

Guidelines for Open-ended Art

- Never alter or 'fix' a child's work
- Add new materials weekly, incorporating your theme if possible
- Never tell a child what to create
- Emphasize the process, not the end product
- Don't ask "What is it?" Say "Tell me about it"
- Ask the child if and where he/she would like his name put
- Let children explore materials
- Let children come up with their own ideas and use materials creatively
- Provide materials for 3-D and on-going artwork projects
- Encourage, do not force participation
- Do not do models or samples for the children
- Throw away any coloring books or dittos in the room
- All materials should be at the children's level, and accessible
- Play dough and the art easel should be open the majority of each day
- Display art in a variety of ways – it should not all 'match'
- Let the children be as independent as possible, and encourage self-help skills and responsibility in cleaning up art
- Educate parents as to the value and learning in open-ended art
- Teach and model appropriate use and respect of materials
- Allow ample time for children to create and explore
- Children should be doing their own cutting – it's okay if a circle doesn't remotely resemble a circle yet. This is how they develop these fine muscles – and makes it 'their' work and experience.
- There is no 'right' or 'wrong' way, or end product.

Dear Mom and Dad,

It may not look like much, but my scribbles are very important! Scribbling is the first step in learning to write, and I am developing the muscles I will need to hold a pencil!

Sometimes a scribble is not just a scribble!

Love,
Your toddler

What message does a child get from Teacher from directed product art and craft activities?

- The adult's ideas are more important than mine.
 - In comparison, someone else's work is always better than mine.
 - Different is not better - all being the same is the goal.
 - Art is not about expressing myself or my ideas.
 - I can't do it right.
 - If it's good my Teacher will like it – and me.
- I don't have to think – just do what my Teacher says.

REMEMBER!!!

When we say something **very specific** about a child's work, it is much more meaningful than the generic response "That's beautiful!" And, it also shows that we are **truly** looking at what they did.

What can you say to children about their art?

- "I see circles in your picture."
- "You filled up the whole paper."
- "Do you have a story you want to tell me about your picture?"
- "Would you like me to write something on your picture?"
- "Tell me about how you made the blue lines so smooth."
- "I feel happy when I look at your picture. The colors are very bright."
- "I can see you worked hard on that."
- "You used red, yellow and orange in your picture."
- "You've got all kinds of lines in your picture."

Open-Ended Art Experiences By Cathy Abraham <http://123child.com>



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