

Tips and Techniques for Creative Adventures with Literature

What is creativity?

Ask ten people to define creativity and you will probably get ten different definitions. In the text, *Creativity and the Arts with Young Children*, Second Edition (2007), Rebecca Isbell and Shirley Raines define creativity in this way:

Creativity is the ability to think in unique ways, produce unusual ideas or combine things in different ways. (p. 3)

In this same text, four dimensions of creativity are identified: the creative person, the creative process, the environment that fosters creativity, and the product of the creative activity. It is the first three dimensions, the person, the process and the environment, that should be the focus with young children.

Some of the characteristics of the creative child are:

- curious
- playful
- adventurous
- inquiring
- independent
- active participants

Young children express their creativity in many ways. They paint or draw different lines, shapes and colors. They use movement to express their feelings and thoughts. They make up songs or use new words in familiar songs. They take on roles and act out events.

For young children the creative process often involves exploration and experimentation with materials, techniques and props, with no finished product in mind. They are much more interested in mixing paints of different colors than in the product, which is the color or hue that emerges from the mixing.

When we plan an environment that fosters creativity, we should include interesting experiences and open-ended materials. Children should have many opportunities to make choices, to explore and experiment with materials and props and to work on a project over a period of time. They should be in an environment where their ideas and processes are accepted rather than judged. Children need to please only themselves.

What are the Visual Arts?

In an early childhood classroom, the visual arts include painting, drawing, sculpting and the use of other media. An art center with equipment, materials, supplies and tools provides an environment where children can be involved in the visual arts. As children are involved in these experiences, they are visually expressing their creativity.

Art Center

From *KITS – Learning Environment/Program for Children – Session 1* comes the following information on the Art Center.

Art Center Set up

Note: *Refer to Photo for an example of a storage shelf for art materials*

- ___ Out of line of traffic
- ___ Washable floor covering
- ___ Near a sink
- ___ Table(s) and chairs (# of chairs can indicate # of children allowed in the center)



Materials and Props

- ___ Variety of paper (purchased or recycled)
- ___ Child-size, blunt-tipped scissors
- ___ Washable glue
- ___ Crayons, washable markers, colored pencils
- ___ Double-sided easel
- ___ Washable paints, assorted paint brushes, variety of items to paint with
- ___ Paint shirts, smocks or aprons (shirts can be older children or adult size with sleeves cut off)
- ___ Playdough (home made preferred), cookie cutters, rolling pins
- ___ White and colored chalk, small chalk boards
- ___ Collage materials: cardboard (for base of collage), fabric/felt scraps, feathers, lace, wallpaper samples, old greeting cards, dried flower petals, doilies)
- ___ Finger paints and fingerpaint paper
- ___ Washable ink stamp pads and stamps
- ___ Glue sticks, tape, string, yarn
- ___ Other (list) _____

Materials and Props that Reflect Diversity

- _____ Paint, paper, crayons and markers in a variety of skin tones
- _____ Collage materials that reflect different cultures: array of papers, fabric scraps, magazines
- _____ Art books featuring famous paintings

In addition to providing an art center, the early childhood teacher supports the visual arts by allowing time in the daily schedule for children to explore, experiment and create in the center. She displays children's art, as well as the work of artists, in the classroom and elsewhere in the program setting. She meaningfully integrates the visual arts into children's learning experiences.

The following are some "visual arts" things that teachers should and should not do:

- **DO** introduce art materials to children and demonstrate and discuss with them their proper use.
- **DO** store materials close to where they are to be used.
- **DO** organize materials so children can make selections independently.
- **DO** respect children's names. Instead of automatically writing a child's name in the upper left-hand corner of the paper, ask "Where would you like your name?" or "Do you want to write your name, or do you want me to do it?"
- **DO** display large art prints in different areas of the classroom; for example, Van Gogh's painting, *Sunflower*, in the science/discovery area, *The Writing Lesson* by Renoir in the writing center, *Mother Combing Her Child's Hair* or *The Child's Bath* by Mary Cassatt in the home living/dramatic play area, *Playing in the Sand* by Mary Cassatt in the sand and water center, or one of Monet's paintings of water lilies in the art center.
- **DO** allow children to be involved in messy activities. Paint aprons or shirts can protect clothing and children can assist with clean up.
- **DO** trust your children to know what a turkey or an apple or a tree looks like. You do not have to draw one for them.
- **DO** respect a child's choice not to have his or her art work displayed.
- **DO NOT** provide a model you have made for children to copy or reproduce. Models are intimidating to children. They will feel inadequate to copy your model.
- **DO NOT** give children tasks such as pre-drawn forms or pictures to color or emphasize "coloring inside the lines." Children will draw and color their own pictures.
- **DO NOT** restrict children's choices by telling them which art activities they should engage in. Instead, let children choose their own materials for exploration, experimentation, and creative discovery.
- **DO NOT** "fix" children's work because it did not meet your expectations.
- **DO NOT** give rewards for "good work." Children need to please only themselves.

