DEVELOPING ARTISTIC AWARENESS IN YOUNG CHILDREN

by

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Abstract

THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING ARTISTIC AWARENESS IN YOUNG CHILDREN

I have designed a program for young children, ages 2 to 10, that integrates music, movement, drama, and children's literature. I teach this program in my own studio. This study looks at the beginnings of artistic awareness from the viewpoints of the people directly involved in the program: the parents, the students, and the teacher. The study determines that the following conditions are necessary for the development of artistic awareness in young children: an environment that includes enriched experiences that are developmentally appropriate; activities that match the children's interests; encouragement, respect and understanding that cultivates a positive self-concept; and positive parental involvement.
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THERE WAS A CHILD WENT FORTH
There was a child went forth every day;
And the first object he looked upon, that object he became.
And that object became part of him for the day, or a certain part of the day, or for many years, or stretching cycles of years:
The early lilacs became part of this child....
And the apple-trees covered with blossoms, and the fruit afterward, and wood-berries, and the commonest weeds by the road;
And the schoolmistress that passed on her way to the school....
The blow, the quick loud word, the tight bargain, the crafty lure,
The family usages, the language, the company, the furniture—the yearning and swelling heart....
The doubts of day-time and the doubts of night-time—the curious whether and how,
Whether that which appears is so, or is it all flashes and specks?
Men and women crowding fast in the streets—if they are not flashes and specks, what are they?
These became part of that child who went forth every day,
and who now goes, and will always go forth every day.

Walt Whitman
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I have designed a program for young children that integrates music, movement, drama, and children's literature. I teach this program in my own studio. The children are grouped according to age: 2 year olds, 3 and 4 year olds, and 5 and 6 year olds. There are between nine to twelve children in each group. The classes take place once a week for thirty weeks in the year from October to May. Each class lasts between thirty to forty minutes.

The program progresses developmentally. The children begin learning very basic concepts of music at the age of two and advance to more complex concepts built on familiar material as they grow older. This program prepares the children for piano lessons which they can begin when they enter grade one. The piano program involves group piano lessons which the parents attend.

Although parents do not attend the pre-piano classes unless they need to be there to settle in their two year old, they are all informed about the program. All the parents have the opportunity to view a video tape taken of other children participating in the classes that shows how the program progresses.

The following are some ideas that are representative of the philosophy on which this music program is based.

-Heredity sets the limits to the child's potential (J.P. Gilford, 1970), but motivation and attitude determine to what extent this can be reached (McVicker Hunt, 1961).

-There is a correlation between an enriched environment and the cultivation of intrinsic motivation and a positive attitude (Elkind, 1981, Bruner, 1966).

-Teaching material must be developmentally appropriate (McVicker Hunt, 1961, Weininger, 1982).

-Children should be given the opportunity to express their thoughts and ideas, and when this is accepted as valid content it can contribute to their self-confidence (Samuels, 1977).

-Extending what children already know and are interested in can enhance their excitement about learning (McVicker Hunt, 1961).

-It is important to make the most of teachable moments that might not be part of the lesson plan (Bloom, 1981, Bruner, 1966).
-Children are intrigued by imaginative situations and by creating their own stories (Nixon, 1969).

-Good listening skills are important for many reasons besides just learning an instrument (Aranoff, 1969, Nye, 1983, Cass-Beggs, 1974, O'Brien, 1983).

Providing children with enriched experiences at an early age is considered essential (Fowler, 1968, Reaney, 1927) in order for the children to grow and develop "to the full stature of which they are capable" (Maslow 1964, p.126). Children who are encouraged to experience and express themselves in activities that extend what they do naturally and expand on what they are interested in, are developing their sense of aesthetics. The current B.C. Primary Program Foundation Document (1990) states,

As young children explore and experience the world around them through the arts, they learn to respond thoughtfully and sensitively to their environment. They develop personal creativity and a sense of aesthetics. They enrich, deepen and extend their thinking and language, their learning and communicating. (p.49)

After many years of working with children and drawing my own conclusions, I was very pleased to come across articles by educators and psychologists that support my ideas. I feel that it is necessary to include a brief discussion of what goes on in these classes so that the reader may also see relationships between this program and the literature.
The Setting, the Program and the Children.

This integrated arts program parallels Bruner's idea in the way that it develops in progressive stages using the enactive, iconic and symbolic levels of learning. Children at the age of two use the same materials as the older children, but the focus is different. An example can be seen with the song "Ring around the Rosies." The two year olds are taught to listen and to fall down on the word "down" while the older children are taught to understand the rhythm, the pitches and form of the song. This piece is then one of the first pieces the children learn to play when they begin piano lessons. Most of the material that is used progresses in this same way.

When children are exposed to classical music, poetry and stories of our traditional literature, or material that has stood the test of time, it is bound to have some enduring effect on them and influence them in their later years of life. The materials that are chosen are from these areas. I feel that when children have moved to, analyzed and had fun with classical pieces of music they will become interested in playing an instrument, studying a form of dance, or at least become critical listeners and enjoy music at a later stage in their development. Deriving pleasure from listening to and participating with valuable pieces of literature will also help to cultivate their interest in literature.

The classes usually begin with sitting in a circle and singing songs, or reading from a book. We then do different
kinds of activities where each child moves in his own way. The activities are based on music or movement concepts, drama or story ideas. At the end of every class we gather together again in a circle. This format seems to work for all ages and it helps to keep every child involved.

A familiar opening song and good-bye song with puppets is used for every class, but the complexity of the lesson that is taught with these songs and puppets depends on the age group. For example, at age two the children watch and try to mimic my hand signs that correspond to the pitches of these songs, they sing along and kiss the puppets good-bye. When the children are older they understand the hand signs, the pitches and rhythms of these songs. I often surprise the older children by a change in the rhythms or pitch or words of their familiar songs, and they are able to tell me what happened.

Individual attention is an important part of class time. There are songs that sing good-bye to the children individually, songs that call attention to their names, and songs that each child sings individually for the great enjoyment of the puppet that they are singing to. In Bell Horses, for example, each child has to sing for the bell he has chosen. In every class the children have the opportunity to tell us about something they want us to sing about and we make up a song to a familiar melody. The song could be about news that the child has or about what he is
wearing. For the older children, the song is analyzed to determine either pitches or rhythms or melody.

I am constantly amazed to see how patiently the children wait for their turns. They are attentive, patient and focused while they wait. They show respect for the situation and for one another. Underlying expectations such as the above exist in most of the exercises. The children are required to follow certain conventions such as listening quietly while others are talking or singing. They are developing social skills and learning about trust and cooperation. This is very valuable for any kind of learning situation.

I rarely have any discipline problems in my classes because the children are engrossed in the activities, and they are conditioned to listening to musical and vocal cues. I only have to whisper positive reinforcements to the children that are well behaved, or play something familiar on the piano and the child that is misbehaving immediately attends.

It is very important to maximize the concentration span and attentiveness of the children, especially since some classes are made up of such young children, so there is always a smooth transition from one activity to the next. Since children tend to be more focused and less distracted in larger groups, I have about twelve children enrolled in each class.

In planning my curriculum I try to enhance what
children already know and what children already do, by how they like to do it. Play encompasses much of what children like to do, and it is through play and make believe that the students experience the music and movement concepts, drama or story ideas.

Children learn best when it is pleasurable. They will usually be totally involved and attentive when games are used for extending their understanding of a certain concept. For example, children love playing games that help them discern the differences between high and low; loud and soft; fast and slow.

Another resource for obtaining the children's undivided attention is to take cues from what the children are doing at that moment and embellish it. These are usually the most exciting moments for both the teacher and the students because everyone becomes totally absorbed. For example, one day the children came into my class and instead of sitting in their usual circle, they sat in two straight lines. Rather than reorganize them, I dispensed with my lesson plan and we spent the entire class singing and paddling down the river. There have been studies that state engaging with children in their play activities broadens their sensitivities and increases many of their skills (Dixon, 1985).

My program originated with giving the child experiences that only dealt with the musical concept. For years I would use magic to change the children into hopping frogs and
swimming frogs (staccato and legato), or whatever I needed them to be in order for them to experience the musical concept in their bodies. It would stop there. I could sense that the children wanted to continue to explore in that imaginary way, but I wasn't sure how to go about it.

One day in doing an activity about the Three Bears, I discovered that more was happening with the children than just experiencing the musical concepts.

There were so many musical and movement concepts that the children learn from the Three Bears that I never bothered to ask them about anything else. Papa bear moves slowly to the rhythm of "ta". The children march feeling big and heavy. The music is low. Mama bear skips to the rhythm of "titi". Music is in the middle range. Baby bear's music is high and very quick to the rhythm of "tiri tiri". The older children are taught how the sounds of an instrument correspond with the bears. Big instruments have low sounds, and so forth. When I finally thought to ask the children to tell me about what these bears were like, it added another dimension to hear one child say "I have fuzzy hair all over my face"! Well of course, this is what the children are experiencing besides the musical concepts, and why they wanted to continue in that imaginary way.

There is no division between music and movement and the imagery and stories that accompany that experience, and as a music teacher it is most important to maintain this
integration. In playing piano one calls up feelings or images which help to express the piece of music.

Images are so interrelated to one's senses that if you see something beautiful it might give you the feeling of serenity, while hearing a musical piece might conjure up visions of that beautiful sight. In any art form, whether dance, drama or music, the experience is more poignant when the artist is able to call upon his imagination to help express himself. At a music festival recently a child was asked to imagine how horses might gallop to the music that she played, this entirely changed the expression and performance of her piece. This might be a key to why certain artists are so much better than others even though their technique is comparable. The better ones are more in tune with their imaginations and are more able to let go and express themselves.

It is important that children have the opportunity to express what they imagine and what they feel. This will hopefully enable them to keep in touch with that area of creativity that so often gets suppressed as they grow up and attend school.

By questioning the children about what they are experiencing, they are encouraged to express what they imagine. The children actively engage in reflecting on their experiences. Questioning helps to extend the childrens' experience beyond the activity and time and space are provided for children to discuss their ideas and create
stories within the imaginary situations that are set up. In this way more thinking and reflecting is encouraged.
Piontkowski and Calfee support this idea of questioning. In the book *Attention and Cognitive Development* (N.Y. Plenum Press, 1979), it is stated that teachers' use of direct questions is positively correlated with achievement.

In one activity the children (two and three year olds) learn the concept of high and low by being caterpillars in the low music and butterflies for the high music. Along with questioning the children about the musical concepts, I encourage them to tell me about their experience, for example, what the butterflies' wings look like, and so forth.

The children as caterpillars go into a cocoon, and besides telling me the music was in the middle range, they describe their feelings of what it is like in their cocoon and what it feels like to turn into a butterfly. They each have time to tell their own story.

In another activity the children are growing flowers (gradually getting higher). They listen to a piece of classical music that they will probably study if they continue on to playing piano. I feel it is important for children to move to and experience music that they will later play. The younger children grow to the music. The older ones do the same but are expected to answer questions about the form and phrases of this piece, the rhythm names, and the rhythmic patterns. It is equally important to
extend this experience by encouraging the children to talk about what kinds of flowers they were, naming different kinds of flowers, and talking about what the flowers need in order to grow. The children love to answer these questions. They have the chance to share their images of what they look like and feel like being flowers, as well as their knowledge about flowers.

