

Creative Arts

Professor Matt Sanders

WE HEAR SO MUCH LATELY ABOUT CHILDREN NEEDING MORE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY.

But we also need to remember that an interest in creative arts such as music, dance, drama, painting, drawing and sculpture are also important for your child's development.

You don't have to force children to learn piano or violin, or drag them around to post modernist art exhibitions to encourage creativity.

Rather, it's more an extension of the 'stick the drawing on the fridge door' approach. Find out what your child has a creative interest in and take an active interest yourself. Check where lessons are available or where equipment can be borrowed, hired or purchased. Offer to help by making costumes. And keep an eye out for activities you can try for free.

Let your child try a few different things. What seems interesting initially might be end up being too difficult or not in tune with their personality. But avoid letting your child withdraw from lessons before the end of a term,

unless the activity is clearly upsetting them. Children need to learn that confidence at a task comes with practice over time.

Singing and dancing to any tune helps develop a child's sense of rhythm, melody, harmony and timing.

You can help your child notice details such as patterns, colours, shapes, lines and textures by talking with them about images of natural beauty you see everyday — a pattern of bark on a tree, the shape of a seed pod, the veins in a leaf.

There are also many art activities held specifically for children, particularly during school holidays. Check your local paper for concerts, exhibitions, pantomimes, street performances and events in the park. Share your observations and talk to your child about their own reactions.

“Let your child try a few different things.”

When your child does produce their very own work of art, drama, or music take time to praise their efforts and give their activity attention. For example, sticking their painting on the fridge tells our child we value their creative efforts. Avoid negative comments when giving feedback and encourage practice and care for any instruments or equipment they are responsible for.

Above all, remember that creativity and the arts is as natural and vital to a child's development as the physical play that helps develop coordination and muscle development. You never know, you might even discover some of your very own creative interests in the process.

Tips for encouraging your child's music and performing arts activities.

- Be prepared for noise. A piano standing in a family room is much better than sending your child off to another room to practise because you don't like the sound.

- Help your child move furniture around if they need space to rehearse a dance or play.
- Provide an audience. Don't force your child to perform if they don't want to, but involve other family members who can show an interest in your child's progress.
- Attend formal performances that your child is in as often as possible.
- Remember to say something positive about your child's performance and leave any corrective feedback for their teacher.

Tips for encouraging your child's painting and visual arts activities.

- Keep small items for collages and art projects handy.
- Store art supplies where your child can easily access them and set up their own activities.
- Be prepared for spills and mess — use old aprons or shirts and an area that can be cleaned up easily.

Find more parenting tips at: manitoba.ca/triplep or call 945-4777 in Winnipeg or toll-free 1-877-945-4777.

Professor Matt Sanders is founder of the Triple P - Positive Parenting Program.