The authors of *The Colors of Learning* (2004), Rosemary Althouse, Margaret H. Johnson and Sharon T. Mitchell, summarize it best in these words:

Art invites creative exploration, choice and the child's own thinking. (p. 40)

When we review the visual arts, two broad processes are evident – applying and forming/assembling.

Applying

Children can apply art media such as: tempera paint, finger paint, crayons, chalk, washable markers, watercolors, pencils, paper, glue, and paste to many surfaces. They can apply other items in a variety of ways and in different combinations: fabrics, yarn, string, lace, ribbon, and natural materials, for example. Some items can be applied to paper, cardboard, and fabric. Some materials can be stapled, glued or pasted in place.

Crayons – often the first art medium that children use

- Provide the crayons for a classroom rather than have children bring a box for their individual use. This encourages children to share materials.
- Provide crayons that are soft and apply well to surfaces.
- Include fat or chubby crayons as well as the slimmer varieties.
- Remove the paper from some crayons and encourage children to try drawing with the sides as well as the tips.
- Store like colors in labeled containers. Use the color of the crayons as part of the label.
- Have crayons available throughout the year.
- Introduce special types of crayons such as fluorescent and multicultural skin tones.
- Provide a variety of types of paper for children to use.
- Introduce children to crayon rubbings. Place newsprint or fairly thin paper on top of an object that has an interesting texture or raised design: coins, keys, brick or bark for example. Guide children to use the side of a crayon with paper removed to rub back and forth until the desired image appears. Tape the object down if children have difficulty when objects shift.

Felt-tipped Markers – washable rather than permanent markers

- Provide markers in at least two thicknesses. The smaller markers allow children to add detail to their drawing.
- Protect tables with newspaper because markers penetrate most paper surfaces.
- Guide children to replace caps on markers to keep them moist.

Colored Chalk – a satisfactory medium for children

- Provide thick sticks of the soft variety
- Allow children to use chalk on paper, on chalkboard and sidewalks.
- Provide damp paper towels as an interesting surface. The moisture keeps the chalk dust from flying.
- Have children brush liquid starch on a piece of heavy paper, like construction paper, and then draw with the chalk.
- Prepare the following mixtures for dipping dry chalk into to prevent chalk from flaking off: mix equal parts of water and liquid starch or mix three tablespoons of sugar in a cup of water.
- Scrape off the sticky substance that eventually coats the ends of chalk that has been dipped in one of the mixtures.

Tempera Paint - a water-based medium that is available in a wide variety of hues

- Purchase washable liquid tempera. Dry powdered tempera paint can present a health hazard if mixed in the presence of children.
- Provide tempera paint that it is the consistency of heavy cream so that children are best

able to control it.

- Add a teaspoon or two of liquid detergent for easier clean up of spills.
- Add small granules of sand or sawdust to tempera paint for a textured effect.
- Add a small amount of wintergreen or oil of cloves to prevent liquid tempera paint from turning sour.
- Provide no-spill paint containers with lids.
- Start with the primary colors of red, blue and yellow. Children can mix their own secondary colors, using brushes and containers. Later on, add white and black tempera paints that children can use for mixing tints and shades.
- Begin with brushes with chubby handles which are easier for children to handle. Appropriate brush widths for three and four year old children are one-half to three-fourths inches.
- Wash brushes after use and store with bristles up for drying.
- Provide a variety of paper for painting: newsprint (it is inexpensive, but is thin and can tear when a young child paints over and over in one area), manila paper, construction paper, textured paper such as wallpaper samples and ends, wrapping paper, computer paper, shelf paper, opened paper bags, and printed newspaper.
- Provide paper that is 18 x 14 inches for beginning painters. They need sufficient space for broad arm sweeps. This size paper will fit standard easels.
- Provide easels for painting. Children can also paint at tables, either sitting or standing.
- Cover the floor with newspaper or a piece of plastic or vinyl to prevent paint from dripping on the floor.
- Demonstrate to children how to dip their paint brush in the paint, wipe off excess paint two times and then paint so that paint is less likely to run when applied to paper. Share these words, "Dip, wipe, wipe, paint".