Children enjoy making up stories, and it is fascinating to see them motivated, attentive and totally involved in doing so. They so quickly become committed to a shared belief. The following is an example that happened with an activity called Bell Horses.

When the children learn Bell Horses at two years of age, they only have to turn into a horse, and listen for when the horse has to gallop away from his barn and gallop back to his barn. (Focused listening and ABA form). As they grow older, they are able to sing for the bell themselves (individual singing with hand signs), and they understand the form of the piece.

The children are conditioned to responding to the music of Bell Horses (listening skills). The same music tells them when to leave the barn and gallop away, and when to return. One day, after they had already galloped away, I surprised them by playing their familiar song in the minor key (musical variation). This intrigued the children, and they immediately engaged in creating a story about what had
happened to the horses. I have done this a number of times with different groups and had similar responses.

The mood the minor key had created could be seen in the way the children moved. Their story was about how the horses got lost on their way home from their gallop because of a sudden change of weather. They talked about their sad feelings and about what they were going to do (problem solving). When the music changed back to the major key the children responded with relief and happiness. They decided that the horses found their way back to their barn. When I asked, "How did you find your way back?," one of the children responded, "I dropped bread crumbs like Hansel and Gretel did." Another child said, "I dropped pebbles like in the story of Curious George." It was so interesting to see the children make connections to other stories with this experience.

I sometimes combine a few exercises into a story. After we fall down in the garden where we sang 'ring around the rosie', we pick up the posies, and then change into the posies that are growing in the garden. We talk about what else is in the garden and we find caterpillars and butterflies, bluebirds (a song that I use to teach musical form), hopping frogs and swimming frogs (staccato and legato) who live in the pond near by, etc. Besides all the musical concepts that we deal with, we end up sharing an experience in imagery that we have created together using everyone's contribution.
The other day I introduced the children to Saint Saens' "The Swan" from the Carnival of the Animals. We had a long talk and we made analogies about birds and clothing in this way. The children demonstrated how the swan moves and acts like he would be wearing his very best clothes, while the pigeon is always wearing grubby clothes.

The music, movement, drama and story material are springboards for the children's own creative and imaginative ideas. As an example, the children wanted to act out Humpty Dumpty. They discovered that it was a galloping rhythm, and galloped around as I played the tune on the piano. Some children chose to be the horses while the others chose to be Humpty, and they incorporated a few other nursery rhyme characters like Jack and Jill who lived nearby. The children were saddened that Humpty Dumpty falls and breaks, so they decided to change the end of the story and fix Humpty Dumpty. This in turn created other ideas as they prepared to bring Humpty back to the castle with them to meet the King.

Since many stories don't feel finished, the children run into the class ready to continue from where they left off the previous week. One such example is that of the Musical Dolls. This began as an activity for one class and lasted for ten. The children (four to six year olds) were toy dolls in a store window. They chose their instruments and went to pose in the window. These dolls have two switches, one for movement and one just for playing their
attached instrument. The concepts that I was dealing with were different kinds of rhythms and their corresponding movements. We were working on moving to a waltz or to a march, and being able to identify the difference in the music that I was playing on the piano. The first episode ended with the dolls all following me home and being stored in a closet. The next class the children all ran back into the closet ready to continue. Other episodes involved a scene from the doll's first day at the department store beginning with their arrival still in boxes; the mishaps of a novice music teacher who turned on the dolls accidentally and didn't know how to turn them off before the manager was to come; a fight among the dolls because they each wanted the others to move their way; the dolls becoming real and being pleased to move and be individuals and different from the rest; a breakfast the dolls make for their owner before informing her that they have become real.

Over the years, parents would often remark about instances that they felt were directly related to the child's experience in the class. I have collected many of these and found that the children were taking more home with them than just a solid preparation for the study of an instrument.

Therefore, this study is concerned with describing how enriched, artistic experiences affect children and how this is manifested. Observing children transfer their experiences from one activity to another, or use their
experiences in play, might give insight into the process of the development of aesthetic awareness.

More specifically this study will address the following questions:

What are the perceptions of this program from the perspective of the people directly involved in the program: the students, their parents, and the teacher?

How do these perceptions compare with respect to:

- the students' growing awareness of music, movement, drama, and literature
- their learning of listening skills, musical concepts, movement concepts
- their knowledge of books and pieces of music experienced in the program
- their ways of thinking
- their self concept
- their transfer of the experiences in the program to other areas of daily living
- their transfer of these experiences to a musical instrument or dance or other activities
- their social skills?
CHAPTER TWO
BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

My review of the background literature explores the concept that a positive attitude towards learning and intrinsic motivation are inherent in young children (Maslow, 1964, Bruner, 1966, Elkind 1981), but it is the responsibility of those in control of the child's environment to cultivate it. According to Bruner (1966), this internal push seems to be dependant on an external pull - an external supply of stimulation.

Healthy children are born with a creative potential (Steinberg 1964), that properly nurtured, will enable them to grow and develop "to the full stature of which they are capable" (Maslow 1964,p.126). Proper nurturing involves providing children at an early age with an environment that includes enriched experiences (Fowler 1968, Reaney 1927, Bloom 1964, McVicker Hunt 1961, Bruner 1966), that are developmentally appropriate (Bruner 1966, Weininger 1982, Elkind 1981), and that foster a positive self concept.

Early exposure to positive experiences along with the opportunity to develop a good self concept may well be the proper conditions needed for a child to actualize himself and become his potentialities. (Rogers,1954,p.72)

Building on what children already know (Bruner 1966, McVicker Hunt 1961, Elkind 1970, Bloom 1964) and what they like to do in areas that naturally interest them is an important aspect of proper nurturing.
In the young child we find a natural poet, a natural musician, a person who is accustomed to responding to aesthetic values by his very nature (Taylor 1964).

Children love to play, sing, move; do art work; listen to and recite nursery rhymes, poetry and stories; clap and move to different rhythms. It is these areas of the children's interests that should be cultivated.

CREATIVE POTENTIAL

The nature of children.

The mainspring of creativity appears to be man's tendency to actualize himself -- to become his potential. It exists in every individual and awaits only the proper conditions to be released and expressed (Rogers 1954 p.72).

Children have the potential to develop and excel in many areas given the proper conditions. Offering confirmation of this idea, Steinberg (1964) states that there is a growing realization that creative potential is not confined to a gifted few and determined at birth. Evidence seems to support the view that children are born with the capacity to respond perceptively and in very original ways; a creativity is built into the species and is a manifestation of an innate orientation of the organism(p.124).

If everyone is born with creative potential, what then is giftedness or talent? Gilford (1970) explains, 

there can be varying degrees of a quality possessed by different individuals; in other words, we can think not only of a few particularly gifted persons but that individuals in general possess some degree of the same degree of trait or traits (p.100).

Heredity only establishes the limits of development and we can conjecture that it is the responsibility of the
environment to cultivate it. It is the environment that governs to what extent those limits are reached (McVicker Hunt, 1961).

Maslow sees the satisfaction of sheer curiosity, sheer inquisitiveness, and the craving for understanding as forces which propel the individual towards greater knowledge and understanding. Inquiry appears to be a natural and rewarding activity. "Man is born with the need to know; the need to understand is profoundly rooted in man's biological nature" (Maslow, 1962 p.21). Bruner comments, "The will to learn is an intrinsic motive, one that finds its source and its reward in its own exercise" (Bruner, 1966, p.127). Bruner points out that the most lasting satisfactions lie in learning itself, not in extrinsic rewards.

Steinberg quotes Maslow's statement that the need to know is "what propels the individual toward growth and toward developing to the full stature of which one is capable" (1964, p.126). Steinberg uses the term "the creative attitude" for this "need to know" and says that it seems to be built into the species.

**Creativity - a characteristic of young children.**

Fromm (1959) considers the creative attitude to be characterized by the same descriptors used to describe happy and secure young children. When we consider the essential nature of these children, we see their curiosity, and open-
mindedness, their capacity for wonder and puzzlement, and their ability to be imaginative.

Rogers (1959) may as well be describing children in his definition of a creative personality. He says a creative personality can be characterized by three conditions. Firstly, the creative personality is open to experience. In other words it means a lack of rigidity and a tolerance for ambiguity, in essence the opposite of psychological defensiveness. Secondly, the source or locus of evaluation is internal. The value of the product of his or her efforts is established by the individual and not by others. And lastly, associated with the openness and lack of rigidity is the ability to play spontaneously with ideas, colours, shapes and relationships. The creative seeing of life in new ways arises from the examination of countless possibilities.

Hallman (1963) considers this ability to play spontaneously with ideas, colours, shapes and relationships as being the condition of connectedness. It is the ability to bring already existing elements into a distinctive relation to each other. He quotes Bruner who says "All forms of creativity grow out of a combinatorial activity, a placing of things in a new perspective" (1963, p.74). Hallman expands this view by stating that creativity is not merely the capacity to connect elements in a new way but to transplant these new combinations onto previously unrelated
materials. Creativity is also the capacity to regard life metaphorically, and as Carl Rogers says, to discover structure in experience instead of imposing structure on experience.

Gowan writes about Maslow's distinction between "primary" and "secondary" creativity. Primary creativity is that "which comes out of the unconscious; which is the force of new discovery", like the creativeness of children. Secondary creativity is the type of rational logical productivity demonstrated by capable, well adjusted, successful people. "True creativity depends on the integration of both primary and secondary processes in the personality" (1965, p.12).

Maslow points out that healthy creative people have a child-like quality. Creativity is seen in terms of complete character integration or lack of barriers between the conscious mind and its unconscious areas. Gowan quotes Maslow's statement that "The ability to regress in the service of the ego, retrieve material from the preconscious and return it to the world of reality is a vital aspect of creative production" (1965, p.10).

Elkind (1970) uses the terms emotions and intelligence for these same concepts. Elkind believes that the reason that young children are so responsive to learning is because there are no barriers between their emotions and their intelligence. Concepts become absorbed as part of the child's total being.
The conscious mind is traditionally associated with the left hemisphere of the brain. Here, cognition specializes in data whose significance is based on relationships that are sequential and analytical in nature. The cognitive process concerns itself with academic achievements and skill acquisition. It is a process that operates from outside inward, concerning itself primarily with external manifestations.

The unconscious areas are associated with the right side of the brain. "It is the seat of one's emotions and intuition" (Andrews 1980-1981, p.77). The affective process perceives how things exist in space, how parts go together to make up a whole, how to understand metaphors, images, and dreams and creates combinations of ideas. This process contains intrinsic forces which operate from inside outward, motivating action towards the realizations of one's own potential and allowing for personal idioms to emerge. The right hemisphere concerns itself with discovery, finding joy and satisfaction in the continuous process of searching. It is this definition of unconscious that Maslow refers to as the "primary creativity" - like the creativeness of children.

