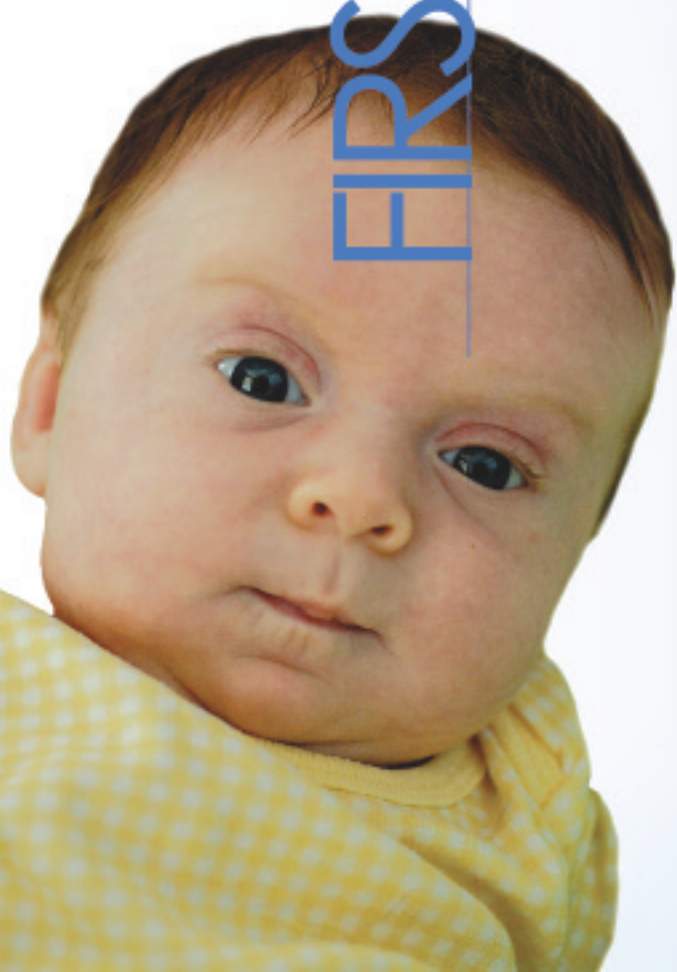


Children's FIRST LANGUAGE



program 1

“Education is lighting a fire, not filling a bucket. And the arts light the fire. They light the fire of enthusiasm and involvement. They engage the child on every level—sensory, verbal, and cognitive.”

Valerie Bayne Carroll,
Master Teaching Artist, Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts

The arts have been referred to as “children’s first language” because even before they can speak, children express their thoughts and ideas through art, movement, music, and dramatic play. This program provides an overview of the Art to Heart series, introducing the importance of the arts as a form of self-expression and a foundation for learning and development. The program shows arts activities in a variety of settings, including at home, in a child care center, in classrooms, and at a museum.



- Think about the role of the arts in your life. As a child, did you play dress-up, draw pictures, or sing songs? Did you think of these activities as the “arts”—or just as fun? As an adult, do you enjoy music and dancing? Do you go to plays or movies? Do you have any hobbies that involve artistic skills, such as quilting, decorating your home, arranging flowers, or ceramics? Do you think of yourself as creative?
- What roles do music, dance, theater, and art play in cultures and communities?
- What do you think about arts activities as learning experiences? What do you know about the impact of the arts on learning and/or reaching prescribed educational outcomes?

Segment: Baby Artsplay

The program opens at the Wolf Trap Foundation's Center for Education in Vienna, Virginia. The video shows part of a Baby Artsplay class. Aimed at children six to 36 months old and their parents and caregivers, Baby Artsplay shows parents how to incorporate music and books into the daily lives of their young children. Parents learn how to enable their children to experience the steady beat of familiar songs by shaking rhythm instruments or being bounced on a parent's knees. The class also explores the steady beat in books and nursery rhymes for a literacy connection.

Think About/Discuss

- What specific activities are going on in the segment? Does what you see support the teacher's comment that the arts engage children "on every level—sensory, visual, and cognitive"?
- How do the parents and children interact? Do they seem to be having fun? What materials and instruments are being used?
- What does the statement "Education is lighting a fire, not filling a bucket" mean? What types of learning activities would "light a fire" as opposed to "fill a bucket"?

Segment: The Value of Arts Activities

A variety of teachers and other experts offer ideas about the value of the arts in the lives of young children.