Finger Paint – a sensory experience in which children use their fingers and hands to explore the paint and to create designs and forms

- Include finger painting experiences for the children.
- Respect those children who are hesitant to finger paint. They may change their minds after watching other children enjoy the process.
- Understand that finger painting can be a messy experience and be prepared for this.
- Have children wear paint smocks or shirts when they finger paint.
- Decide on surface for finger painting; for example paper which has a glossy finish, directly on laminated tables, or on a tray with or without paper.
- Dampen the surface to be painted with a sponge.
- Purchase finger paint in ready-mixed form. Scoop out the premixed, pudding-like paint and apply to a wet surface.
- Provide dampened paper towels for wiping hands before children go to sink to wash hands.

Watercolors – set with blocks of watercolors that are washable and nontoxic with paintbrush

- Provide two to four watercolor sets and a brush for each set, small containers of water for rinsing brushes, and paper that is sturdy and absorbent.
- Demonstrate and explain how to use the watercolors.
 - Dip the brush in the water, then swirl the tip of the brush in the color of paint they want to use. Guide them on how much water to use (less water makes it easier to control the flow of wet paint onto the paper.)
 - Remind them to thoroughly rinse their paintbrush before changing colors.

- Explain to children that they cannot keep adding water to the painting because the wet paper eventually will tear.

Teacher Note: *Large coffee filters, especially those made from recycled paper, are excellent for watercolors. They are inexpensive if purchased in bulk.*

Teacher Note: *You may want to cover the table with newspaper before children begin painting with watercolors.*

Collage – the process of selecting and attaching materials on a flat surface to create a more or less two-dimensional design or picture. Collage has been used by a number of illustrators of children’s books; for example, Eric Carle, Ezra Jack Keats, Leo Lionni, and Steve Jenkins.

- Collect materials that children can use to create collages: pieces of colored construction paper, paper cut or torn into shapes, tissue and cellophane in various hues, wallpaper ends or samples, fabric scraps with interesting textures and designs, pieces of yarn and string, large buttons, stamps, sticky dots, pieces of ribbon and lace, wrapping paper, greeting cards.
- Sort materials and store in individual containers.
- Rotate collage materials so that children always have a variety from which to choose.
- Provide cardboard or heavy paper as the base for collages.
- Have glue and scissors available in the center.
- Allow children to choose materials and create their own collages.

Forming/Assembling

Playdough – a non-hardening dough that can be purchased or made and is used as a molding material

- Consider making your own playdough which saves money and is less likely to crumble.
- Store playdough in an airtight container.
- Allow children to have many opportunities to manipulate the playdough before adding accessories.
- Add accessories such as alphabet and cookie cutters, small rolling pins, plastic knives and forks, potato masher.
- Provide vinyl placemats to define children’s space and for easy clean up.

Three-dimensional structures – the process of assembling a variety of materials and attaching them to a base

- Collect materials that children can use in creating three-dimensional structures: craft sticks, boxes of different sizes, small cereal boxes, paper towel tubes, yarn, cotton balls, wall paper ends, fabric scraps, wood scraps, natural items such as shells, pebbles, pine cones and small sticks, spray can tops, plastic lids, broken jewelry, cardboard, corrugated cardboard, blocks of wood approximately 6 inches long, pieces of ceiling tiles, glue, tape, scissors with blunt-ended blades. Be creative and collect other items that are safe for children to use.
- Explain to children that they can use the materials to create a structure.
- Allow children to explore the materials and talk about what they are and how they might be used.
- Guide children to select a base on which to build.
- Stand back and allow children to create their own three-dimensional structure.

- Invite children to dictate a story about their structure; what it is and how they built it, for example. Record their dictation and place it with the structure.
- Provide a place in the classroom for displaying the structures and the dictated stories.
- Suggest that children invite their families to look at the display.

What are the Performing Arts?

The performing arts for children, ages from three to five, involve them in music, creative movement and dance, dramatic play and creative drama, and puppetry. These activities are intended to be fun, child-centered and free from pressure to perform for adults.