For a person to best reach his potential, the two processes -- cognitive and affective -- must be inseparable and "their extrinsic and intrinsic forces symbiotically synchronistically blended" (Andrews 1980-1981, p.80). An individual who expects to develop his creative potential
must operate on intuition as well as reason. When these two forces are integrated there seems to be an openness to subconscious thinking. Hallman (1963) says, "one must be able to relax conscious thinking and operations and inhibit logical controls" to allow for the creative process to occur.

Simon (1965) describes the creative process in four stages. The first stage deals with learning a great deal about the environment. The second stage is the incubation period. This is the stage when the subconscious mind, unhampered by conscious restrictions, puts together seemingly unrelated bits of information absorbed in the form of sensory impressions. One is not conscious of putting things together, it is the process to which the advice "sleep on it" applies.

The third stage is the illumination. This stage is often accompanied by a feeling of euphoria resulting from a "dramatic flash" of insight. This feeling is caused by the shifting of activities from the subconscious to the conscious (Simon 1965). Hallman refers to this stage as one of surprise. The excitement that results in the sudden and unexpected recognition of these novel combinations is what motivates individuals to appreciate or produce creative works. Bruner (1966) regards this effective surprise as the essence of creativity itself. The fourth stage is consolidation. This is when the conscious mind takes over
and cleans up the details and works out the implications of the solution.

Rogers (1954) gives a summary of the process of creativity in his definition. It is "the emergence in action of a novel relational product, growing out of the uniqueness of the individual, on the one hand, and the materials, events, people, or circumstances of his life on the other" (p. 71).

Simon (1965) postulates that the creative process in science and art are substantially identical. They are basically the same kind of thinking processes.

It is most important to encourage children to maintain this creativity, which is an expression of their individuality and uniqueness so they will grow to become creative and critical thinkers.

**Fostering creative potential.**

Many educators and psychologists believe that in order for a person to reach his or her fullest potential, the early years of childhood (when the "will to learn" is so strong), are critical to the future development of the individual. But this internal push seems to be dependant on an external pull: an external supply of stimulation (Bruner, 1966). It is at this young age when children's minds are so receptive to learning new material that it is imperative to take advantage of it.
Fowler (1968) argues this point most forcibly:

Accordingly, the role of early stimulation emerges as more than of fleeting interest. In no instance (where documentation exists) have I found an individual of high ability who did not experience early stimulation as a central component of his development. It is, therefore, essential not to write off the studies of "giftedness" as of no relevance to early education because it is biased evidence. The unvarying coincidence of extensive early stimulation with cognitive precocity and subsequent superior competence in adulthood suggests that stimulation is a necessary if not sufficient condition for the development of his abilities (p. 17).

Reaney (1927) feels that early experience remains the foundation for the rest of one's life and shapes the person you will be in later years. Therefore habits formed in the first years of life govern the individual's future to such an extent that happiness in life, and power as a member of the community, depend largely upon a person's training in early years.

There is no doubt that the early environment is crucial to the child's potential development but it is the quality of the environment that counts. The following section will explore the ways in which young children learn through discussion of the importance of an enriched early environment, factors which affect learning and finally modes of learning.
THE IMPORTANCE OF AN ENRICHED EARLY ENVIRONMENT

Some Theories.

The work of Bloom (1964), McVicker Hunt (1961), and Bruner (1966) have contributed significantly to the area of early learning and child development. Bloom documented that the ages between birth and four were periods of rapid growth and development for human characteristics. Bloom suggests that fifty percent of the mature capacities of intellectual, physical, social and emotional development were established before four years of age. By age eight, eighty percent of mature intelligence has been established, so variations in the environment would have less effect after this age. The greatest effect of environment would be exhibited between one and five years of age. According to Bloom, the effect of environment on the child's development during these early years was twenty to twenty-five percent.

Bloom emphasizes the importance of providing an enriched early environment for three reasons.

a. Learning theory has noted that it is easier to learn something new than change existing behaviors.

b. Since development of human characteristics was found to be sequential in nature, each characteristic was built on an earlier one.

c. Since there is such rapid growth for selected characteristics in the early years, the environment
would shape these characteristics the most during the periods of rapid change.

McVicker Hunt (1961) expands on this saying that because the most rapid growth of intellectual development takes place before eight, both enriched home environment and earlier schooling should be considered. He maintains that the greatest need for an enriched home environment, including good nutrition, is in these years of rapid growth. Those children whose environment is lacking in various enrichments may be handicapped throughout life, while children whose home enrichment is intellectually stimulating are very likely to do well in the classroom.

Bruner (1966) has stated three ways by which people translate experiences -- ways of processing and representing information from the environment. They are used in sequential stages.

a. Enactive -- A child knows many things for which there are no imagery-words; thus, we cannot teach using only picture diagrams or descriptive language. The child must be taught through action and the senses -- touching, feeling, manipulating, visually examining, using the body and muscles in rhythmic interpretations, chanting and singing.

b. Iconic -- This stage depends upon visual or other sensory organization and upon summarizing images. This is a stage of internalization: the individual can retain the image when it is no longer present -- learn
through imitating sounds, moods, movements of animals, people, machines, and plants.

c. Symbolic -- communication of thought takes place through language and other symbols to explain and interpret experiences. Certain images and words stand for an idea or object.

McVicker Hunt (1961) sees intelligence to be built on a base of motor data. When young children are exposed to concepts at the enactive stage they have a stronger foundation than if they were to begin at the symbolic stage at a later age. When children begin learning musical concepts at the age of two (in the enactive stage): through feeling it in their bodies in rhythmic interpretations, by chanting and singing, by touching, feeling and visually examining, they acquire a much deeper understanding than when they learn these same concepts sitting at the piano (at the symbolic stage). By the time these children are old enough to study the piano, they not only acquire new concepts with ease, but their efforts are rewarded by a much quicker rate of success. This in itself motivates them to continue to study.

For years, there has been evidence to support the fact that children who experienced being read to at an early age displayed good attitudes towards reading, if not early reading abilities (Durkin, 1961). Bruner explains this by saying that readiness can be taught, or at least nurtured, by the mastery of simple skills that in turn prepare the
child for more complicated ones. Unless these basic skills are mastered, later and more elaborate skills become increasingly inaccessible. In McVicker Hunt's view, none of the systems for processing information can be bypassed without a resulting detriment to intelligence.

McVicker Hunt wrote in 1961:

It is no longer unreasonable to consider that it might be feasible to discover ways to govern the encounters that children have with their environments, especially during early years of their development, to achieve a substantially faster rate of intellectual development, and a substantially higher adult level of intellectual capacity.

Children need not wait to be ready to learn. Bruner (1971) writes, "One teaches readiness or provides opportunity for its nurture; one does not simply wait for it" (p. 29).

Learning Concepts.

Children can learn many concepts if they are introduced at a suitable level. A concept is a generalized idea or understanding embodying many images and memories which have been blended into a meaningful whole.

The acquisition of concepts is viewed as a process of "seeing relationships, categorizing, discriminating and generalizing about those things a child sees, hears and feels in his environment" (Wann 1962, p. 10).

Children find their own meanings in the world around them.

Elkind (1970) agrees with Bloom, McVicker Hunt, and Bruner that mental growth is cumulative and depends on what has gone before. He adds that the attainment of concepts
will not only prepare children for furthering their knowledge in that subject alone but can be transferred to acquiring skills in other areas. For example, a child who learns to recognize patterns in musical compositions can later apply this knowledge to understanding mathematical concepts.

It is because concepts become absorbed as part of the child's total being (Elkind 1970) that expanding or elaborating on these concepts at a later date can be done with considerable ease. This gives the child confidence to approach new learning situations with a positive attitude. As with any conditional response, success is reinforcing and this positive experience seems to increase motivation (Gottfried 1983).

FACTORS WHICH AFFECT LEARNING

Appropriate Learning Experiences

Although the importance of environment cannot be underestimated, one must be selective in choosing the kind of stimulation that would best suit the child's level of development.

Elkind (1981) believes that true education is coincident with life. He says that true education is not limited to special skills or concepts and particularly not to test scores. "Much of it is spontaneous, an outgrowth of openness and curiosity" (p.67).
Bruner (1966) stresses the power of spontaneous learning because it supplies reinforcement in its own activities. He refers to this as discovery learning. It is in this kind of learning situation that the child is most attentive. What he is doing holds relevance and purpose for him because he is involved in a spontaneous, original, and creative activity which is directed from within. Concepts experienced for themselves in this discovery-exploratory environment are readily retained and used to learn higher level concepts than those learned through rote learning.

When a child is educated in a way that suits his interests and his level of development it "sticks to him" (Weininger, 1982) because it is so meaningful. Not only will it be easy for him to expand and elaborate on these concepts at a later date, but he will probably cultivate interests that will influence the rest of his life.

Positive Attitude and Motivation.

Fostering a positive attitude towards learning and maintaining the child's natural intrinsic motivation, openness to questioning and curiosity should be the educators' greatest concern.

Bruner (1966) feels that when children are exposed to worthwhile and relevant experiences their curiosity and interests are piqued and they are motivated. Bruner defines motivation as that which originates from within the individual and nurtures the desire to learn. Some of the strongest motivations are the urge toward mastery and the
satisfaction that comes from performing with skill (Read, 1980). We see these motivations in a young child as he persists in working on a fastening until he succeeds in closing it, however long it may take.

Motivation is a vital component for without it a person would never have the discipline to apply himself in the way that is necessary in order to acquire new skills. He then, would be unable to reach his potential no matter how talented he may be. So under the most conducive conditions a child who may not necessarily possess the inherited potential for certain kinds of achievements may develop the attitude towards learning that will allow him to succeed where he may not have under other circumstances. It is the environment that evens out the odds.

For a child to enjoy, value and be motivated by what he is learning, his learning experience must fit with his level of development and interest. McVicker Hunt (1961) describes this as the optimal match. The experience must be balanced. There should be sufficient novelty to interest the child and to broaden knowledge of the object, concept or event, without danger of overwhelming the child with something that cannot be grasped because of a lack of prior experience; at the same time the learning experience should not be too repetitive or it will fail to stimulate the child to learn.

To explore teachable moments in what the child naturally does would be making the best kind of optimal match. A child loves to learn more about what he already
knows. When I sing the notes of a scale and stop at the penultimate note, my class loves to be able to answer to "have I come to the end yet?" The children enjoy being able to tell me whether they are hearing a complete cadence or an incomplete cadence, or how many rests there are in the song "Hot cross buns". They know the answers to these questions even though they have never formally been taught the right answers. It is just a matter of extending and giving names to what they naturally perceive. When children are involved in these kinds of experiences, they have longer attention spans and are able to concentrate for long periods of time. Piontkowski and Calfee's (1979) review of the literature reveals teachers' use of direct questions is positively correlated with achievement.

**Consequences of Inappropriate Stimulation.**

Too much inappropriate stimulation may be as damaging as the lack of stimulation. To force a child to learn by rote learning and drill rather than by guiding sensory experiences results in premature concept formation and closed thinking (Weininger, 1982). Children are sometimes encouraged to recite the alphabet or count, repeat difficult words in answer to complex questions, in short, perform for the adults' gratification. This mere parroting of words lacks concrete reference, and according to Weininger, can impair learning (Weininger, 1982).
An example of this can be seen in the Suzuki method of instruction. Children learn by rote to play an instrument at the age of three. It is very impressive to see these tiny children perform but to be able to do so, they have spent hours listening to the same pieces over and over, and hours playing the same bar over and over again.