Think About/Discuss

- Which comment stands out the most to you? Why?
- How do these comments support the idea of the arts as a "first language"?



This program is made up of segments introducing arts activities in a variety of settings. Note concepts and ideas you would like to learn more about and/or implement.

Segment: The Arts at Home

Cyndi Young and her four-year-old daughter, Georgia, have fun with the arts in their home on a regular basis. In this segment, we see them tracing each other, painting in the backyard, and creating with modeling clay.

Think About/Discuss

- What activities do you see this mother and daughter do together? Are these structured or open-ended? How do these activities differ from using a coloring book or making a craft that has specific directions? What are the differences between process-oriented activities and product-oriented activities? Which type do you think is more creative or beneficial?
- What are some of the benefits of art activities that Young mentions? What do you think her perspective as a teacher adds to her perspective as a parent?
- It's important that children feel free to explore and to express themselves in a supportive setting with trusted adults. These relationships are a foundation of learning. Do you see evidence of this in the segment? How could a teacher or caregiver build this kind of relationship?

Kindergarten students in Daviess County, Kentucky, receive keyboarding lessons.



Segment: Playing in Paint

At the Child Study Center at East Tennessee University, even infants get hands-on experience with art materials. In the segment, you'll see babies playing with washable, nontoxic finger paints and textured materials such as bubble wrap and aluminum foil. They are exploring—and affecting change on—the world around them.

Think About/Discuss

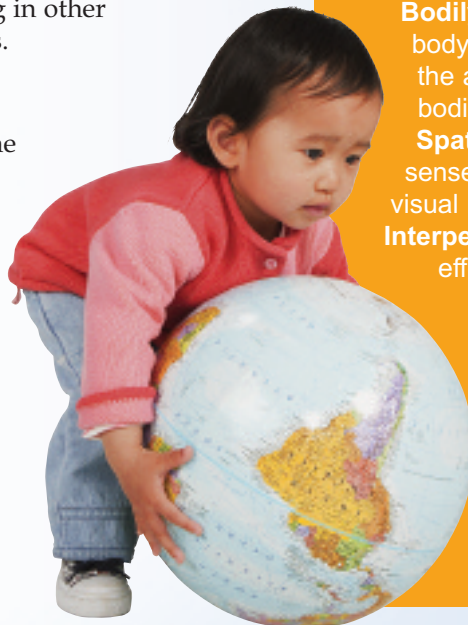
- Were you surprised to see babies “painting”?
- Babies and toddlers explore their environment through movement and sensory experiences—seeing, hearing, touching, and tasting. This is how they learn about themselves and their world and is called the sensorimotor stage of development. How is the paint-play activity suited to babies and toddlers?
- According to the teachers, what are these babies getting out of the activity?
- As the babies play, their teachers talk to them, describing what they are experiencing: “Oooh, that feels cold and sticky.” “Look, it’s on your hands; it was on the paper and now it’s on your hands.” Why might this be beneficial?

Segment: The Arts at School

In Daviess County, Kentucky, the school district implemented a project called Graduation 2010, researching ways to help students achieve. As a result, the district implemented new approaches to learning, including keyboarding for each kindergarten student and increased artist residencies. The results have been higher test scores and children who are happy to come to school. In this segment, educators, students, and parents discuss the benefits of a focus on the arts. You'll see young children in keyboarding class—where the goal is not to produce master musicians, but to get children using both hands as well as other senses—as well as participating in other music and movement activities.

Think About/Discuss

- What benefits of including the arts and music/keyboarding were discussed in the segment by teachers, parents, and students?
- What is important to you as a parent regarding your child’s school-based educational experience?
- What is important to you as an educator about your students’ school experience?



Segment: The Evolving Art Museum

Like museums across the United States, the Speed Art Museum in Louisville, Kentucky, is looking for ways to serve families and children. This segment visits the museum’s Laramie L. Leatherman Art Learning Center and Art Sparks Interactive Gallery, an art environment with hands-on and engaging activities that range from low-tech, such as blocks, to high-tech computer activities.

Think About/Discuss

- What activities did you see in the segment that you can recreate at home or in the classroom? What is the benefit of open-ended activities?
- Are museums places for children? What are the benefits to museums of evolving to be more receptive to the needs and interests of young visitors?
- Did you visit museums as a child? Was the experience like Art Sparks?
- What would make you comfortable in a museum’s family and hands on space? What would make you want to stay and return?