Dramatic Play – play in which several children select a theme, take on different roles and use real or pretend objects to play out the roles

A favorite center for children in most classrooms is the home living/dramatic play center. The following is information on how to set up the center.

Home Living/Dramatic Play Center

From *KITS – Learning Environment/Program for Children – Session 1* comes the following information on the Home Living/Dramatic Play Center.

Home Living/Dramatic Play Center Set Up

Note: Refer to Photo for a sample of a Home Living/Dramatic Play Center set up.

- _____ Sufficient space for three to five children
- _____ Space defined by walls, shelves, furniture and carpet or rugs
- _____ Located near other noisy areas such as the block center
- _____ Softness and touches of home: small rug, tablecloth, napkins, plants, photo album with photos of children and their families



Materials and Props

- ___ Sufficient materials and props for 3 to 5 children so that they have choices
- ___ Child-size kitchen furniture such as stove, refrigerator, sink and tables and chairs
- ___ Pots, pans and unbreakable dishes
- ___ Dolls, doll clothing and blankets
- ___ Dress up clothes for both male and female
- ___ Doll stroller or carriage, doll high chair, doll bed
- ___ Empty food containers (stuffed with newspaper and sealed with tape)
- ___ Accessories: hats, shoes, purses, wallets, ties, briefcases
- ___ Storage for dress up clothes and accessories
- ___ Full length, unbreakable mirror
- ___ Telephones
- ___ Memo pads, pencils
- ___ Magazines, cook books, phone books, children's books, menus, grocery ads
- ___ Other (list) _____

Materials and Props that Reflect Diversity

- ___ Dolls of different races and cultures and of both genders
- ___ Authentic cooking utensils such as a wok and tortilla press from different cultures
- ___ Empty food containers from children's homes with print in other languages (stuff the containers with newspaper and seal with tape for durability)
- ___ Props that represent the professions of children's parents (menu and tray, medical kit, briefcase, tool belt, hard hat)
- ___ Dress-up clothes used by men and women in a variety of roles
- ___ Magazines and pictures that represent different cultures
- ___ Menus from ethnic restaurants (Mexican, Italian, Greek)

Teachers are encouraged to develop prop boxes for the dramatic play area. The prop boxes suggested in some of the curriculum guides relate to the books that were read to the children. They are intended to encourage children to act out scenes from the stories they heard.

Teachers are encouraged to develop additional prop boxes to add to the dramatic play area. From *Adventures in Learning - Tips and Techniques*, comes the following information about prop boxes:

Prop boxes include a variety of materials relevant to a particular theme or topic of study. As children use the items in the prop boxes, they are recreating and exploring the topic-related and life experiences they have had and gaining a better understanding of the world around them.

Tips for organizing and storing prop boxes:

- Store props for each theme or topic in a box or plastic tub with a lid.
- Label each container with the name of the theme or topic of study.
- Tape an inventory list to the inside cover of the container.
- Check prop boxes periodically and repair or replace items that are torn or broken.
- Invite families to provide items for the prop boxes.

Here is a list of topics for prop boxes to get you started:

- **Supermarket:** empty food containers, cash registers, paper or plastic money, paper bags for groceries, plastic fruits and vegetables, coupons, supermarket ads, signs for different sections such as meat, dairy, fruit and vegetables, canned goods, and cereals
- **Office:** pads of paper, pencils, briefcases, telephones, stamp pads and stampers, envelopes, computer keyboard, adding machine or calculator, calendars, old planners, and business cards
- **Barbershop/hairdresser:** empty shampoo bottles with labels, wigs on stands, curlers and pins, hair dryer (minus electric cord), towels, basins, smocks, signs with services provided and prices, hair styling magazines, magazines for the waiting room
- **Camping:** pup tent, canteens, cooking utensils, empty food boxes, flashlight, small logs for campfire
- **Medical Office/Hospital:** stethoscope, blood pressure cuff, ace bandages, white “lab” jackets, scrubs, prescription pads and pencils, telephone, x rays, folders and clipboards for patients’ charts, flashlight
- **Shoe Store:** chairs to sit in, variety of old shoes, shoe boxes (labeled and priced), cash register, play money, shoe horn, ruler to measure foot or a foot measurer from a shoe store, signs with name of store
- **Bakery:** baker’s hat, apron, small plastic bowls, muffin tins, cake pans, spoons, spatulas, empty cake mix boxes, recipe cards
- **Gardening:** gardening gloves, small gardening tools, vegetable and flower seed packs

Creative Drama – children act out stories with or without props

In creative drama children become actively involved in the story. They use words and actions to dramatize the stories they have heard. Sometimes they use props.