With this method we get a very presentable product, but the actual learning process appears to be neglected. Is it more important that children will be able to perform music at an early age or should they learn to love music and want to continue with it throughout their life? To teach young children concepts that they can relate to, and to teach them in ways that correspond to their natural behavior is a major priority. For example, rather than have children learn the concepts of music through structured piano lessons at age three, let them learn these concepts through movement, playing percussion instruments and singing.

Similarly, when very young children are taught in structured lessons how to read, the product again becomes the priority. This discussion does not deal with those children who learn to read spontaneously at a young age with little fuss or bother. Elkind (1981) writes that teaching children to read as infants and toddlers is a good example of parental pressure to have their children grow up fast, "This pressure reflects the parental need, not the child's need or inclination" (p.32). These parents are missing the point. It is not how these children read at three, but how
much they enjoy reading at fifteen, and for the rest of
their lives.

Elkind says that when a child has become so specialized
at an early age in either a sport or a performing art, other
parts of his personality may be somewhat underdeveloped. He
refers to this as premature structuring. The characters of
the children therefore become structured so early that there
is little room for further growth and differentiation of
personality.

McVicker Hunt (1961) agrees that when children are
pressured to grow up fast, important achievements are
skipped or bypassed, which can give rise to serious problems
later. The exclusive preoccupation with a single field of
interest can lead to superior performance if the child has
the native talent, but it can also lead to narrow
specialization, social and vocational maladjustment, and
personal unhappiness. The most productive people have a
variety of interests and avocations. Indeed, major
contributions are often made by individuals from outside
their own field. For example, Freud was a neurologist,
Einstein was a mathematician, and Piaget was trained as a
biologist. True innovation comes from broadened, not

Parents who love learning will create a stimulating
environment for their children which will be far more
beneficial to them than specific instruction. Parents
who fill the house with books, paintings, and music,
have interesting friends and discussions, who are
curious and ask questions provide the children with all
the intellectual stimulation they need (Elkind 1981,p.65).
The Importance of Fostering a Positive Self Concept.

Early exposure to positive experiences along with the opportunity to develop a good self concept may well be the proper conditions needed for a child to actualize himself and become his potentialities. (Rogers, 1954, p. 72)

For years, students of creative development have observed that 5-year-olds lose much of their curiosity and excitement about learning and 9-year-olds become greatly concerned about conformity to peer pressures and give up their creative activities. The early researchers in this area have assumed this was purely a developmental phenomenon. Pulsifer (1960) supports Torrance's view that this is not a natural developmental change. She feels it is because of the sharp man-made change which confronts the 5-year-old and compels him by its rules and regulations when he starts school. In his studies, Torrance found that certain classes did not display a decline in creative thinking abilities or creative behavior. This is due to the fact that these teachers established creative relationships with their pupils and gave them many opportunities to acquire information and skills in creative ways.

Parents and teachers play a critical role in fostering a child's creative potential.

There is clear evidence from the studies of McKinnon (1967) that a close relationship exists between what a person thinks and does and the image he has of himself. The basis for the fulfillment of one's potential exists in one's self concept. The following studies demonstrate this.
Combs and Snygg (1959) noted that children can only develop perceptions about themselves in terms of their experience and the treatment they receive from those responsible for their development.

Davidson and Lang (1960) found that children who perceived their teacher's feelings toward them as being favourable saw themselves positively and the more positively these pupils perceived their teacher's feelings toward them, the better was their academic achievement. Similar results were presented by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968). In their study, teachers were told that an experimental group of children actually chosen at random were "spurters." The children so designated, when compared to a control group, were found to show higher achievement at the end of the year. In reality there was no difference between the two groups at the beginning of the experiment.

It was found that measurements of self concept and ego strength of kindergarten children were more predictive of reading achievement two and a half years later than measurements of intelligence. In other words, the self concepts of kindergarten children were a more accurate indication of their potential reading skills than intelligence test scores (Wattenberg and Clifford 1964).

The first five years of life are accepted by most psychologists as the ones in which the basic framework of personality and self-conception are laid down (Coopersmith,
Since positive self concept is crucial to later achievement it is important to nurture it from an early age.

The following is a list of characteristics displayed by parents of children with high self esteem. These children:

1. had parents who reported affectionate warmth toward their children (Shwartz, 1966);
2. had parents who were notably firm, loving, demanding and understanding (Baumkind, 1967);
3. had parents who had high expectations of them, and gave them consistent support and encouragement.

These parents seemed to provide a balance between protectiveness and encouragement of autonomy in that the children were not allowed to try more than they were capable of doing. The fathers in this study were seen to take an active and supportive role in child rearing. (Coopersmith, 1967).

Parental love, manifested by warmth, supportive encouragement, consistency, realistic expectation and a balance between protectiveness and reward, rather than punishment, is more likely to result in a positive self concept.

Teachers can use many of the same techniques as parents in fostering positive self concept. Parents and teachers could also:

1. Provide experiences in which children have a noticeable effect on the environment.
2. Treat imaginative ideas with respect.
3. Provide an environment that is responsive to the child's actions.
4. Treat children's questions with respect and encourage children to find their own solutions to problems.
5. Reward children with praise which gives them a feeling of competence.
6. Show children that their ideas have value.
7. Provide children with the opportunity to investigate new areas of interest and curiosity.
9. Establish an atmosphere of trust so children are not anxious about asking questions or making mistakes.
10. Give children the feeling that they are capable and competent and their unique expression is of utmost value.

MODES OF LEARNING

Just as the most beneficial starting point for instruction is to enhance what children already know, the best resource to use is what children already do.

In the young child we find a natural poet, a natural musician, a person who is accustomed to responding to aesthetic values by his very nature (Taylor, 1964 p.36).
Children love to play, sing, move, do art work, listen to and recite nursery rhymes, poetry and stories, and clap and move to different rhythms. Although play encompasses many aspects of a child's learning and development, the following discussion will be organized into these subsections: Play, Creative Expression, Art, Music and Movement and Poetry.

I will first discuss some ways in which children like to learn. At a young age children are fascinated by binary opposites (Egan, 1986). In teaching concepts one should not only discuss what something is, but also contrast it with what it is not. In this way, the children form a solid understanding of such concepts as: high-low; fast-slow; loud-soft. Their awareness becomes more and more refined as they advance from knowing the extremes of high and low sounds to recognizing the difference between two adjacent notes.

Teaching in this way can elicit a lot of humour and the children just love it. There is a song which I use to make two year old children aware of what they listen with and where the song comes from. "We listen to music with our noses?" The children all laugh and respond "No!", after a few more questions along the same lines, they answer "our ears". Many children are convinced though, that the answer to where does the song come from is "our teeth".

Play.

Playing and learning go hand in hand.
Play is the natural avocation of childhood: As children cannot be forced to play, neither can they be taught to do so. Play is intrinsically motivated and intrinsically reinforced, a self-generating and extremely satisfying mode of behavior for the young human being. It is both as necessary to the young child as the bodily and emotional needs which sustain life itself. (Otto Weininger, 1979, p.26).

In play the child learns through exploration and open ended experiences. He attends to material that is meaningful to him and if it cannot be assimilated and integrated into what is important or useful to him, it is not likely to be retained.

At play a child is learning through peer group interaction, self selected activities, and by sensory learning. He is constantly moving, touching, listening and looking. He practises and learns physical skills and sensory discrimination and since he is constantly talking, he practises his vocabulary and concepts. At the same time he practises ways to relate to people, and learns the complicated business of human relations (Weininger, 1979).

A good self concept is crucial to the child's acquisition of knowledge. Weininger (1982) reports a longitudinal study that looked at children from a playing vs. a non-playing environment. It was found that the children from the play based program had higher self concepts. They also achieved higher in math, reading, comprehension and spelling than the children from the non-play based program.
Reed (1980) says that play brings the inner world of feeling in touch with the outer world of "shared reality". She quotes Winnicott who writes, "It is only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self". This is because when the child is playing, he is in control and it is his internal reality that is being expressed.

Creative Expression.

Creative expression through the arts, whether in language, music or dance, or visual arts is very important for the young child. Through the arts the child is expressing ideas and thoughts, as well as feelings. (S)he derives satisfaction, fulfillment and gains increased awareness in the expression of feeling. By keeping many avenues of expression open, the child is freer to grow as a person. (S)he is protected against the effects of blocking and inhibitions which result when few avenues of expression are open (Nixon, 1969).

When expression through art is blocked, the blocking limits personality growth. Creative expression can serve as a safety valve, draining off destructive feelings that might otherwise pile up to be disturbing in unrecognized ways. In providing children access to many forms of the expressive arts we help them find the satisfactions which comes from expressing themselves freely as a person, without fear and
with confidence (Read, 1976). The primary goal for children is not to train them as artists but to assist them in expressing what is theirs to express.

There have been studies that state engaging with children in their play activities broadens their sensitivities and increases many of their skills. (Dixon, 1985). Entering into the imaginary world of children encourages them to express their ideas which in turn inspires them to use language that they probably never used before in their lives. Lark-Horovitz (1973) reports that she has found some evidence for the relationship between expression in art and language. The children whose home art was creative and abundant were later rated by their schools as superior in language and vocabulary. It was as if the children's spontaneous expression in creating pictures had contributed to later expression in language.

I wonder if spontaneous expression in other art forms, for example, dance, music or drama, have similar ramifications.

Art.

There appears to be an uncanny similarity throughout history and the world in the ways that children develop in their means of artistic expression. Growing evidence supports the belief that all children progress through comparable and sequential stages of artistic development and that willful interference with this developmental process may cause emotional problems and disturbances (Nixon, 1969).
Kellog believes that the unfolding of pictorial art in the child most closely parallels that of biological phenomena. If the child is left alone to develop art, he should evolve his own individual expression of concepts found in the works of all children (Gardner, 1973).

Poetry.

Children are naturally fascinated with stories and rhyming patterns. All children derive untold pleasure from primitive repetition, chanting, and suggestions for body action which these rhymes afford. The memorable language of the Mother Goose or nursery rhyme has its appeal in rhythm, imagination, humor, surprise and nonsense (Bayless 1982, quotes Scott). According to Chukovsky (1968), the preschool child's own verse making and his irresistible attraction to poetry, his need to hear and memorize it are strong spurs in his mental growth. He writes, "Under the influence of beautiful word sequences, shifted by a pliable musical rhythm and richly melodic rhymes, the child playfully, without the least effort, strengthens his vocabulary and his sense of the structure of his native language".

Gardner (1973), writes about Burling who analyzes nursery rhymes in a variety of languages and finds that they consist of four lines, and four major evenly spaced beats on each line. The verses are marked by stressed syllables and rests occur at regular intervals.

Children from about their fourth year on become capable of learning poetic texts and it can afford them
the greatest pleasure to tattle out the verses attached to the illustration in their picture books, to sing...to learn poems. (Stern 1926, p.229)

Chukovsky (1968), verifies that Stern's findings seem to be confirmed across cultures.

