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Drawing

Claire used colored pencils to draw a picture of two people dressed in fancy clothes. She identified the two as Barry and Kate, who had recently gotten married. Claire had attended the wedding just two weeks before. This was the first entry into Claire's kindergarten writing journal.



Stephen chose to work in the art area several times a day. One day he selected the markers and began to create an elaborate representational drawing, which he described in great detail to his teacher. He told her the house was his grandma's house, and some people broke her roof. The water around the house was a flood. Later, the teacher contacted Stephen's mother to confirm the accuracy of his descriptions. Although none of the events Stephen described in his artwork and story had actually occurred, his mother told the teacher that at home Stephen expressed concern about monsters and wanted to be near her more often than usual.



Drawing implements provide opportunities for children to record their thoughts, ideas, and feelings, either in conjunction with writing or as the primary vehicle for communication. Children progress through stages in the development of drawing, just as they do in writing. Early childhood classrooms abound with opportunities for children to draw. The art area may contain one or more drawing implements, such as crayons, markers, and colored pencils. In addition, the focus of the special activity of the day may be the use of drawing implements, such as watercolor pencils or pastel chalk.

Teachers' Questions

What art activities fall under the drawing category?

Art activities that introduce children to a variety of drawing tools, used in combination with different types of paper, are considered drawing activities. Children may create scribbles, lines, designs,

figures, or pictures with a pencil or other drawing implement, depending on their interest and stage of development. A wide variety of materials are available to encourage children in the exploration of drawing.

What stages do children pass through as they learn to draw?

There are two broad stages of artistic development related to drawing: scribbling and representation. Children progress through the drawing stages in a predictable manner, but at different rates depending on the individual child, just as they pass through writing stages at varying rates. Knowledge of children's stages of development in art provides important information for teachers as they plan appropriate drawing activities for the classroom. See chapter 1 for more complete information about the artistic development of young children and a chart of the drawing stages.

Why is it important to include opportunities for children to draw in early childhood classrooms?

Drawing provides a developmentally appropriate forum for young children to express themselves. Parents and educators often associate the child's first vocalizations with attempts to communicate. Drawing, in the form of scribbles, is the first permanent record that children produce as they progress towards written communication. As such, scribbles are precursors not only to representational drawings, but also to conventional writing.¹ Drawing allows children to express thoughts, ideas, and feelings through art.

Drawing activities also encourage fine-motor development. As children hold and manipulate a variety of drawing implements, they increase their muscle strength and coordination. Gradually, children develop a more mature hand grasp. The early fist grip evolves into a two-finger grasp and eventually a standard pincer grip. With increased finger strength, children are able to apply more pressure when they draw. The faint, wobbly lines of toddlers or young preschoolers develop into firm, controlled marks.

What are some goals for drawing activities?

Goals for drawing activities relate to the stages of artistic development. Drawing activities provide opportunities for children to progress through the drawing stages, from scribbling to representational. Some goals are related to drawing in general, while others are best suited to a particular activity. Examples of specific goals include the following:

- ▲ experimenting with blending colors (chalk)
- ▲ exploring the effects of water on a medium (chalk and water)

- ▲ creating illustrations to accompany literacy activities
- ▲ adding detail to drawings (colored pencils)

Do coloring books or similar activities aid in the development of children's drawing ability?

No. Most early childhood educators believe that coloring books hinder children's drawing ability and stifle creativity. Since coloring books supply children with pictures that are already drawn, there is no opportunity for children to experiment with drawing. While it might be argued that learning to color in the lines helps children develop fine motor skills, encouraging children to draw their own forms to color produces the same result while allowing them to represent objects or ideas in their own way.

What materials are needed for drawing activities?

A variety of types of drawing tools and surfaces are needed in order for children to fully explore drawing possibilities. The most common drawing tools in early childhood classrooms are crayons, pencils, and markers. However, other implements, such as watercolor crayons, chalk, oil-based chalk, and colored pencils, should also be included in the art curriculum to provide a variety of possibilities for children to record images, designs, shapes, and forms.