Creative drama is more appropriate for older preschool and kindergarten children and should be fun and pressure-free. Audiences should be each other and younger children such as three year olds, rather than adults.

From the Pre-K ELLA Trainer Manual comes the following creative drama tips:

- Begin with a book to read or a story to tell.
- Choose a story with few characters, simple story line and lots of action. Stories with repetitive dialogue and predictable stories are appropriate for dramatizing.
- Read or tell the story over a period of time so it is digested and becomes familiar to the children.
- Ask children to pay particular attention to the characters and what they say and do and how they express their feelings.
- Lead a discussion about the story. Involve children in discussing the sequence of events in the story.
- Invite children to volunteer for each part. Respect children's choice of level of involvement. Some may only choose to be a part of the audience.
- Involve all children in deciding on props and settings needed. Keep both props and settings simple. Some stories may require no props.
- Serve as narrator and prompt children when necessary.
- Allow children to present the drama to the other children in their own creative way.
- Allow reenacting with different children playing the parts. The attention span of the children will determine if this takes place the same day or another day.
- Make the props available for children's independent play. This will extend children's, involvement with the story, thus extending the literacy opportunities. It will also allow children who did not choose to perform for others an opportunity to play a part without an audience. For example, put the bowls and other props from the reenactment of the Three Bears in either the home living/dramatic play area or the library area.
- Keep creative drama simple, child-centered, free from pressure and fun for all the children.

Some of the curriculum guides include creative drama activities using either props or puppets. Other books appropriate for creative drama include:

The Gingerbread Boy by Paul Galdone
Ask Mr. Bear by Marjorie Flack
Caps for Sale by Esphyr Slobodkina
The Three Billy Goats Gruff by Paul Galdone

Puppets

Storytelling and puppets have been connected through the ages and this connection continues today. For young children, puppets have a magnetic quality that can provide a powerful connection to literature.

Puppets can be used by both teacher and children in early childhood classrooms. However, the use of puppets should begin with the teacher as a model. Children need many opportunities to observe the teacher as a puppeteer and to take part in activities that involve the teacher in that role. If this does not happen, children may abuse the puppets and use them for aggressive behavior.

Puppets can be purchased or made by both the teacher and the children. When children are involved in making puppets, allow this to be their creation. The role of the teacher is to provide the materials and sufficient directions to ensure that the puppet will work successfully. Some of the curriculum guides will have directions for making different types of puppets.

Here are some suggestions for using puppets in the preschool classroom:

- Use puppets to introduce a new book, to play a character in the story, or to encourage children to discuss the story.
- Use puppets as a medium for involving children in discussing appropriate behavior in social situations.
- Use puppets to encourage children to talk about and deal with their feelings and emotions. Young children often believe that puppets are real and have feelings. Sometimes they are willing to share feelings such as fear with a puppet after the teacher has used a puppet to tell a story about a person or an animal that was afraid.
- Collect puppets that can be used with many different children's stories. For example, a bear puppet can be used with *Ask Mr. Bear*, *Corduroy*, and *A Pocket for Corduroy*. A chicken puppet can be used for *Rosie's Walk* and *The Little Red Hen*. A rabbit puppet can be used for *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* and *The Runaway Bunny*.
- Select stories to tell with puppets that have a few characters, an easy-to-follow sequence of events and a clear plot.
- Understand that you do not need a stage, nor do you need to be a ventriloquist when you use a puppet to tell children a story. Children tend to ignore the puppeteer and focus on the puppet.
- Allow and encourage children to use puppets to retell stories or to tell a story they have made up.
- Use puppets often with children.

Music

From *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool*, Fourth Edition, by Diane Trister Dodge, Laura J. Colker and Cate Heroman, comes this definition of music:

Music is combining voice and/or instruments to create melodies and pleasing sounds (p. 153)

Most young children seem to be natural musicians. When they hear music, they move to it. They listen to music. They begin singing along with songs that are recorded or sung by others. Once they learn to sing, they make up their own melodies and their own words to familiar songs. Children's natural response to music makes it easy to include music throughout the day; during group time, center time, transitions and routines.

Including music during group time is enjoyable. It is an effective way to expand language and to introduce and reinforce concepts. When children are involved in musical activities, they feel

part of the group and learn to cooperate with others. Because music keeps children actively involved, it can be thought of as an indirect guidance technique.