The use of nursery rhymes and poetry are excellent tools in developing childrens' awareness of phrasing, rests, beats, and listening skills. This understanding of phrasing and resting can be helpful to the beginner reader.

Music and Movement.

Music and movement seem to be an essential, almost magical element in a child's life. Children all over the world have the same innate affinity towards singing similar notes and moving to rhythms. It has often been stated that all young children sing the descending minor third of the pentatonic scale. It is the sound of a child calling "Mommy". All children move at a quick pace. When the child's musical education begins with highlighting what they are already doing, the children develop a very strong foundation.

There is so much a child can learn from music and movement. Listening and attending which is fundamental to music carries over into every part of our lives. Listening is perceiving and requires thought and reasoning. One must be able to attend and be selective, focusing only on what is necessary. This takes a lot of concentration. Listening skills originate from the simple beginnings of knowing the
difference between silence and sound, to the more refined auditory discriminations, such as hearing subtle likenesses and differences of sounds, instruments and tonal qualities. Children can have lots of fun learning through playing many different kinds of listening games.

Music is made up of rhythmic patterns. Children at a very young age can discern what is the same and what is different in pieces of music. As they grow older, they can discern patterns that are more complex. When children are able to recognize patterns it speeds up their comprehension. Knowing that a piece which looks so long and foreboding is made up of so many repeated patterns, makes it much easier to learn. Rhythmic patterns also aid in memory. We store in our minds the patterns of things seen and heard, like faces, buildings, numbers, familiar footsteps. Many mnemonic devices lean heavily on rhythmic patterns for their effectiveness. For example, the natural incorporation of single notes into grouped patterns facilitates sight reading and recall. This is the same in dance, single steps grouped into patterns are recalled very easily.

Rhythm is a great source of pleasure, not only as a basic element in the arts but in our daily lives. Our everyday activities when performed with efficiency are rhythmic. All motor skills whether in work or in play are dependant on well developed rhythms. To be able to conform rhythmically is the ultimate test of motor efficiency. This in turn does wonders for ones' self image.
Rhythm and movement is an invaluable aid in learning. Memory of a rhythmic experience persists in the muscle groups long after the original motor experience is past. These memories condition the individual so that he would be able to recall them quickly whenever necessary. Muscles rehearsed well ahead of the mind enables one to think ahead without being concerned about what is happening in the body.

The self-confidence, discipline, accuracy and the quick co-ordination between the mind and the body which one acquires in the study of music and movement can be assets in many other areas of learning. Quoting Frigyes Sandor, Cass-Beggs (1974) writes,

> It has been found that the academic record of children attending the private music schools is much higher than that of children attending regular primary schools. The reason for this lies in music's power to communicate, and in the fact that it can be used to master other branches of knowledge.

Children learn so well through the use of music and movement that introductory math is now being taught using such devices as rhythmic clapping, snap and clap patterns and the book that is being used is "Mathematics Their Way" by Mary Baratta-Lorton.

**CONCLUSION.**

This chapter has set forth the notion that creative potential is inherent in every child, and the impetus for its fulfillment lies within the child's natural desire to learn, borne out of his "need to know". The child by his very nature characterizes definitions of 'the creative
attitude' and the 'creative personality'. There is no separation between his emotions and his intelligence; both his left and his right hemispheres work together. The child's capacity to respond to life has not yet been dulled or tarnished by a set of imposed verbal symbols in which it is customary to find his expression (Taylor, 1964).

It is necessary to tap this tremendous resource at an early age in order to nurture it to fruition. The environment must be sensitive to the child's stage of development and provide suitable experiences that will enhance his natural inclinations -- allow for the concepts to be built in areas that naturally interest him.

All around the world and throughout human history children derive pleasure from the same kinds of activities. In art, they evolve their individual expression of concepts found in the works of all children. In music and movement, they have the same affinity towards singing and moving as children of other cultures. All children derive untold pleasures from primitive repetition, chanting and rhyme.

An optimum resource for curriculum planning builds upon what children already know and on what they like to do in the areas that naturally interest them. This will not only result in a strong foundation for later learning but there is a good possibility that children will be excited to learn and that they will do so with greater ease.

In this chapter it has been seen that a child's predisposition towards being creative need not diminish as
he matures. He may preserve and maintain this child-like quality throughout his life and thereby personify Maslow's description of a self-actualized individual: an adult who has developed creative potential to the fullest.
CHAPTER THREE
DESIGN OF THE STUDY

In this chapter, I shall describe the ways in which I collected the data for the study. First of all, along with my own personal observations, thoughts and reflections based on the 18 years that I have been teaching, I took notes that included students' responses to particular activities, their comments, ideas and behavior in class. I also documented many of my classes over the last three years with video tapes.

The parents were selected on the basis of those who were interested in participating in the study and were willing to attend a group interview session. They were encouraged to keep notes of their observations about anything that might seem to be related to their child's experience in the class.

The students selected for this study were the children of these parents. Their ages ranged from two years old to ten years old. There were three 2 year olds, thirteen 3 to 4 year olds, ten 5 to 6 year olds, and nine 7 to 10 year olds.
Parents.

Thirty-one parents were interested in participating in the study. On eight separate occasions we met over lunch at my home in small groups of two to four persons. There were two groups of four parents, three groups of three, and three groups of two. Eight parents were interviewed individually because their schedules prevented them from attending the group meeting. The small groups were made up of parents whose children attended the same classes. Since the parents knew one another from meeting each other weekly at their child's class, the interview had an informal, comfortable atmosphere.

Prior to attending the meeting, the parents were given the following letter to think about:

This study is concerned with describing how enriched artistic experiences affect the children and how this is manifested? Observing children transfer their experiences from one activity to another, or use their experiences in play, might give insight into the process of the development of aesthetic awareness.

What do you see that your child has taken home from their experience in these classes?

Each meeting began with watching a video tape of their children in the class. The following tapes were viewed: the parents of 3 year olds watched a class taped in May 1990; the parents of 4 year olds watched a class taped in May 1990; the parents of 5 year olds watched classes taped in
May 1988 and May 1990; the parents of 10 year olds watched piano classes taped in May 1987 and May 1990. The parents of 2 years olds did not have a video tape to view since this was their first year in the class, but had recently observed classes their children were attending.
The video tapes were useful in that they helped trigger memories that parents had not recalled when making up their list of observations.

After watching the video of their children, the parents spent the rest of the meeting discussing their ideas and the observations they had made. I recorded this with a video camera set up on a tripod in the corner of the room.

The group discussions differed from the individual interviews in that the group exchanged views on a wider range of ideas, while the individual interviews were more focused on the individual family and the particular child that attended the class.

During the group meetings the parents would often say "but this is getting off the subject", only to be reassured that anything they had to say was of value.

Since this study deals mainly with the themes that have come from these discussions, it is not necessary to provide an in depth profile of the parents.

All the parents that attended were mothers who were in their thirties. All but three parents were university graduates, ten were professionals in law, medicine and
eight others had studied beyond their undergraduate degrees.

**Students.**

After interviewing five pre-school students individually, it became clear that it would be more beneficial to interview in groups. The group interviews were video taped.

The children were very shy and contributed very little when asked:

"When you think about the music class, what ideas come to your mind?"

"What happens in music class?"

"What do you learn in music class?"

When the children were asked the same questions in their class environment they were more comfortable about answering the questions but still it was difficult to elicit very much information.

It was necessary to add the following questions to get more of a response:

"What do you do in music class?"

"What do you take home with you from music class?"

"Can music teach you anything?"

"What do you know now that you didn't know before you came to these classes?"

The piano students were very quick to respond to the questions with many ideas. They were interviewed
individually, in small groups of two or three, as well as in one large group of all piano students together. Along with the questions above they were asked the following questions:

"Is taking piano lessons important for something besides learning to play the instrument?"

"What do you learn from practicing an instrument besides being able to play piano?"

"What do you learn about yourself?"
CHAPTER FOUR

THE EMERGENCE OF ARTISTIC AWARENESS

In order to present the reader with a comprehensive and multi-faceted picture of the ways in which the children have been influenced by my program, I will introduce this chapter with anecdotes of children absorbing experiences. This will be followed by sections on: parental observations of children, ages two to six; children's perceptions, ages two to six; children's perceptions, ages seven to ten; parental observations of children, ages seven to ten; background, class examples and the use of drama; social development; parental perspectives; and finally a recapitulation of this chapter with a summary of my beliefs.

Children Absorbing Experiences.

The other day my three daughters and my niece went out for lunch with my sister. I could imagine what a time they had by what I overheard while they were playing in their room.

"Do you want relish on your hotdogs?" said the seven year old.

"No thank you," said the two year old. "I just like ketchup."

"Would you like some fries?" said the five year old.
"Come on, put your napkins on your lap so that you don't get your clothes messy," said the eleven year old, pretending to be my sister.

I am intrigued by how children absorb experiences and later use them in another form, whether it is in play like the illustration above, or in the way their experiences or what they know shape their perceptions and expression.

My two year old daughter wanted to tell me something about the new toy car in which she was riding. She said "Mommy, look at this helmet," referring to the roof of the car, "and I can put things into this pocket," she said referring to the rear compartment. She had no trouble finding the words to express what she wanted to say. She loves putting things into the pockets in her clothes, so it would naturally follow that any compartment that one would put things in would be called a pocket. She knows about helmets from her skating experience and has an invisible helmet attached to her tricycle that she always remembers to put on before she goes for a ride. I guess I can see the resemblance of her skating helmet to the roof of her little car although I never would have made similar connections.

When I listen to the words that she has chosen, it gives me insight into her world and I can reflect on why she has chosen to express herself in this way.

I have noticed that children take in experiences, but they will not reveal what they have absorbed until later. I remember when my children were just infants I would teach
them how to clap or do an action or how to say something and it might take perhaps a week before they would incorporate it into their play. Older children seem to use their experiences more immediately.

A number of years ago I was teaching my middle daughter who was then three, how to take a breath and blow bubbles in the water. She was very hesitant to do so, but sat on the first step and played with her dolly in the water. After a few minutes of playing she said, "Mommy, look at this". She breathed in deeply as she made her dolly jump off the edge, and blew out when her dolly entered the water. After playing for a short while she said that she was ready to try. Now her breathing was much more coordinated after having had time to play like this with her doll.

Parents often tell me how their children have used the experiences from my classes in their play, but some parents are concerned when they don't see their child participate in the class. They feel that if their children are not participating, then they are not learning anything. Children have different learning styles, and some need time to observe before they join in actively. Other children may not appear to be actively participating, but really are absorbed in the experience.

I try to explain that participation is not as important as whether the children make use of the experiences from the class in other areas of their daily life. I have had children come and watch the class without participating for
years, but their parents tell me that they are always playing at home with what they have experienced in the class.

We can learn, from the way children play or by the way they express themselves, about what they know and what has impressed them. We can also learn about how certain experiences can shape the way that children see the world.

The following are some glimpses of what the children are doing with their experiences from this program according to the parents' observations.

