



Encouraging Creativity in Early Childhood Education

Children are wildly, endlessly creative with fierce imaginations and open hearts. In a child's eyes, everything about the world is new and surprising, held together by their own sense of simple logic that may or may not line up with an adult's understanding of reality. As we age and learn concrete truths about the world, our creative instinct tends to diminish. By validating their creative input, asking critical thinking questions, and providing opportunities for deep observation, we can do our part to help children maintain their creative spirit well into adulthood.

- Focus on ***process over product***. Be curious to see what a child can learn by doing, rather than judging their final outcome
- When a child speaks to you, make eye contact and listen to what they have to say on their level. When they feel you are listening, they will tell you much more.
- Leave space for children to safely interact with materials in their own way on their own time. You may discover something new you hadn't thought of before.
- Think of activities like a picture frame. The teacher makes the framework/structure, and the child is free to create inside of it
- Ask critical thinking questions about stories, songs, and pictures: How did he feel? Why did she do that? Have you ever felt that way? What might you do differently?
- Give reflective, not evaluative, feedback to creative efforts. "I see you used green and yellow paint for the flowers." "I see you made a rocket ship out of Legos." "The Magnetile tower is very tall."
- Provide opportunities to observe the world and objects from the world. Worry less about what they may or may not already know and be interested in seeing what they can observe and evaluate in front of them. Help children notice both the big picture and small details.
- When you're feeling stuck in a routine, do something spontaneous and new. Your sense of joy in discovery will inspire their curiosity.
- Be open and flexible in your class planning to allow room for a child's input (*follow the child*). Maybe it's not what you planned to do, but why not?
- Create chances for children to work with their peers in small groups and create their own outcome. This helps children develop teamwork and listening skills
 - o Be aware of unbalanced power dynamics in groups. Does one child tend to dominate socially over another child? Help the dominant child to listen more and make space for the quieter child to express their own thoughts