For those teachers who say they cannot sing, keep in mind that for preschool children voice quality is not important. Children just want to sing. Some teachers may decide they would be more comfortable using CDs or tapes for group singing.

Select songs such as “Old McDonald Had a Farm” that has lots of repetition. Children enjoy songs and fingerplays such as “The Wheels on the Bus” and “The Eensy Weensy Spider.” Nursery rhymes and singing games and action songs such as “Hokey Pokey” and “Farmer in the Dell” are favorites. Include songs from different cultures and especially from those of the families in your program.

The following strategies for introducing a new song are suggested by Diane Trister Dodge, Laura J. Colker and Cate Heromann in *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool*, Second Edition. (2002).

Strategies for Introducing a New Song

- Select a song that is relatively short, has simple words, and a melody that is easy to remember.
- Make sure that you have practiced the song and know it by heart.
- Tell the children a story about the song.
- Sing the song to the children. Be animated and sing with a smile.
- Sing the song again and again, if you wish. Invite the children to join in or clap along.
- Use props, such as puppets, flannel board figures, or pictures, to help children remember the words to the song.
- Add motions to the song. (p. 437)

If you use a tape or CD to introduce a song, adapt the strategies just listed.

Musical Instruments

Just as children enjoy singing, they also enjoy playing musical instruments, sometimes called rhythm instruments in the preschool setting. Some instruments that children can use include:

- drums (to be played either with hands or a mallet)
- bells
- rhythm sticks
- maracas, shakers
- triangles
- tambourines
- cymbals

Instruments can be purchased and some can be made by teachers. Consider purchasing good quality instruments that will last.

Before children are able to play an instrument at specific times or in certain patterns, they need to know the name of each instrument and explore its sounds. They also need to learn the appropriate way to use and care for the instruments.

Many teachers begin with rhythm sticks which are excellent instruments to introduce children to the idea of playing an instrument at specific times, keeping the beat, or playing in certain patterns. Refer to *Books and Movement – A Magical Mix - B.A.M.M.M.! Activity #9 – I Can Play Sticks*, for information on how to introduce children to rhythm sticks and involve them in different activities with the sticks. Ideas for making rhythm instruments are also included.

Consider introducing instruments by groups rather than all at once. For example, introduce instruments that you shake such as maracas, shakers and tambourines together. Name the instrument, have children repeat the names and allow children to experiment with the instruments. Call attention to the different sound of each instrument. Have children close their eyes, you play one of the instruments, and they name the instrument you played. Introduce a variety of bells to children; bells on elastic or chenille stems and bells on sticks, for example. Instruments that you strike, for example, triangle, cymbal and drum, can be introduced together.

After children have had many opportunities to explore the sounds these instruments make and can listen and keep the beat, they will be able to use the instruments to accompany listening, singing and movement activities such as marching. However, this is a process that takes place over a period of time.

Dance

From *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool*, Fourth Edition, by Diane Trister Dodge, Laura J. Colker and Cate Heroman, comes this definition of dance.

Dance is using the body to express ideas, to respond to music and to convey feelings.
(p. 152)

Sometimes the terms dance and creative movement are used interchangeably. Granted there are many similarities between the two. However, in this document they will be discussed separately, with dance first, followed by creative movement.

The preceding definition of dance includes a response to music while in creative movement that is not a focus. The music heard on a CD or tape is usually the music referred to when there is discussion of young children and dance. Refer to school supply catalogs for CDs of dance tunes by recognized children's recording artists such as Greg & Steve, Raffi, Dr. Jean, Mr. Al, and The Learning Station. Include this music in your classroom activities.

When dance is included in the preschool curriculum, remember that this is not a reference to dance lessons with a dance instructor and choreographed movements. It is a time when children listen to music and create the dance for their enjoyment.

The following are suggestions for introducing different types of dance to children:

- Collect pictures of people engaged in different types of dance.
- Use the pictures to tell a story about the dance. For example, "The people in this picture are at a party and they are dancing a waltz. I'm going to play a waltz and you move like the music tells you to move."
- Observe the children. Do they seem to be responding to the tempo they are hearing?
- Introduce a different tune such as reggae and invite children to listen and move like the music tells them to move.

- Invite them to discuss which they like best, the waltz or the reggae.