**Parental Observations of Children: Ages Two to Six.**

Many parents have noticed that their children speak about music in terms of imagery. This may be related to activities that involve creating stories out of listening carefully to the form of classical pieces in which the children are asked to tell me what they imagine at different parts of the music. Here are some examples:

There is always classical music being played on the piano in Carina's home. Her mother says that she is always asking "Mommy, what's happening now. Tell me the story."

Two year old Joni was listening to a piece of music and told her mother to look at the music hopping. It is as though she sees the images in her head and then instead of telling her mother to listen she tells her to "look"!

Four year old Ally's mother says that she describes music in imagery and attaches emotion to what she hears. She
was listening to a piece of music and told her mother, "You see it's like this, everyone is chasing each other." Another time she was listening to pizzicato on the violin and said, "What is this instrument? It doesn't sound like a violin".

In the class the children have been taught to differentiate between the sound of music written in minor or in major keys. Many parents have commented that their children refer to what they hear as lonely and sad, spooky or happy music.

One mother of a two year old said, that when her child was listening to music in the low range she said "I don't like it here, it scares me."

A mother of a three year old said that her son likes to walk like a monster when he hears music in the low range.

One day five year old Mickey and his mom were listening to a thunder storm and Mickey said, "The thunder and lightning is the low notes and the rain is the high notes. I need to try it on the piano."

Jill's mother says that her daughter who is five tries to play growing flowers, and thunder and rain on the piano.

Three year old Sam heard music played in the high range and said "That's a butterfly!

Another child in Sam's class goes to the low side of the piano and plays "caterpillars," then goes to the high side and plays "butterflies."

Five year old Jamie's mother told me that he likes to sit at the piano and find sounds that he likes. One day he
found a card that could fit between two sounds that he liked to play together so that he would be able to find the notes again the next day.

Joey's mother has noticed that her five year old's behavior changed dramatically since he began to attend the class. He listens and moves to his sister's piano playing and other music rather than sing above it like he used to.

The following are some activities that might have influenced his behavior. In the class, the emphasis is placed on listening carefully to one another, practising matching pitches in singing, and being taught that music is made of silences and sounds, both equally important, in the same way as paintings have negative shapes around the pictures. The children practice controlling their sound making by playing their band instruments loudly on the number one count and softly for counts two three four. They also practice balancing the sound of their band instruments against the melody instrument as though they were in an orchestra.

Jenny and Jamie are both in a five year old class where we have been writing the rhythms of the songs that we make up about each individual child on the board. I then make up a melody on the piano using each child's rhythm and they have to be able to identify their rhythm. Jenny and Jamie's mothers both tell me that their children are drawing notes and clapping rhythms all the time. They even ask their
mothers to repeat a rhythm that they have made up or identify the rhythm with rhythm names.

Many parents have told me that they have noticed their children playing with the stories that occur in the class. Here are a few examples. They have found their children teaching their friends how to be growing flowers like they do in class. They tell them to grow up slowly talking about types of flowers and the need for sun and water. They also play bell horses talking about sleeping in the barn and galloping in the field. Another child was found teaching his sibling how to march with big steps like papa bear, skip like mama bear and tippy toe run like baby bear.

Five year old Shaun likes to get together with his friends and have band parades getting louder and quieter as they march around the house, much like we do in our music class.

A mother of a six year old noticed that at her daughter's swimming class she was swimming very rhythmically and asked her daughter about it. The daughter replied that she was counting 1 2 1 2 in time to her strokes.

Two year old Lucy walks about the house chanting, One two three four One two three four, emphasizing the number One count.

Max likes to make up a rhythm pattern and ask his mother to copy it. He loves to be able to teach her the rhythm names. He also writes out rhythms and then places it on the piano and plays it.
Four year old Alice heard her father say a word that she couldn't pronounce, so she said, "Say it slowly and I will clap out the rhythms so then I will be able to say it".

Stewart is always clapping out the rhythms of words and names and giving the rhythm names.

One of my students has a language memory problem, but her mother says that she uses rhythms to help her with her spelling. She can remember the rhythm and this aids her memory for the spelling.

Judy is singing now all the time. She uses Friendly Bear tune to sing about things that she's doing in her life. She prefers to sing her books instead of read them.

Lately in the class we have been working on saying ONE two three, ONE two three, and calling it a waltz. My two year old daughter was chanting to a galloping rhythm and I asked her, "What is this you are singing? A waltz?"

"No," she said, looking at me as though I shouldn't have to ask her, I should know that simple answer.

"Is it a march?", I asked.

"No, it's a gallop, see," and she showed me how she could move to the rhythm that she was chanting.

All the examples above could be traced to some experience in the class, and it could be expected that the children would use the experiences in the way they did. Sometimes, however, there are hidden influences that children pick up which would never even be considered to be a possibility. The following is one such example.
Three year old Rachelle loves to put all her teddies and dollies in a circle and pretend to be me, her mother says. She sings the Cuckoo Song with her hand signs and talks to her toy students. Besides pretending to be Anita, Rachelle has chosen to play with the circle time of the class. This is the time at the beginning and the end of the class when the children come together and each have time to tell everyone something that we can use to sing about. This is the time that the puppets come out to sing with the children at the beginning of the class, or at the end of the class to kiss the children goodbye, or reflect on what they had done that class. This is also the time when the puppets put on little scenes. The following is the kind of thing that happens at circle time which might have impressed Rachelle enough to be playing with it at home.

Friendly Bear, who is usually warm and affectionate and just kisses the children goodbye after the children call him out by singing his song, appeared to be different. When I asked him what was the matter, he said that he listened to our class that day, and we were changing the rhythm of everything. We were making some songs faster and others slower, and we were calling out the names of the rhythm changes, like ti ti ta changed to tiri ti etc.

"So why should you be disturbed by that?" I asked.
"Well", said Friendly Bear shyly, "do you think that maybe the children could also do that with my song?"
"Sure we can", said the children and even the ones who were not participating in the changing of rhythms activities earlier were totally involved in trying to please Friendly Bear. The children were successful in changing his song to faster rhythms and singing the rhythm names which they did all by themselves, and this made Friendly Bear very happy and proud.

The children have been used to the same teacher for about four or five years, the same group of children, and a similar routine, but the routine often changes and this adds an element of surprise and excitement to the class.

Cuckoo Bird is one of the puppets that the children develop a relationship with. When they see Cuckoo Bird they expect to hear his special song and to be encouraged to sing along. The song is made up of the pitches "sol mi". The children learn the corresponding hand signs and this is their first introduction to learning about pitches and hand signs.

The children learn Cuckoo Bird's song within the first few classes when they are two years old. At the end of the song is the word 'cuckoo' sung three times with the "sol mi" hand signs. Cuckoo Bird gets very excited when each child attempts to sing cuckoo with the hand signs by himself.

Every so often Cuckoo does something that is out of the ordinary. He is usually ready when he has to come out to sing his song, but this day he just slept in. There was
nothing the children could do to wake him up. They called to him, and sang his song very loudly, but to no avail.

We then decided a new approach to the problem. We sang quietly and got louder and louder, and that seemed to work, but when not all the children were singing he fell back asleep. Finally the children discovered that they all had to sing with a crescendo and they would succeed in waking Cuckoo Bird. Not one child was reluctant to join in and so Cuckoo Bird was elated to wake up to such beautiful singing. He was a little confused as to the day and the time and the fact that he was supposed to have been singing already, but he apologized, and kissed each child as they individually sang cuckoo to him, with the hand signs.

Children's Perceptions: Ages Two to Six.

One day a five year old child came up to me before the class and told me "I am ready to start taking music lessons". I asked, "What do you mean? What do you think you are doing in these classes now?"

"We're just having fun," he said, "Making up stories, galloping and counting the phrases, marching, singing with hand signs, reading books and listening to music on the piano."

I never pursued what he meant by taking music lessons but to him it certainly must be something quite different from "just having fun." What he said was verified by the
answers the other students aged two to six gave to my questions.

Younger students appeared to have difficulty telling me what they were learning in music class. I would sometimes have to ask three or four questions before getting any answer.

The following questions were asked,

What do you do in music class?
What happens in music class?
When you think about music class, what ideas come to your mind?
What do you learn in music class?
Can music teach you anything?
What do you know now that you didn't know before you came to these classes?

The children replied,

"We have fun, we hop run and skip."
"We like to pretend."
"It's a really short class."
"We have so much fun that it seems short."
"Be good."
"Bears. Get to be baby Mama and Papa bear.
"Butterflies and caterpillars. Music is high and low."
"We play instruments loud and soft, fast and slow and we count."
"It lasts for a short time. It really should be longer."
"Hand signs teach you up and down of music."
"We're getting ready to learn piano."
"It's fun because we can play."
"We can use our imagination to know what is happening in the music, animals or something."
"There is jumping music and ballet music and sad music."
"We are having fun and learning music."
"Staccato and legato."
"Different ways to walk and move."
"Dancing."
"Marching and skipping and galloping."
I asked "Would you like to do that movement without music?"
"No, it is more fun with music."

These questions appeared to be too general for the children. They were better able to answer more specific questions like, "Why is it important to listen?" To this they answered, "It is more fun to listen so that you can do the activity otherwise you won't be able to do it."
The only question to which dead silence was not the initial response was, "Do you like talking about what you do in this class?" They chimed in with the following answers:

"No, we like doing it."
"I want the class to be longer."
"I want to show my story about a caterpillar race."
"I want to be a crab."
Children's Perceptions: Ages Seven to Ten.

I asked the following questions to the children who take group music classes with three children to a class, ranging in age from seven to ten:

Is taking piano lessons important for something besides learning to play an instrument?
What do you learn from practicing an instrument besides being able to play the piano?
What do you learn about yourself?

These children had no difficulty in answering the questions. Here are a sample of the children's replies,

"Practicing teaches me that if I keep working and do a bit every day I will get it. Like studying for a test I should do a bit every day."

"I learn about co-operation with partners in school. If I don't practice and get my work done before piano class I will let down my partners in my piano class because I will not know my work. It is the same at school."

"I learn that if I put my mind to it I can do it. It helps my confidence."

"Piano lessons take hard work, discipline, and concentration you have to put in the time."

"It is training your brain."
"It is training your body, like dance, your hand will just go to the right notes if you practice right. You don't have to worry about it."

"Music is art."

"It is expressing yourself, I enjoy putting my feelings into the music."

"We learn to listen carefully to the little details that we can add, it is just like looking at art and seeing the little details."

"We can create an atmosphere with music."

"When you learn music you can play anything you want, and you know that you will be able to do it."

"It is easier to play other instruments."

"You learn how to concentrate just like when you play the penalty shot in soccer or hockey, you have to concentrate just like piano."

"You have to watch out for the tiny details and be neat and tidy about your work, you can't be sloppy. Just like in art or in printing."

"Learn how to tell the difference between what sounds good and what sounds bad, even if the differences are very small. It teaches you to appreciate what looks good and bad also."

"Trains you how to learn things."

"If you work in the proper way, you can do well, and then I feel good about myself."
"When you practice piano you find something new about the piece, or something that will help you remember, that makes it the best practice session."
"You can enjoy yourself."
"It makes you smarter because you train your brain."
"You can make up songs and be creative."
"It is fun because you can take things that you learn and use it to make up other things."

