

## Coaching Corner – March 2011

### The Visual Arts

The unique creativity of a young child is best demonstrated through artistic expressions. We want to nurture and encourage this creative expression in many forms, including the making of art.

For young children, it is the process, rather than the product, that offers the opportunity to learn and create. Through art, children learn to take risks and consider different perspectives of and in the world. The expression of joys, fears, or frustrations is therapeutic for children. As children create art, they are problem solving, applying known concepts, and analyzing and synthesizing information. Below are some ways you can develop and refine these valuable skills.

- **Art Sharing** – During an art-sharing time, each child holds up his project and the children in the class talk about his work (describing the shapes or use of exciting tools). Children feel good about what they created, and they like when their peers acknowledge their ideas and work. This sharing process allows children to see and understand that there can be many diverse and correct answers to a problem. Even though each was given similar materials and instructions, each came up with a unique solution that is valued by all.
- **Incorporate Many Art Mediums** – It is important to remember that the process of creating art is more important than the finished product for young children. Provide plenty of opportunities for exploration of materials and tools that stimulate creative thinking: clay, watercolors, sculpture, photography, etc. When the focus is on the process of creating art, children will create what is reflective of their own ideas and experiences.
- **Explore Art in Cultural and Social Contexts** – A young child's world typically consists of him or her self, the family, and the school. At this early age, we should not expect them to have an understanding of history, geography, or cultural beliefs. It is, however, appropriate for them to develop an acceptance of and interest in people and customs different from their own culture. Visual arts provide an opportunity to look at art forms and artists from around the world, allowing children to discover how we differ and to celebrate those differences. Choose artwork for your classroom that represents a variety of peoples and cultures; you will be promoting understanding, tolerance, and inclusion.
- **Valuing Art and Beauty** – Encourage children to discuss what makes a piece of art pleasing to them. Such discussions and diversity of opinion enrich and expand children's knowledge of art. When discussing a piece of art, you may want to ask some of the following questions: What do you think of this piece? Do you like it? Why or why not? Would you like to have this work of art at home? Why or why not? If you could give this art as a gift, who would you give it to? Why? Effective aesthetics education helps children develop criteria for what they value in the arts. It encourages higher-level thinking and asks for evidence to support their opinions.