Teachers should also consider a variety of surfaces for drawing activities. Many early childhood programs purchase newsprint because it is the most economical paper available. Although this paper is acceptable for initial experiences with crayons, other papers may be more satisfactory and more appropriate for specific drawing activities. Markers, chalk, and oil-based chalk are easier to control and more aesthetically pleasing when used with white drawing paper. The brilliant colors of markers are highlighted against stark white paper, but are subdued on newsprint.

Paper in many colors and sizes is readily available. Teachers can cut the paper into various shapes, such as circles or triangles, to stimulate children's interest and creativity. Paper of different textures, such as corrugated paper or sandpaper, provides an interesting challenge to children and stimulates thinking as they observe the effects of the "bumps" and "ridges" on their drawing. Paper is not the only suitable drawing surface. Cloth, cardboard, and Styrofoam provide unique yet aesthetically pleasing drawing media. Children quickly notice that their drawing tool makes an indentation in Styrofoam. This allows children with visual disabilities to feel what they draw.

Where can teachers find drawing materials?

Drawing materials can be purchased through catalogs or stores that specialize in educational supplies. Some of the same materials can also be found in discount stores. Teachers should purchase the highest-quality materials they can afford. Inexpensive crayons, markers, and colored pencils do not perform satisfactorily as children attempt to draw. Children may become frustrated and lose interest in drawing. Teachers can conserve the more costly materials through careful planning of special activities.

When drawing materials are readily available, children make ample use of them. Teachers may choose to use inexpensive or donated paper for drawing activities in the art area. Parents may contribute white fabric, corrugated paper, or cardboard for classroom use.

What drawing implements are the easiest for children to use?

Thick, unwrapped crayons that are flat on one side are the easiest drawing tools for young children. Thick crayons are easy for young children to grasp and do not break as readily as thin crayons. Removal of the paper wrapping allows children to use the flat side of the crayon as well as the point. This provides opportunities for the exploration of both the width of various strokes and shading. Crayons that are flat on one side will not roll off the table. This eliminates a source of frustration for children.

How do teachers incorporate drawing activities into the classroom?

Teachers can plan drawing activities for two areas of the classroom: in the art area or as a special activity. Some standard drawing materials, such as crayons, markers, or colored pencils, may be available each day in the art area. For more complete information about the centers, see chapter 2. Teachers can also highlight drawing activities as special activities on a regular basis.

How can teachers design special activity areas to highlight drawing activities?

Teachers often designate one table near the art area, but separate from it, as the special activity area. Teachers can use this table to present drawing activities in an organized and aesthetically pleasing manner. The special activity table typically seats three to four children at one time, which allows the teacher to focus on individual children as they experiment with new materials. The teacher often displays duplicate sets of materials for each child at the table, which helps eliminate management issues. The paper for the activity can be placed in individual trays, one for each place at the

special activity table, and the drawing implements can be displayed in cups, attractively covered cans, or small trays. Additional materials should be stored nearby for easy access by the teacher or the children. While older or more-experienced children may sometimes share a set of drawing materials, whenever possible each child should have access to a complete set of the drawing implements. Suggestions for how to display the materials can be found with each activity in this chapter.

What are the advantages of planning drawing activities as special activities?

Special activities allow teachers to introduce new materials, establish guidelines for their use, and monitor children's explorations of drawing materials that are too expensive or too messy to include in the art area. By introducing new activities first as a special activity, teachers can encourage children to experiment with them before they are placed in the art area. For example, the teacher of a group of young preschool children might plan a special activity using only three colors of markers and construction paper. Goals for this activity might be to introduce the markers and assist children with removing and replacing the caps. The teacher may also want to establish guidelines, such as using markers only on paper, and redirect children if they are pounding the tip, which will eventually damage the point. Later, the teacher could include markers in the art area.

How do teachers decide when to introduce specific drawing implements?

Teachers introduce drawing tools, such as markers and colored pencils, based on the ages and experiences of the group. Young children may need many opportunities to explore crayons before other drawing implements are introduced. As other drawing materials are added to the curriculum, children continue to benefit from drawing and creating with familiar drawing tools such as crayons. They experiment with new ways to use the materials and solidify newly acquired fine motor skills. Teachers can observe children as they use drawing materials to determine when to introduce new activities.

