

ARTS TOGETHER MULTI-ARTS PRESCHOOL CURRICULUM

INTRODUCTION

“Art develops creative thinking; provides a means of communication and self-expression; serves as an emotional release; strengthens the self-concept and confidence; increases self-understanding; heightens aesthetic awareness and sensitivity; enhances the ability to visualize; provides problem solving/decision making opportunities; develops appreciation for the individuality of others; leads to the integration of the individual; serves as a balance to the classroom activities; aids physical coordination; develops work habits and a sense of responsibility; aids the adult in understanding the child; generates JOY.” – Peggy Davison Jenkins, Art for the Fun of It

Arts Together is a community arts school known for its unique teaching philosophy that emphasizes personal creativity and expression. The development of the Multi-Arts Preschool grew out of a desire to create a safe and nurturing educational environment where children could grow and prepare for kindergarten through an exploration of the arts, thus providing a place to develop self-awareness and a strong foundation for learning.

In this arts-based environment, children learn to be confident in their abilities; explore and discover through play; ask questions and show interest in different topics; pay attention for a period of time; express themselves creatively through art, music, dance/movement and drama and persist with tasks through encouragement. They make gains in language and literacy development, are introduced to science and math, progress in social/emotional development and increase their fine and gross motor skills.

Students practice transitions as they move to different classes throughout their preschool day. They study art, drama, music, dance and movement, as well as exploring ideas and concepts in the school’s learning lab. Monthly themes, such as “My Learning Tool Box”, “The Animal Kingdom” and “As Your Garden Grows”, create a school-wide focus for programming in these individual classes. The themes also create opportunities for increasing students’ general knowledge about the world around them.

The goals of the Multi-Arts Preschool are to develop in our students positive self-esteem, new skills and a love of learning. We emphasize creativity and the idea that the process is more important than the product. Children are encouraged to develop at their own pace and develop their own creative voice. We appreciate that every child is unique, that children have different learning styles and that their rate of learning varies. We believe that young children learn best through hands-on experiences and our curriculum provides a broad range of activities that encourage each student to find their own paths to success in learning new skills and concepts.

MULTI-ARTS PRESCHOOL CLASSES

Art

Children work with a wide range of art materials often enough that they become confident using them to express feelings and to communicate experiences. They have an art experience that is fun and exploratory, with the emphasis on the creative process not the end project (product). The instructor provides a balance between providing students with an end result in mind and letting them determine their own outcomes. Every art project - cutting, gluing, painting, drawing, and printing - strengthens and improves the fine motor skills needed for the writing when they are ready.

Creative Dramatics and Music

These classes incorporate fantasy play, dress-up, role-playing, storytelling, emotion recognition and control. Learning rhymes, listening to then acting out stories and other activities are first steps for our students on the road towards reading and elementary school.

Children experience many means of self-expression in music class through singing, playing instruments, listening and moving to music. Children build confidence as they are invited to develop a sense of rhythm, auditory discrimination and fine motor skills through the playing of instruments and a sense of pride in their own singing voice. We express feelings, use our imaginations, problem solve, and celebrate diversity through the songs we sing, hear, play, move to and compose in a cooperative atmosphere of play.

Dance/Movement

Dance is a form of expression, as well as an important tool for physical development. In our preschool, children have the opportunity to dance in a creative, nurturing and encouraging environment where we combine skill development with exploration and improvisation. Children explore different ways to move their bodies through space usually inspired by specific images and the monthly preschool themes. They learn sequencing and how to follow directions through movement repetition, working through a series of movements and by making up and practicing their own dances. Creative dance is a way for children to express feelings, cooperate, accept and value individual differences and increase self-esteem. They develop body-awareness, gross motor skills, sensitivity to music and rhythm and an understanding of spatial relations and non-verbal expression.

Learning Lab

Learning Lab is a class that incorporates many aspects of the Arts Together preschool program. Children sound out words and letters, count and measure, and explore the senses, colors, textures and shapes. Children enjoy getting their hands in dough, making edible projects and learning simple science in the classroom. Cooking is fun and educational, as it provides many opportunities for math and science. Learning Lab's goal is to include portions of art, drama, music and movement against a more literary and scientific backdrop.

AN EXAMPLE OF A MONTH IN THE LIFE OF A MULTI-ARTS PRESCHOOLER

Monthly Theme: The Great Outdoors

In Art Class

Students begin the month by becoming birds that take flight around the art room, collecting materials for nest building to keep their eggs safe and warm. The instructor reads *The Rainbow Crow* as inspiration for creating cut-out birds. The students draw then cut-out basic body parts – a triangle (tail) from a square, an oval (body) from a rectangle, a circle (head) from a square and wings from a folded rectangle. The students add tissue paper rainbow feathers to finish their creations. Parents are encouraged to ask their children about *The Rainbow Crow* by asking questions such as “Why are crows black?” and “Why can crows only caw instead of sing?”

In Drama and Music Class

Students act out stories, as well as learn about spring. They make felt boards and cut out frogs, logs and a pond for the song “Five Green and Speckled Frogs”. When the students take their felt boards home, parents are encouraged to have their children sing and act out the song for them. Students begin learning how to play the xylophone with each child responsible for a different note. When a student's note is called out, they play that note with a mallet. By the end of the month, students are playing “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” and “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” as a group.

In Dance and Movement Class

In the dance studio, the sun shines and rain comes down on students, as they become little “seed” dancers who slowly start to grow. After flowering as dandelions, they turn into dandelion seeds that the wind blows high and low around the garden, so they can practice dancing through levels of space (low, middle and high). When the wind rests, so do these dandelion seeds as they find new places to grow on the floor. Students also talk about caterpillars, butterflies and bees. As caterpillars, they crawl, roll and wriggle around looking for food and then build a cocoon from which they emerge as butterflies that dance and fly all around the room.

In Learning Lab

Students discuss and observe the parts of a plant from root to flower and draw seeds in their garden environments. They plant sunflower seeds in the school garden and illustrate the different parts of a plant. They also create the layers of the Earth on a large, foam Earth.