



Kansas State University  
Agricultural Experiment Station  
and Cooperative Extension Service

## Teaching Guide

This lesson examines the development of children's art from the scribbling of a toddler to the more elaborate work of the grade-schooler. Children's drawing progresses developmentally. The expressive gestures of the toddler, from the moment they can be recorded by a crayon or pencil, gradually evolve into a set of consistent symbols or basic patterns. This development occurs in the context of play; it is not taught. This art is much like a window into the child's world. It plays an important role in children's overall mental development. The resource will also examine the role of parents and other care givers in nurturing creative expression in drawing.

Prepared by  
Charles A. Smith,  
School of Family Studies  
and Human Services,  
Kansas State University

# AT THE HEART OF THEIR ART

### Goals

Participants will understand the developmental changes associated with artistic development and will know how to directly support creativity and artistic growth in children.

### Time required

30 minutes

### Materials

Obtain a variety of child art materials for participants to use. Choose among four colors of tempera paint, liquid starch, finger painting paper (will not absorb fluid), clay, play dough, fat crayons, watercolors, brushes, art paper, white glue. As a minimum, set out crayons and paper.

Masking tape

A paper pad and marking pen

### Preparation

Review the fact sheet MF-2414, "At the Heart of Their Art: Understanding Children Through What They Create." Have a copy of the fact sheet available for each participant. If possible, visit our Web site at:

<http://www.ksu.edu/wwparent/programs/art/>

Ask participants to bring to the meeting samples of art created by children from 2 through 8 years of age. If you can, bring additional art created by children in the same age range. A local preschool or elementary school teacher may be able to help. The art, although not required for the meeting, will enrich the group experience. If you have access to a color printer, you could download and print samples from our Web page, listed above.

Set up several tables in a circle or square arrangement.

Place different art material at each table. Make finger paint by combining the tempera paint with the liquid starch. Mix the regular tempera paint, set out the brushes, and prepare other materials for use at the tables. Have crayons and paper at all tables if that is the only art material you have.

Set up a large pad visible to everyone in the group.

### Transition (10 minutes)

#### Directions.

Set aside "gallery" space where participants can place the art work they brought (each keeping one item to show during discussion).

Before beginning the more formal program, encourage participants to circulate and appreciate each piece of art brought to the meeting. Avoid evaluation labels such as "good" and "bad." Instead of saying, "That's a good drawing," they could say, "I really like all the colors!" Such comments are not necessary, though.



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**Directions.**

Ask participants to move to the tables. They can begin creating with whatever art material is available at that table. Explain that the idea is not to create something necessarily recognizable. They should experience the feeling of moving, choosing colors, manipulating the material, and creating something. None of the art will be judged.

**Follow-up.**

After the period of exploration, ask participants to set aside the materials. Was it fun? Could they let go, enjoy the creating, and be childlike? Or were they critical of what they did? Were they focused on trying to make something that might gain the approval of others? Or did they focus on the process of creating? How did it feel to create?

Emphasize that the joy of art for young children is in the creation of the art work, not seeking approval for what they have done. As adults, we are too quick to put pressure on children to make something. Or we constantly ask, "What is it?"

***Step 2: Developmental Changes in Drawing (10 minutes)***

**Directions.**

Distribute copies of the fact sheet, and provide participants with sufficient time to examine the material. Then go over each stage, beginning with Scribbles and ending with Scenes.

**Follow-up.**

Respond to questions they might have. Emphasize that children can create art that fits their current or previous stages. Point out that making conclusions about children is inappropriate after seeing only a few samples of their work.

***Step 3: Applying the Insights and Conclusions (10 minutes)***

**Directions.**

Encourage participants to review the art work in the gallery. They could take notes as they examine the work to introduce during discussion. You could ask them to find an example of one or more (or all) the stages described in the fact sheet. This task would be easier if you have art created by children between the ages of 2 and 8.

Ask participants to return to the circle. Tell the group that county family and consumer sciences agents have additional material on the topic as part of the "Basic Parenting" program. Respond to any questions they might have and thank them for attending.

This Leader's Guide is an abbreviated version of the more comprehensive Art Awareness program that is an expansion pack to the Basic Parenting Foundations program. See your county extension family and consumer sciences agent for the in-depth version.





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Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

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