What are some of the problems or limitations children may encounter with materials such as markers or colored pencils?

Some children may experience difficulty manipulating markers and colored pencils, as well as creating desired effects as they draw. Younger, less-experienced children may not be able to remove and replace the caps on markers. Children have little control over the width of the lines markers produce and are unable to make lighter

marks or contrasting shades with them. Tall, thin colored pencils may be more difficult to manage for children who have not yet developed a mature pencil grasp. The pencils produce fainter marks than crayons or markers, which may be frustrating for some children.

What can teachers do to eliminate problems associated with markers and colored pencils?

Teachers can introduce these tools in a sequential and organized manner. Teachers may wish to reduce the number of markers children initially use in a special activity. Teachers can imbed the tops of a red, yellow, and blue marker in a small amount of plaster of paris set inside a 3-inch disposable pie pan. Children can easily reseal a marker by pushing it into the stable cap. A set of three markers per child encourages each child to explore the properties of the markers rather than focusing on removing the lids. Sets of thicker, 5-inch-tall colored pencils can be purchased for use with young children.

How often should drawing activities be available for children?

Drawing implements are typically available at all times in the art area and may be planned as a special activity several times each month. Teachers can use these suggestions as guidelines, but should also observe the needs and interests of the group. Children may frequently engage in drawing activities in the art area, and therefore need fewer planned special activities that focus on drawing. On the other hand, if children spend very little time drawing with the materials in the art area, the teacher may want to plan special drawing activities more often. Special drawing materials may attract children and subsequently encourage more explorations of drawing materials at the art area.

What pitfalls should teachers avoid when commenting on children's drawings?

Teachers should avoid making judgmental comments, even when they are positive. Evaluative comments may inadvertently hinder the creative process and limit opportunities for dialogue about the artistic process. For example, adults often respond with perfunctory remarks, such as "That's nice," or "It's pretty," when children show them their artwork. While these comments are meant to be encouraging, children quickly realize that they are insincere. Not all artwork, including children's art, is meant to be pretty, and children do not view all of their endeavors as equally successful.

Teachers should also avoid questions that focus on representation. "What is it?" is a frequent response to children's artwork. This

is inappropriate in several regards. First, many young children have not yet reached the stage of representational drawing, so the question is not developmentally appropriate. Second, not all art is representational, so even after children have reached the stage of representational drawing, they may choose to express themselves in a nonrepresentational style. Perhaps most importantly, when children are trying to draw a specific object, and someone asks them what it is, they may become very discouraged, avoid art, or regress in their drawing endeavors.

Sometimes teachers talk too much! Children may not want to talk about their artwork or listen to comments about it. Art is a means of expression in and of itself, and children may not always feel the need or desire to have it translated into words.

What are the best ways to respond to children's drawings?

Teachers can comment on the process of drawing, as well as the artistic elements. In many cases, teachers may act as observers and say nothing. Children benefit from the observations teachers make about artistic elements in drawings, such as color, shape, form, pattern, and symmetry. These comments supply children with the language associated with art and help draw attention to artistic elements in their drawings. Comments about the process of drawing help children focus on techniques, rather than the success of the attempt. They also help children form physical knowledge relationships related to the use of art materials. For example, the teacher might comment on whether a child used the whole arm or just the movement of the fingers to create a specific line or shape. Focusing on the process is especially helpful for children who are critical of their own drawing or who make comparisons to the drawings of other children.

How can teachers coordinate literacy experiences with drawing activities?

Teachers can plan specific drawing activities to encourage children to focus on written communication. Many teachers already record children's dictations and encourage children to write in all areas of the classroom. Some drawing activities are excellent vehicles for reading and writing experiences. For example, a group of children may demonstrate high interest in a book such as *Quick as a Cricket*, by Audrey Wood (Singapore: Child's Play, 1982). This book uses animal analogies to describe feelings. "I'm as quick as a cricket" and "I'm as quiet as a mouse," are examples from the book. Teachers might capitalize on interest in this book by creating a class book about feelings. Children are typically eager to contribute to this endeavor. The teacher can use story paper, which

has a space for drawing at the top and a lined section below, for recording the children's responses. In the lined section, the teacher could preprint the pattern from the book, "I'm as _____ as a _____," for each child to fill in. Children at both the scribbling and representational stages can participate in the activity. Young children may describe the scribbles they make, while older children may want to write the responses themselves.