In *Books and Movement – A Magical Mix - B.A.M.M.M.!*, two of the Learning Activities focus on dancing; Learning Activity #2 – I Can Dance, and Learning Activity #7 – I Can Dance Colors.

Creative Movement

From *Young Children*, March 2010, in an article entitled Young Children and Movement by Connie Bergstein Dow, comes this definition of creative movement.

Creative Movement is an art form whose medium is the human body in motion. (p. 30)

With this definition in mind, think of the teacher's role in creative movement as that of providing children the opportunity to learn new motor skills and practice, reinforce and build on those they already have. Through creative movement, children are given the skills and motivation to become physically active for life.

Since a creative movement curriculum is already available at no cost from the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, it will not be necessary to include detailed information here. *Books and Movement – A Magical Mix – B.A.M.M.M.!* is a series of twelve learning activities that begin with a children's book, extends to movement activities that are suggested in the book, and expand to include related curriculum activities and ideas for enhancing the learning environment. See [References and Resources](#).

Music Center

Many classrooms for three and four year old children include a music center which is available as a choice to children when they are engaged in learning center activities. In the center, children can sing, listen to music, use musical instruments and props, and move to music.

Some teachers hesitate to include a center because they think it is too noisy, is disruptive to children in other centers, and is difficult to manage. Here are some suggestions for making the music center a valuable addition to the learning environment.

- Locate the music center away from quieter areas such as the library center.
- Locate the center near a power source for the CD or tape player.
- Define the area with dividers or shelves.
- Use an area rug to define the space. A rug also provides comfortable seating and absorbs excess sound.
- Reduce excess sound by hanging sound-absorbing materials such as carpet squares or a cloth tapestry on the wall or on the back of a shelf or divider.
- Limit the number of children who can use the center at one time and allow enough space for that number.
- Provide storage so children can take out and put away materials easily and safely. For example, provide pegboard hooks and labeled bins.
- Provide an easy-to-use tape or CD player, head phones and a place to store them.
- Display instruments that children can easily select and put away.
- Limit the number of instruments that are available at one time.
- Introduce each instrument to children and allow them time to explore it. Discuss with them the appropriate way to use the instrument.

- Add materials and props such as scarves, ribbon sticks, or crepe paper streamers. Add one type of material at a time.
- Add sheet music or music books to the center.
- Rotate materials to maintain children's interest.
- Display pictures of musical instruments, people playing instruments, orchestras and marching bands.
- Join children in the center to support them as they use the instruments and the materials and props.

Library Center

Because literature is a key element in the curriculum guides, it is appropriate to include information on setting up a library center in the classroom. Teachers are encouraged to place the books they read to children in the center, as well as a felt/magnetic board, the storytelling figures and the puppets that support the stories. They are also encouraged to join the children in the center to support them in their literacy experiences.

From *KITS – Learning Environment/Programs for Children – Session 1* comes the following information on the Library Center.

Library Center Set Up

Note: *Refer to Photo for a sample of a Library Center set up*

- _____ Bookshelf to display books
- _____ Located in quiet area of classroom
- _____ Out of flow of traffic
- _____ Good lighting
- _____ Softness such as carpeted floors, rugs, pillows

Materials and Props

- _____ Variety of children's books
- _____ Felt/magnetic board and storytelling figures
- _____ Discussion pictures
- _____ Puppets
- _____ Stories on tape or CD
- _____ CD or tape player with headsets
- _____ Illustrated nursery rhyme and poem charts
- _____ Other (list)



Materials and Props that Reflect Diversity

_____ Books that depict the following: (Check the books that are available)

- Class-made books of children and their families _____
- Family groups of different races, cultures, customs, ages and family structure

- _____
- Men and women engaged in different activities at work, home and leisure _____
 - Children and adults with various disabilities _____

_____ Pictures that reflect different races, cultures, customs and ages

_____ Books in language spoken at home, including stories on tape or CD

Creativity and Young Children with Disabilities

For young children with disabilities, an early childhood program should provide opportunities for them to be involved in creative activities. This is specifically addressed in *Young Children*, Volume 59, Number 4, July 2004, in an article entitled Making the Most of Creativity in Activities for Young Children with Disabilities by Linda Crane Mitchell. (pp 46-49)

Two chapters in *The Inclusive Classroom* by Patti Gould and Joyce Sullivan (1999), address adaptations in the art center and the dramatic play center. The chapters also include information on activities for children with disabilities.