**Parental Observations of Children: Ages Seven to Ten.**

I have been teaching these children since they were two years old. The following are some observations their parents have made regarding what they do at home with their music experience now that they are in the piano program.

As a child, Maggie would go to the swing set for its rhythm used to relax her, now she goes to the piano to be soothed when she is in a sad mood. She likes to be creative with her piano playing and changes rhythms of her songs or sometimes even plays her bass notes in the treble clef with her right hand, and the treble notes in the bass clef with her left hand.

Jennifer likes to compose pieces to reflect her ideas.

Rick often asks his mother to describe how the music that he is playing makes her feel.

Christopher makes up stories for all his piano pieces.

Neil told his mother that reading something word to word is like playing something note to note, it does not
have the whole meaning. You must see the whole idea or
whole picture as you would in understanding how sentences
make up a paragraph. It is the same for music phrases making
up the whole piece.

   Tommy writes out his own compositions quite accurately.

   Eight year old Sammi was writing a poem for school and
told her mother the rhythm names she needed to finish her
poem.

   Christine's mother tells me that she does very well in
school with a very little amount of work. Things just come
easily to her. Piano is the only thing that she has to work
at, and it is good for her to learn good practice and study
habits for when the time will come that she will have to
work at something.

   Geoff has a very low frustration level. If he can't
succeed at first, like he usually does, then he would prefer
to abandon what he is attempting. His mother feels that due
to his experiences in the integrated arts classes, he is
sufficiently motivated to put in the sometimes very
frustrating practice necessary, in order to learn to play
the piano.

   Walter's mother says that the discipline he gets from
his study of the piano carries over into his school work.
He is quite precise, and when he starts something he
finishes it with attention to detail.

   Vanessa's mother said that being able to play the piano
is already part of her daughter's self image. Vanessa says
that if she didn't study piano she would miss it and she wouldn't feel the same about herself. She is proud that she can play.

Alexandra's mom says that she sees Alexandra handle the expectations of piano practice and that translates into her school work. When she first starts to study a piece it is frustrating but if she steadily works at it she is able to accomplish it and in the end feels very gratified. She then knows how to deal with the pressure and expectations of her school work. She can see that hard work pays off. Her mother sees this as having a positive effect on her self confidence.

Oliver's mother has noticed that piano lessons have trained her son to follow directions, pay attention to details, and concentrate so that he is able to anticipate well. His attention span has increased, and she says that she can see how all of this can affect other areas of his life.

Background, Class Examples and the Use of Drama

When I first started to teach these classes I would use ideas from literature or drama or movement to illustrate musical concepts. I was mainly concerned that the children learn about rhythms, phrasing, pitch, form, and so forth. Learning the other fine arts was secondary since as a music teacher my priority should be just music.
I learned very quickly that children preferred experiences that integrated elements of stories, movement, drama and music to experiences that emphasized only musical concepts. It was the children's response to the activity called The Three Little Pigs that enlightened me.

Since it was the first story that I did with my little students, it is where I discovered the need to learn more about creating stories and dramas out of all the other musical activities. This is why I decided to return to study at the university. My background was in literature, music and dance, and I needed to learn more about drama.

The activities were based on the story of the three pigs. The children learned about the rondo form when after every house they visited they sang "Who's afraid of the big bad wolf?". They learned about phrasing by changing direction for every phrase in the song as they were holding hands in a circle. They learned about chanting together loudly and in staccato, "NO, not by the hair of my chinny chin chin."

What impressed me most was that all the children were completely committed to creating the story, to chanting loudly in unison or whatever they had to do, and they picked up on the musical concepts immediately. What motivation they seemed to have. Using the musical concepts was only a part of what the children were doing.

I reflected that this was similar to playing a piece of music beautifully or dancing very expressively. If the
musician or the dancer is involved imaginatively, then their technique is only a part of their expression and the total experience is very inspired. In this same way, the children used the musical concepts as the artists used their technique, just as a means to creating a greater picture. Learning these musical concepts never presented an obstacle. They learned very quickly because they needed to use them in the story.

This is the way children naturally like to learn and this is the way they learn best. It is more meaningful to them when they are working within a context, such as the story of The Three Pigs. This is why the children would often ask to do this activity over and over again. Now all my classes have stories that are derived from the musical concepts or other stories that happen spontaneously. The children just expect something will happen in the class. The following are some examples.

One day I played a piece which sounded like flowing water. After listening to the piece, we decided that the whole studio was a place in the middle of the sea and there was water up to the ceiling. The children immediately became sea creatures, sea plants, mermaids, turtles, dolphins and whales. After the piece was played again the children were still very absorbed in the mood the music had created and they didn't want it to stop. We divided the group into the creatures of the sea and the audience, and the children had the opportunity to watch each other and to
show each other their ideas. When everyone had a turn to portray their choice, we had a discussion about the experience. We talked about mood and atmosphere, and the children tried to define it and figure out what those terms meant. Then we discussed what a wonderful experience it was to create an atmosphere through movement, music and imagination. We also talked about what it meant to be inspired.

There was a very calm, peaceful quality about that activity. I had played the piece very softly with a background harmony of legato flowing music. The children asked if we could do it again, and posed as animals of the sea, ready to express their ideas. I suddenly changed the music to staccato and the children were startled. They couldn't believe it. They said, "You lost the mood, you changed it." They begged me to bring back the music with the same quality that we had before, and I did. After moving to it once again we had a talk about the magic of being able to create moods and atmospheres and how feelings can be expressed in movement and music. We also discussed the contrast in the music and how the mood was destroyed by playing it in staccato.

Another day, it was the birthday of one of the children. After singing to him, they made a unanimous decision to be candles on a cake. The children spontaneously positioned themselves in a package waiting excitedly to be placed on the cake. I took them out one by one and very
ceremoniously lit the candles. I played Happy Birthday on the piano, and the children slowly melted as the song came to an end. The packaging and melting of the candles happened completely extemporaneously, without any planning or discussion. Afterwards, the children commented on how it all felt like magic.

When the children are involved in this kind of activity they are completely motivated. They have a wonderful attitude and they want to learn. For children to experience this kind of excitement about the fine arts is my main objective. In this way they will have the positive attitude and intrinsic motivation necessary to continue studying as they grow up.

It is interesting to see how the children use the musical concepts and play with them as though it is a very commonplace thing to do. "I know," said Michael, "let's all get into four groups and each take a phrase and make up a different movement to it." The children are keen to learn new concepts because the more they learn, the more they can use to play with.

Social Development.

Many parents have commented that their children have benefitted from the group experience in the class. They have noticed that although their children were once shy and timid, they now do very well socially in their groups at school or in other activities.
When the children are with the same teacher and with the same group of children for many years, they not only learn many social skills that are necessary for participation in a group, but they also gain self-confidence.

In my classes there is a set protocol for co-operation and respect for one another, listening to each other and to the teacher, knowing that everyone will have a turn, and knowing when to sit quietly and patiently and when it is time to move, jump and run. The children know that there are expectations made of them by the teacher and by their classmates, and they quickly learn the kind of behavior that is appropriate.

The limits and discipline expected of the children only enhance the quality of the atmosphere and as one parent said, "The children are having fun and that is all they know." When studying any art one learns that they must operate within certain parameters and it takes discipline to achieve one's goal. Although these children will not see this correlation for many years, they will experience it for it is in this same way that the children enjoy a more fun filled class when they co-operate and stay within the limits.

When the children are encouraged and rewarded for expressing their thoughts and ideas, they learn to be proud of who they are and what they know. In this way the already acquired knowledge and background that students bring with
them to class is acknowledged, and this increases their confidence and their awareness about who they are and about how much they know.

Every person sees the world in his own unique way for even children brought up in the same family with the same background have experiences that are distinct from one another. This uniqueness of seeing things in new ways and expressing it without inhibition is inherent in every child. When children are in an environment where they feel comfortable, they have no trouble expressing themselves. It is fascinating to be privy to their perceptions.

Children have the ability to take experiences and make new connections, place things in new perspectives, and juxtapose these new combinations on previously unrelated materials. This sums up Hallman's (1963) definition of creativity. He states that creativity is not only the ability to bring already existing elements into a distinctive relation to each other but also to transplant these new combinations onto previously unrelated materials. What the children do naturally is the source of all the innovative and original ideas.

When children have been in a class where they feel their contributions are valuable and necessary and they feel respected by their peers, they will have the confidence to express their ideas and thoughts in other group situations. Having confidence will not only enable them to trust their own abilities and try out new things but it will also enable
them to maintain this creative way of being into their adult lives.

At a young age children are not too concerned about being the same as everyone else, but there comes a time in their development when being different or thinking differently is not acceptable. When they have had positive experiences and have been encouraged to state their own opinions for as long as they can remember, it will only be natural that they stand up for themselves and express what they think or feel despite opposing points of view.

**Parental Perspectives.**

In my interviews with the parents, they were worried about "getting off the subject". It was important that the discussion flow from the initial questions without any prompting, so the parents were encouraged to talk about anything that came to mind. It was interesting that the conversation drifted from their observations about their children to their aspirations for their children, their attitudes about education, and their attitudes about art.

Parents' aspirations have a strong influence on what will become of their children. It has been my experience with teaching for the past 18 years that parents create the context and climate for how their children will develop. Just the same as children absorb information from their environment and use it as part of their life, they also integrate their family values.
Values are reflected in the choices that parents make for their children's education. In every group discussion the parents spoke of their reasons for choosing this kind of experience for their children. Their main concern was that their children become inspired, motivated and develop a good attitude about learning. They feel that in these integrated arts classes the children are able to extend what they enjoy doing naturally. They develop listening skills, have the opportunity to express themselves and be imaginative in a group environment that encourages uniqueness and individuality. Parents feel that having positive experiences at a young age, with music, movement, drama and literature, may lead to a life long commitment to the creative arts. As one parent said, "I want my children to learn in a very gentle way that music and the arts have meaning and are important".

Learning any one of the arts takes discipline, concentration and a certain level of motivation but unless the desire comes from the individual, chances are it will only last as long as the children are pushed to do it. These parents want their children to develop a love for music and experience how much enjoyment can come from the arts, so the motivation to continue to study will come from within the child.

The study of any art can be an important part of a child's self concept. Besides the gratification and feeling of accomplishment, and inspiration that comes from the
necessary concentration, hard work and attention to detail, the child's image of himself is closely tied to the art through which he expresses himself.

Even though children have had a wonderful introduction to the arts, there are few that can be successful at studying an instrument without the involvement of their parents. It is necessary for parents to set standards because children need discipline and encouragement in their every day routine, so that they will succeed in learning the instrument with the least amount of frustration. When learning an instrument is one of the expectations in a family and quitting is not even an option, children infer the message of their family values and it becomes a natural part of their lives. They learn that discipline is an important part of accomplishment and these values reflect on other areas of their lives.

At the interviews the parents spoke about how they want their children to have something else that is part of their lives besides school. Making the right choices for extra curricula activities is a great responsibility because the serious pursuit of any of the arts is a lifestyle commitment. Although the choices are made so that the children will have a different activity apart from school, the development of the skills for practising in any of the arts can be influential in how the children will tackle their school work as well as other areas of their lives.

