**IMPORTANCE OF ART IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULUM**

Art plays a crucial part in early childhood education for several reasons, benefiting children's development in multiple ways. Integrating art into early childhood curricula is not only about fostering creativity but also about supporting holistic growth across cognitive, social, emotional, and motor skills. Here's why art is so important in early childhood education:

1. Cognitive Development

Cognitive development: Art activities can enhance cognitive skills for example critical thinking, problem solving and spatial reasoning. They encourage children to explore, experiment, and make decisions--contributing to their overall cognitive development

- Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking: Creating art encourages children to make decisions, solve problems, and think critically. They may have to figure out how to mix colors, how to assemble pieces, or how to use materials in a way that works.

- Symbolic Thinking: Art helps children understand and engage with symbolic representations. When they draw a picture of a house or a family, they begin to understand the power of symbols to represent real-world objects, which is essential for literacy and numeracy development later on.

- Language Skills: Talking about art—describing colors, shapes, and textures—can significantly enhance vocabulary and language development. It also promotes storytelling, as children may narrate what they are creating or explain their artwork to others.

2. Emotional Development

Children can use art as a medium to convey feelings, thoughts, and experiences that might be challenging to articulate verbally. This emotional outlet not only aids in developing emotional intelligence but also provides healthy means of coping with stress or uncertainties.

- Self-Expression: Art provides children with a powerful tool to express feelings and emotions that they might not yet have the words for. Whether through colors, shapes, or imagery, art becomes a means of processing and communicating emotions.

- Building Confidence: Completing an art project, even something simple, helps build a child’s confidence. When children see their creations valued, they feel a sense of accomplishment and pride, boosting their self-esteem.

3. Motor Skills Development.

Through activities like drawing painting and music, children develop problem solving skills as they experiment with different techniques and skills. What's more, engaging in creative expression stimulates memory as children recall and recreate experiences through their artwork

- Fine Motor Skills: Activities like drawing, cutting, pasting, and painting develop fine motor skills, which are important for tasks such as writing and self-care (e.g., dressing, using utensils). These activities strengthen the small muscles in the hands and fingers.

- Hand-Eye Coordination: Creating art requires children to focus on both their hands and their eyes, improving their coordination. Whether drawing a picture, painting a canvas, or molding clay, children learn to control their movements with precision.

4. Social Development

During the middle childhood years, children are becoming more interested in their relationships with their peers and in their own place in the world. The art helps them to figure out who they are by exposing them to other cultures, new ways of thinking, of expressing themselves and of communicating with others.

- Collaboration: Art can be a group activity, encouraging children to work together. Sharing materials, ideas, and space promotes teamwork, communication, and respect for others' ideas and work.

- Cultural Awareness: Through exploring different art forms (such as learning about different cultural art traditions or using various techniques), children can gain a broader understanding of the world and diverse perspectives, fostering inclusivity and empathy.

5. Creativity and Imagination.

Children learn more through arts and creativity by engaging them in various activities. As a result, they expand their abilities and skills in every aspect of their development. Children develop social, cognitive, physical, and emotional skills through art

- Fostering Creativity: Art nurtures imagination, a key component of creativity. Children who engage in open-ended art activities have the opportunity to think outside the box, explore new ideas, and experiment with different ways of doing things.

- Exploring Ideas: Through art, children can explore abstract concepts like time, space, and relationships. For example, they may create drawings that express how they see their families or how they imagine the future, encouraging them to think beyond the present and engage in more complex cognitive processes.

6. Enhanced Learning across Subjects

Through activities like drawing, painting and music, children develop problem solving skills as they experiment with various techniques. What's more, engaging in creative expression stimulates memory as children recall and recreate experiences through their artwork

- Integrated Learning: Art can be used to reinforce concepts in other areas of the curriculum, such as science (e.g., drawing plants or animals), math (e.g., exploring shapes and symmetry), and literacy (e.g., illustrating stories or characters). Art activities integrate learning in a way that appeals to diverse learning styles and multiple intelligences.

- Engagement and Motivation: Art engages children in a fun and interactive way, making learning more enjoyable. When art is part of the curriculum, children are often more motivated to participate in academic activities.

7. Building Focus and Patience

Taught to never give up and to keep working on their craft. It also through art, students learn perseverance and patience as they are promotes emotional intelligence and self-expression, as children learn to process and express their emotions in healthy ways

- Concentration: Many art activities require children to focus on a task for extended periods. Whether they’re painting a picture or building a sculpture, children learn to concentrate and pay attention to detail.

- Patience and Perseverance: Art involves trial and error, and children learn the value of persistence. When they face challenges, such as when a piece doesn't turn out as planned, they develop resilience and the ability to keep working until they’re satisfied with their creation.

8. Sensory Development

Art helps children to develop a sense of their own individuality, a sense of self respect and appreciation for others work. As children use scissors to cut, fingers to finger paint, or weave yarn with fingers, they are improving control of the small muscles in their hands

- Stimulating the Senses: Art encourages children to explore different materials, textures, colors, and sounds. This multi-sensory experience supports sensory development and can help children better understand and interact with the world around them.

In conclusion, incorporating art into early childhood education is essential not only for the development of creativity and artistic skills but also for the broader cognitive, emotional, and social growth of children. By engaging in art, children learn to express themselves, solve problems, develop fine motor skills, and interact with others, all of which lay a strong foundation for lifelong learning and development. Ultimately, art in the early childhood curriculum contributes to the development of well-rounded, curious, and resilient individuals.

References

 Parks and recreation, 33(5), 95-98.

**Vygotsky Perspectives.**