HOWARD GARDNER’S MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

Linguistic intelligence: relates to spoken and written language.

Logical-mathematical intelligence: the ability to detect patterns, reason deductively and think logically.

Musical intelligence: skill in the performance, composition, and appreciation of musical patterns.

Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence: using the body or parts of the body to solve problems; the ability to use mental abilities to coordinate bodily movements.

Spatial intelligence: the ability to use the sense of sight to recognize, use, and create visual representations of objects.

Interpersonal intelligence: the capacity to work effectively with others.

Intrapersonal intelligence: the capacity to understand oneself, to appreciate one’s feelings, fears and motivations.

Since his original work, Gardner has added naturalist intelligence to this list. This is the ability to recognize, categorize, and draw upon features of the natural world.

terms & concepts

sensorimotor stage of development:

Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget theorized that human intelligence evolves through a series of stages.

Sensorimotor, the first stage, lasts from birth to about age 2.

In this stage, intellectual development depends on sensory experiences and motor activities—children learn through grasping, touching, and manipulating objects and through sight, hearing, smell, and taste. Piaget's other stages of development in early childhood are the preoperational stage (from about 2 to 7 years old), in which children acquire the ability to represent objects and events through skills such as language, symbolic play, and drawing, and the concrete stage (from about 7 to 11 years old), in which children can use logical reasoning and become aware of other people's viewpoints.

developmentally appropriate practice: This term refers to education that is based on typical development for children as well as the unique way and timetable in which each child develops. Think about

the range of ages and progression of activities shown in the program. The infants at East Tennessee State who play in paint are at a stage of development in which sensory exploration is at the fore, so allowing them to explore different textures, colors, and the feel of the paint is appropriate. At 4, Cyndi Young's daughter Georgia is at a stage where she is refining her motor skills—the arts activities help her learn how to hold and use markers and paintbrushes and how to glue—skills that will help her in school. The school-age youngsters in Daviess County are ready for more structured arts activities that teach specific skills and information—such as vocabulary and techniques—while still allowing room for personal expression.



Cyndi Young and daughter Georgia.


Segment: Origin of a Theory

In this segment, Howard Gardner, PhD, from Project Zero at Harvard University, gives an introduction to his theory of multiple intelligences. In 1983, Gardner proposed that there are at least seven different types of intelligences, whereas most school activities focus on only two, linguistic and logical-mathematical. He has since added an additional intelligence. His theory identifies a variety of ways people learn and areas in which to excel. His theory provides support for a much larger role for the arts in school, since three of his types of intelligences are related to the arts.

Think About/Discuss

- What do you think about the idea of multiple intelligences? Have you seen evidence in this program or in your own interaction with children of what Dr. Gardner is discussing?
- Do arts education and arts experiences help schools address multiple learning styles? What might be the outcome of doing so?

Do You Feel Creative?



Some parents and teachers avoid creative activities because they do not think they are creative themselves. They may fear being judged on their talent—or lack of it. But talent and creativity are not the same thing. You do not have to be an actor to lead children in role-playing or storytelling; an accomplished artist to express your ideas through clay or crayons; or a great singer or dancer to enjoy singing and moving with your children or students. Everyone has the ability to create, and we are all involved in a never-ending process of discovering our creative potential. It just takes a willingness to try new ways of doing familiar things and an openness to discovering something new about yourself and the world around you.

THE FIRST LANGUAGE

The arts have been referred to as a child's first language. How does language develop and what kinds of arts-related activities are beneficial? Here are some milestones in language development and activities that demonstrate how the arts are a form of nonverbal communication as well as supportive of emergent language and literacy. Keep in mind that each child develops at his or her own pace.

Milestones

Responds to sounds.

- Use music in play with infants (as an infant, a person's hearing ability is the best it will ever be throughout the lifetime). Play music soft, then louder. Play an instrument in one corner to have baby look for where the sound is coming from, then move the object.
- Bounce baby on your lap to a rhythm.

Responds to name.

- Sing baby's name; baby will respond to different tones used.
- Relate words to objects. For example, when you say "car," the infant/child will look at the car.
- Name objects in the environment and pictures. Point clearly to what you are naming and use descriptive phrases (such as "red chair") so the child will learn descriptive words, like colors, faster and easier because they have been related to the environment.

