction and to have opportunities to improve their speech and language skills.

There are many places in the community to look for toddler play groups. Some are formal such as programs offered by town parks and recreation departments, churches or synagogues, libraries, family resource centers, YMCAs, YWCAs, JCCs, toddler gymnastics, toddler swim groups, or Mommy and Me groups. Others are informal such as neighborhood moms or dads, Mothers of Multiples activities, Lamaze group get-togethers, or even something as simple as making play dates with the families of one or two other children. Families and their Birth to Three service coordinators need to explore the options that will work best for each family.

Last year, in an effort to forge closer relationships between Birth to Three programs and some of the formal play groups, the Birth to Three System offered small grants of \$2500 each to ten organizations around the state to help them include toddlers with disabilities and developmental delays. Last year’s recipients were:

- Branford Family Resource Center  
12 Melrose Avenue  
Branford, CT 06405  
Lynne Malone, Director  
203-315-3799
- East Hartford Family Resource Center  
Silver Lane Elementary School  
95 Willowbrook Road  
East Hartford, CT 06118  
Lynn Elmore, Program Coordinator  
860-622-5515
- Fox Run School Family Resource Center  
228 Fallow Street  
Norwalk, CT  
Lynn T. Sadlo, Site Director  
203-899-2326
- Meriden Family Resource Center  
124 Columbia Street  
Meriden, CT 06451  
Barbara Hegenbart, Director  
203-237-4743
- New Britain Public Library  
20 High Street  
New Britain, Ct 06051  
Nancy Jordan, Children's and Branch Services  
860-224-3155
- Plumb Memorial Library  
65 Wooster Street  
Shelton, CT 06484  
Charlene R. DeFilippo,  
Community Development

Director  
203-924-1580

- Stratford Community Services  
468 Birdseye Street  
Stratford, CT 06615  
Patricia Naylor, Director  
203-385-4095
- Waterford Youth Services Bureau  
15 Rope Ferry Road  
Waterford, CT 06385  
Susan A. Radway, Director  
860-444-5848
- Winsted Family Resource Center  
201 Pratt Street  
Winsted, Ct 06098  
Ruthann Horvay, Director  
860-379-0828
- Roger Wolcott Early Childhood Center  
57 East Wolcott Avenue  
Windsor, CT 06095  
Betsey Lepak, Director  
860-246-9032

Even though these agencies were funded last year, they all still offer toddler play groups and will gladly accept all children. This spring, we made the same offer to ten more organizations, with funding beginning July 1, 2005. I am happy to report that Fox Run, Meriden, Stratford, Waterford, and Winsted have all been re-funded for this coming year. Two others are still under consideration. And starting in September, we’ll be helping to fund play groups at the Rise and Shine Nursery School at 40 DeForest St. in Watertown (860-945-3101). For a list of the newly funded agencies and their contact information, please see the Birth to Three website ([www.birth23.org](http://www.birth23.org)) or ask your service coordinator. ★

## Art Tips

*submitted by Birth to Three and preschool special education providers*

“Don't forget about using sand in finger paints for those children with sensory issues. You can introduce the

medium a little at a time.”

*-Vicky Wittenberg, Physical Therapist*

“My favorite is mixing cornstarch and water in a big plastic container. Add food coloring. It makes a goo that is non-toxic. You can build with it before it melts down.

Try putting non-toxic paint in a gallon storage bag to make non-messy finger painting.

Coat marbles with paint. Then put them in a box with paper. Roll them around to make abstract designs.

# Preschool Special Education Update

By Maria Synodi, Coordinator,  
Preschool Special Education

Should I keep my child in preschool and not send him to kindergarten even though he is age eligible? Should my child go on to kindergarten even if I feel that he is not ready for the expectations that kindergarten teachers may have for five-year-olds? What should I do?

This is the time of year that parents present such questions to their preschool special education team. And, if parents of typically developing children are delaying their child's entry to kindergarten, parents of children with disabilities are asking, "shouldn't I do the same thing?" This dilemma and struggle is frequently presented by parents of children with and without disabilities to State Department of Education personnel especially at this time of year. And it's not just parents who believe that delayed entry – or retention – is a strategy to diminish or eliminate the individual differences between what children know and can do. Teachers and school personnel, in well meaning but misplaced efforts,

often believe the same thing. Defenders see delayed entry and retention as a way to prevent failure, provide additional time to develop social and academic skills and master the general skills often identified as 'kindergarten readiness' skills.