Children often begin to study an instrument when they
are in grade one or two and at this time they don't usually have much school homework. The only thing that they must be consistent about working on after school is their instrument. In order for this to be a positive experience, the time spent at practising should grow out of working on the pieces the child must study rather than the often imposed half hour timer. There should be a smooth transition from the pre-piano classes into the piano classes and the children should not be burdened with the responsibility of too much music homework. A child in the beginning of grade one is not emotionally ready to take on the long practises necessary for playing at a higher level. Practise time should be reasonable and comfortable for as the child progresses the pieces will get longer and the practise time will naturally increase. If the focus is placed on nurturing motivation and a good attitude about practising the child will progress quickly enough and stay more interested in studying than if the focus is on moving quickly to get to a higher level.

During my interviews with them, the parents deliberated over the issue of pushing children to progress quickly versus being too lax and concluded that they are both equally detrimental. If parents are too lax then the children will probably not achieve as much as they possibly could, and if they are too overly ambitious then the children will eventually lose interest or focus on the wrong priorities. There is a difference between setting reasonable
standards and expectations so that the children can develop to their potential and become as good as they can be, and pushing them so that they will hurry and get to a higher grade level or perform better than the next child.

The parents categorized those parents who pressured their children into two groups. The first group was comprised of the many parents that are misinformed and have their children's best interest at heart but don't know the optimum way to go about it. They know that exposing their children to music at an early age is important and they think that giving them lessons on an instrument at the age of three is the way to do so. Little do they know that for a child to play an instrument at that young an age could hinder rather than augment their development.

The second group encompassed those parents who have selfish motives for pushing their children. These parents use their children's accomplishments to elevate their own status among their peers. It is the product that interests them, not the process. The priority for these parents is either that their children be more advanced than the others or that their children be in the classes that are considered the "in" ones to take. Competitiveness, or following fashionable trends is the underlying message behind the standards, limits and expectations that these parents place on their children.

It was stated by one of those who were interviewed that "Some parents have an agenda for their kids. They want them
to be better than the others, be brilliant academics, or be what they themselves were not. These parents feel that it is a status symbol to say they have a child who is gifted."

Another perceptive comment was that "When the children of these parents reach adolescence the parents tend to place less emphasis on extra curricula activities and focus more on encouraging their children's social popularity. This inadvertently reinforces the parents' own values for social status".

The approach of both these groups will frequently have the same end result in that the children will probably terminate their study of the arts by the time they reach the end of their elementary school years. It is unfortunate that encouraging children in the wrong way often leads to the child's inability to discover the beauty and the inner satisfaction that is derived from the pursuit of an art form.

It is interesting to note that the children who come from these two groups and continue to pursue their art often focus on the wrong priorities. They will be more interested in the audience's reaction or in playing at a high grade level just so that they can show off, rather than the quality of how they are playing or the pure inspired feeling of doing their very best to express themselves in their art.

When children have been genuinely encouraged to be in touch with their emotions and feelings and have experienced the magic of being inspired, they will not only be more able
to express themselves but will appreciate having a vehicle to do so. In that way using their creativity will become an essential part of their lives.

**SUMMARY.**

In this chapter I have looked at what could be termed the beginnings of artistic awareness in children from the viewpoints of the parents, the students and the teacher. I have described how children absorb experiences from their environment and use it in their play or transfer it from one activity to another. Evidence of what the children have taken home with them from their experiences in my classes is portrayed through the parents' observations of their children aged two to six; these children's perceptions of what they thought they were doing; parental observations of the older children aged seven to ten and the older children's understanding of what else they were learning along with their study of an instrument.

I believe that instruction is more meaningful, and children develop a positive attitude and are motivated to learn, when the emphasis is placed on what children do naturally, what interests them and what they enjoy. I reviewed how I discovered that children enjoy learning best when drama and stories are integrated into the music classes. I illustrated this with examples of the ways in which the children interact with the stories, music, movement and drama during class time.
I believe that the development of social, emotional and intellectual skills are a fundamental part of the evolving aesthetic awareness in children. These three areas were explored throughout the chapter. Under social skills I considered the following: co-operation; respect for one another; communication and listening; and group protocol. Under emotional skills I considered the following: discipline; attention to detail; self concept; attitude; motivation; and expression. Under intellectual skills I considered the following: listening skills; musical concepts; movement concepts; creative play with concepts; ways of thinking; and problem solving.

I believe that positive parental involvement is central to the development of aesthetic awareness in children. In this study, I have discussed parental values, expectations, and attitudes towards learning along with the resulting consequences.
CHAPTER FIVE

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has concerned itself mainly with teaching the fine arts to young children through means that best suit their interests and their developmental levels. Although the process was the major focus, the product is just as important but should not be the emphasis when the child is very young.

The child must absorb many patterns and ideas, ways to approach his work with discipline and attention to details for the resulting product to be as good as it can be. He must find in himself the confidence to tackle his interest and the knowledge of his own personal style and the way he best expresses himself.

At first there are many elements that go into learning a dance or a piece of music. Soon these steps or notes become incorporated into patterns that are a natural part of the students' vocabulary. Young children are able to quickly assimilate these patterns and when they get older, as their training becomes more complex, they have a language of choreography, or of chords and phrases that they can use with ease. They no longer have to be concerned with note to note or step to step, they understand the different patterns and now just have to concentrate on projecting their own expression of it. The negotiation of these patterns is impressive enough but although it is performed technically
well, the audience will perceive that something is missing if the performer does not use imagination.

It is the imagination that elevates one performance or art piece over another. The imagination is the unique collection of all experiences, stories, emotions or feelings that could be expressed. Learning how to make use of it sets artists apart from technicians.

Educators should make it their priority that children stay in touch with their feelings and emotions, express themselves and make use of their wonderful imaginations, for it is when they are young that there are no barriers between their emotions and their intelligence. Concepts become absorbed as part of the young children's total beings so they are easily able to "retrieve material from the preconscious and return it to the world of reality which is a vital aspect of creative production." (Maslow quoted by Gowan 1965, p.10)

Creativity is this ability to use ones' imagination for the result is the "emergence in action of a novel relational product, growing out of the uniqueness of the individual, on the one hand, and the materials, events, people, or circumstances of his life on the other." (Rogers 1954,p.71)

Using the imagination is only one of the secrets that goes into making a good product or performance. Another is the ability to think ahead of an action. This can be applied to sports as well as art. Practising helps to train one's muscles and brain to incorporate patterns so they
become automatic. It is important for the student to discover that this happens so they can trust themselves and let go and allow the performance to appear on its own as they are thinking about the next thing.

It is like magic. I remember the day my daughter discovered it. She had been practising a piece over and over again but when she got to a certain chord she would always stop and fret and feel that she could not do it. Since she put in the proper kind of practising, I told her that she should just stop thinking about it and let her hand move to the chord and play it on its own. I said she should imagine a story about what she was playing and not worry about that chord, just trust her muscles and her instincts and let herself go. She did and it was perfect. No problem with that chord. She could not believe that she had already incorporated enough with her practising so that she could just let go and enjoy what she was doing. Her worrying and thinking when she came to her difficult chord only interfered with her performance. This was not only a lesson in how to think but also gave her insight into her own abilities. She has become more confident from this experience.

It is a very exciting and surprising experience to learn that one doesn't and shouldn't always be consciously in control. I call it an introduction to the muse. To trust and let it happen by itself is to feel like the muse is taking over.
Trust, knowing how to think, and attention to detail are the other ingredients of a good product or performance. My daughter had to trust that her hand would go to the right place and play the chord. In art, there is a saying "draw what you see not what you know". It also takes trust to draw such a short line when you know that it really should be longer. It only takes a few times to realize the long line you know looks completely out of proportion. In dance, you must trust that thinking about bending your knees will result in a higher jump than if you think about jumping high.

The audience can be affected by the way the artist is thinking. There are subliminal messages that come across. The audience can usually sense when the performer is preoccupied with feeling inhibited, self conscious or concerned with what the audience might be thinking. In a successful performance, the artist is occupied with concentrating on projecting a certain feeling or atmosphere and attending to all the fine details in his work. The ability to bring new interpretations takes creativity and imagination. It is inspiring to hear a familiar piece performed in a fresh way as the artist manipulates fine details to bring out some notes more than others, creating a foreground and background effect instead of all the notes being played as usual.

Although it is important to express ones' feelings, there is a more refined quality in the final product when the artist knows how this can be done tastefully. Too much
expression of feeling is as damaging to a performance as not enough. Attending to the fine details of technique helps to project and channel these feelings into an aesthetically pleasing performance.

Other implications that may be derived from this study are:

Teachers should be educated in more of an interdisciplinary approach to teaching so the arts can be taught together or with other subjects. In this way it is more meaningful to the children for this is their natural way of looking at life.

Teachers should be educated about the process of creativity.

Curriculum planning should look at children's interests and what they do naturally and gear activities accordingly.

Parents should be educated about the study of the arts so they will have reasonable expectations that will match their children's level of development. They should know how much their values and aspirations affect their children, and what are the best ways to go about educating their children. They should also be informed that educating their children in the arts implies a commitment to a certain life style.
Parents should have some knowledge about what their children are learning so they could be available at the right moments to extend their experiences.

Keeping in mind how much children absorb from their environment, it would be beneficial for both parents and teachers to be sensitive to the children's need for play time. So much can be learned by observing children at play for they are either using what has impressed them, or integrating concepts that they have just been taught.

Children can express themselves and use their imagination in their play. As they grow to adulthood they still have the same need to be able to express themselves. It is important for educators and parents to provide many kinds of enriched experiences so that children may find an avenue or outlet that is best suited to their own personal expression.

When teenagers have interests that they can seriously pursue, they will be too busy to be influenced by negative peer pressures.
I believe that the following conditions are necessary to sustain the natural curiosity, motivation and positive attitude towards learning that is intrinsic in young children: an environment that includes enriched experiences that are developmentally appropriate; activities that match the children's interests; encouragement, respect and understanding that cultivates a positive self concept; and positive parental involvement.

I believe that nurturing this creative potential, inherent in all children, by providing the proper stimulation from the environment, and encouragement to take pride in and make use of their uniqueness and individuality will result not only in fostering artistic awareness where creative expression is an integral part of their lives, but also in aiding these children to develop their potential to its fullest.

The development of the creative potential in children helps them grow to become productive, creative and critical thinkers as well as sensitive and well-balanced adults, able to benefit society bringing innovative ideas, and methods of problem solving to human relations, industry, technology and the arts.
**Recommendations for further study.**

In order to pursue the further development of the artistic process in children, it would be interesting to explore the following themes:

Interview established artists and their families about their backgrounds and upbringing to examine what they think influenced them.

Interview parents of grown children about their values and aspirations to assess what influences these might have had on what has become of their adult children.

Initiate a longitudinal study of children enrolled in a program similar to the one outlined in this paper to ascertain the ways in which these children have been influenced.
Bibliography


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**Primary Program Foundation Document** British Columbia Ministry of Education