Understands simple, one-step directions.

- Using cards or objects, no more than two or three, ask the child to "show me red," or "show me the circle."
- Ask the child to mimic your simple movements.

Speaks in one or two word phrases; can name objects.

- Encourage the child to use descriptive words so he or she is building longer sentences.
- Have the child give commands, for movements, as an example.

Begins to build vocabulary.

- Continue describing environment and pictures.
- When singing a song with new words, make sure to name the words separately from the song and define them for the child.

Repeats words or short phrases over and over.

- Use songs to encourage this; have the child sing along.

Uses prepositions—in, on, under, etc.

- Reinforce this by looking at and describing pictures or describing how you are moving your own body or other objects. For example, "I am walking on the sidewalk," "Look, here's your book under the blanket."

Begins using more words in a sentence.

- Repeat the phrases used by the child so he or she can hear his or her own statements.
- Sing songs that include words in the child's vocabulary as well as songs that build on that base.
- Have the child describe pictures and environments to you. Write these down as the child dictates them to you, so the child will see aspects of print such as writing from left to right.

Speaks in language that is intelligible to most people. Uses pronouns—I, you, me—correctly.

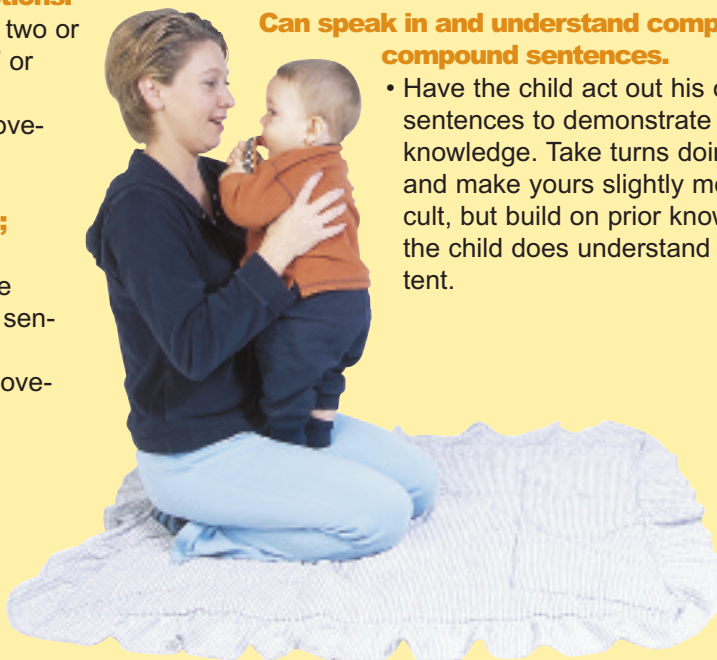
- Have the child use figures to act out stories and demonstrate this knowledge.

Begins to understand and use concepts/description in language.

- Continue asking the child to describe pictures and/or environment and record what the child dictates.

Can speak in and understand complex and compound sentences.

- Have the child act out his or her sentences to demonstrate this knowledge. Take turns doing this and make yours slightly more difficult, but build on prior knowledge so the child does understand the content.





Parents and children enjoy books and music together in the Baby Artsplay class.

FIND OUT MORE

- Visit the Art to Heart web site www.ket.org/arttoheart for more information about the people, places, and topics in this program.
- Rebecca Isbell, Director of the Center of Excellence in Early Childhood Learning and Development at East Tennessee State University, is one of the experts interviewed in this program. Her book *Creativity and the Arts with Young Children* focuses on the use of art, music, drama, and movement in programs for young children. (Delmar/Thompson Publisher, 2003. 2nd Edition at press.) Find more information about this book and others by Isbell, along with suggested activities, at her web site www.drisbell.com.
- Find out more about the multiple intelligences theory at Howard Gardner's web site www.howardgardner.com.
- Find out more about brain development at www.zerotothree.org.
- Find out more about the arts and early childhood in the Arts Education section of the Americans for the Arts web site www.americansforthearts.org.



In the classroom

Plan a developmentally appropriate arts activity for your students. Try an idea shown in the program such as playing in paint for infants or fingerpainting for older children. Or read a story and sing songs or play movement games that go along with it.

At home

Plan an outing to a local museum. Call in advance to see what kinds of special activities are available for families and young children.