There is a 'but' ... and it's a big 'but' ... Experts in the field of early childhood who have done research have identified that our beliefs about what is best and appropriate may well be wrong. We have learned a lot about delaying a child's entry to kindergarten and retention. And what we have learned tells us that children ultimately do not seem to perform any better and do not become any more socially mature when they are retained. In other words, there is no advantage. Some research also shows that retention has negative effects like poorer performance in the next grade, school stress, low self esteem and school dropout. As a matter of fact, national organizations such as the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education, the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Association of School Psychologists have position statements that do

not support the practice of delaying a child's entry to kindergarten or retention.

With all this said, the bottom line is that delaying a child's entry to kindergarten or retention is not a solution to address the differences between what individual children know and can do compared to their peers. This is true whether a child has a disability or not. For a child with a disability, the decision about a child's educational program, including grade placement, is ultimately a decision of each individual child's planning and placement team. This team, which includes the parent, needs to determine each child's educational program and identify the appropriate supports and accommodations that the child will need to participate in the general education curriculum. For five-year-old children, that's kindergarten. Connecticut state law specifies that children who are age five on or before January 1 of a school year are entitled to enter and participate in kindergarten. So consider the research, develop the appropriate program and for all those five-year-olds out there, enjoy next school year in kindergarten!



Blow paint with a straw (better for children a little older so they don't suck it up)."

-Sue Flanagan, Physical Therapist

"Playdough is a great way for kids to relax - it never fails! Kids get so into manipulating the playdough that they start talking and relating to whomever is playing with them."

Anita Slipchinsky, Special Educator

"Use a box (any size) and a crayon, markers or other safe materials and let the child decorate. It becomes a pretend boat or train. Be

sure to include music—tapes, CDs and songs as part of your art program."

-Tim Quinn, Speech Pathologist

"I find art is a great language builder as we talk while doing. Art activities are also wonderful for developing attention. I try to use materials available in most homes and those that families are willing to use. Many families are not interested in letting their children paint so I try other activities. For example, children can paint outdoors, using water on decks or sidewalks. They

can use sponges or large and small brushes. Almost any materials can be converted into a project—just let the child do it—and let him have fun!"

-Barbara Lefkovich, Special Educator



## Resources

### *Prekindergarten Music Education Standards*

This brochure contains standards for children aged two to four, along with information to help providers help children meet those standards. Includes a resource list. Contact: The National Association for Music Education, 800-828-0229, [www.menc.org](http://www.menc.org).

### *A Guide for Using Creative Drama in the Classroom, PreK-6*

This guide offers a series of creative drama activities designed for use in the PreK-6 classroom. Contact: Heinemann Publishers, 603-431-7894.

### *Guide to Creative Dance for the Young Child*

Includes dance information for ages three to eight. Contact: National Dance Association, 703-476-3436, [www.aahperd.org/nda.html](http://www.aahperd.org/nda.html).

### *Imagine! Introducing Your Child to the Arts*

This book includes some practical ways for parents to introduce young children to the arts. Contact: Office of Communications, National Endowment for the Arts, 202-682-5570, [www.arts.endow.gov](http://www.arts.endow.gov).

### *Considering Children's Art: Why and How to Value their Works*

This in-depth approach provides information on how to look at children's art. Contact: National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) 202-232-8777, [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org).

### *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs, revised edition*

Includes developmental information and practices for children from birth through age eight. Contact: NAEYC 202-232-8777, [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org).

The above resources have been adapted from *Young Children and the Arts: Making Creative Connections, A Report of the Task Force on Children's Learning and the Arts: Birth to Age Eight*, credit extended to the Arts Education Partnership.

On the internet look at [www.enchantedlearning.com](http://www.enchantedlearning.com). This site has thousands of theme related activities to download or print right from the screen. A \$20 yearly fee gets you access to even more cool stuff.



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The feature article is translated into Spanish on page 2.  
Ver la versión española del artículo primero en la página 2.  
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