How can teachers assess children's developmental progress in drawing?

Many teachers save samples or make photocopies of children's drawings to include in a portfolio or scrapbook of each child's work.

These work samples document children's progression through drawing stages as well as their creations with art media and explorations of new drawing materials. Teachers can document the art process through photographs of children creating with art materials and include comments that children make about their actions, ideas, and discoveries. Teachers may also keep anecdotal records of children's use of drawing materials.

ENDNOTES

1. Marjorie V. Fields, "Talking and Writing: Explaining the Whole Language Approach to Parents." *The Reading Teacher*, May 1988.

Drawing Activities



3.8 Crayon Melting



Description

This activity combines art with science exploration as children use crayons to draw on aluminum foil placed on top of a warming tray. As the crayons melt, they slide across the surface and produce brilliant colors. Although the warming tray does not get extremely hot on the surface, teachers must carefully supervise this activity. Teachers may want to use a variety of surfaces over a period of a few days to allow children to compare the results.

Helpful Hints

Create crayons on a stick to elevate children's hands high above the warming tray. Heat an oven to 250 degrees and turn it off. Place crayon shavings, about ½-inch deep, in muffin tins and melt in the oven. Insert a craft stick into the blob before it completely solidifies.

Art Experiences

- ▲ exploring the physical properties of crayons when heat is applied
- ▲ observing crayons as they change from a solid to a liquid state
- ▲ creating lines with a more fluid medium
- ▲ comparing the effects of drawing with crayons on a heated surface to drawing on paper at room temperature
- ▲ expressing creativity with an unusual medium

Materials

- ▲ one or more warming trays (depending on the number of adults to supervise)
- ▲ aluminum foil, cut to the size of the warming tray
- ▲ selection of large crayons, with the paper removed
- ▲ pot holder or child's glove, for protection from the heat (optional)

Child's Level

This unusual activity is appropriate for older preschool and kindergarten children. Younger preschool children may not be able to withhold the impulse to lean on the warming tray. Children need many drawing experiences with crayons before teachers introduce this activity.

What to Look For

Children will experiment with the crayons on the warming tray and observe the results.

Some children may comment on the changes in the crayons as they melt and later return to a solid state.

Some children will create lines, shapes, and designs with the crayons.

Some children will hold the crayon in one place to observe the melting process.

Some children will lay the crayons on the foil and watch them turn into puddles.

Modifications

Substitute waxed paper, colored cellophane, or clear cellophane for the aluminum foil.

Substitute colored foil for the aluminum foil.

Vary the colors of crayons in the activity.

Sprinkle glitter onto the melted crayon drawings.

Comments & Questions to Extend Thinking

What is happening to the crayon?

How does it feel when you move the crayon across the tray?

Look where that red line crosses the yellow line. It turned to orange.

Look how quickly the crayon got hard again after we took it off the tray.

3.9

Multiple Lines

Crayons, Markers, & Colored Pencils



Description

This activity introduces the possibility of creating more than one line with a single movement of the hand. It is an outgrowth of observations made of children who sometimes grasp several markers or crayons in one hand and draw with them. Teachers can provide this experience for all children. Several crayons, markers, or colored pencils are bundled together with a thick rubber band. This activity often encourages children to verbalize descriptions of their multiline drawings. They may be so curious that they repeat this activity many times!

Helpful Hints

If too many implements are bundled together, children may remove some from the center.

Masking tape cannot be used to bundle more than two or three implements together.

Art Experiences

- ▲ experimenting with creating more than one line at a time
- ▲ encouraging verbal communication about art
- ▲ creating relationships about the position of the markers or crayons in the bundle and the location of the lines on the paper
- ▲ stimulating renewed interest in drawing activities

Materials

- ▲ white construction paper, 9 by 12 inches
- ▲ 4 “bundles,” each with 2 or more crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- ▲ thick rubber bands or masking tape, to bundle together the crayons, markers, or colored pencils

Child's Level

This activity is most appropriate for older preschool and kindergarten children. Younger children have not yet fully explored drawing with a single implement and don't understand where the extra lines come from. Older children are fascinated by the creation of duplicate lines, shapes, and designs with a single stroke of their hand and arm.

What to Look For

Some children will explore the unusual drawing tool at the scribbling stage, even if they have progressed to the representation stage when using a single crayon or marker.

Some children will create repeated lines and loops on the paper. A few children may be unhappy with the results of the drawing and ask for a single crayon, marker, or colored pencil.

Modifications

Change the paper to 12- by 18-inch white construction paper. Vary the color selection in the bundle of crayons, markers, or colored pencils.

Change the quantity of drawing implements in the bundle. Plan this activity for the easel, and use 18- by 24-inch paper.

Comments & Questions to Extend Thinking

How did you make three lines at once?

How can you make the blue line come out on top?

I see three outlines of this person. It looks like the person is moving.

3.11 Embossing on Foil



Description

Children can use a soft-point pencil as a drawing tool on aluminum or other foil. The lead pencil marks do not show on the foil, but slight depressions are left behind. This is similar to the art of embossing paper, which uses a blunt metal tool.

Helpful Hints

Large beginner pencils work well for this activity.

Place a paper towel under the foil. It allows the pencil to create a deeper indentation.

Art Experiences

- ▲ drawing by creating an indentation rather than by leaving a color impression
- ▲ using a common writing tool with a new medium
- ▲ comparing drawing to embossing

Materials

- ▲ 4 trays
- ▲ aluminum foil, cut to approximately 9 by 12 inches
- ▲ soft lead pencils without a sharp point

Child's Level

This activity is most appropriate for older preschool and kindergarten children. While it uses a familiar pencil as a tool for drawing, it is not well-suited to very young children who may have difficulty exerting sufficient pressure on the pencil to create an indentation.

What to Look For

Children will experiment with moving the pencil over the foil and observe the results.

Some children may comment on the depressions the pencil makes in the foil.

Some children will create lines, shapes, and designs with the pencil.

Some children will not be able to manipulate the pencil successfully. They may press too hard, and make holes in the foil, or not press hard enough, and therefore not create an impression.

Modifications

Provide other types of foil for children to draw on, such as foil wrapping paper.

Use Styrofoam plates as a drawing surface for embossing.

Comments & Questions to Extend Thinking

Can you feel the lines you drew?

What does it look like on the other side of your foil?

I can see your drawing, even though there's no color.

3.13 Ice Cube Drawings



Description

For this activity, children use colored ice cubes as drawing tools. The activity is an outgrowth of discoveries that children made while exploring an ice project in their class. In order to understand how to create ice, which was the children's goal, they experimented with both clear and colored ice cubes. Children quickly began using the ice cubes as drawing tools. They were fascinated with the way the ice melted as they moved the ice cubes across the paper and eagerly described the lovely pastel lines left behind.

Helpful Hints

Store the ice cubes in a cooler so that they don't all melt while children are waiting for a turn.

Art Experiences

- ▲ drawing with a fluid medium
- ▲ combining colors to create new colors
- ▲ creating with an unusual material
- ▲ observing changes in materials

Materials

- ▲ colored ice cubes, made in plastic freezer pop molds by adding a drop of red, yellow, or blue food coloring to the water before freezing it
- ▲ white construction paper, 9 by 12 inches
- ▲ 4 trays, to hold the paper
- ▲ smocks

Child's Level

This activity is most appropriate for older preschool and kindergarten children, who may use the materials to create a specific result and are less bothered by the coldness of the ice cubes.

What to Look For

Children will move the ice across the paper and observe the results.

Some children will draw specific lines or shapes with the ice cubes.

Children will experiment with mixing colors as the ice cubes melt. Some children will attempt to suck on the ice and may need redirection.

Modifications

Emphasize narrow lines by switching to smaller ice cubes.

Use colored ice cubes to create a group mural.

Make colored ice in freezer pop molds for use at the easel.

Comments & Questions to Extend Thinking

What is happening to the ice?

Are these colored lines on your paper made of ice?

Sjaya says she drew her name with ice.

I see purple on your paper, but I don't see a purple ice cube.

Where did the purple come from?