

Is your child getting the most from their art lessons?

Over the past decade I have taught children art in many different formats and capacities. Throughout that decade I have sometimes run into the hardest student to teach-the parent. It is not unusual for parents to feel that if their child is taking an art class (especially one that is on top of any school provided program) than they should immediately walk away with a Picasso (or the like) type of work. Now don't get me wrong, I am a parent too and I can empathize as I have a child in dance, sports, taking private viola lessons and more! I get it so I want to share some things that might help.

First it is important to understand that children experience art through fun and exploratory learning-like anything in life (sports, dance, cooking, etc.) a person (especially a child) will progress and gain more and more fantastic skills when they *enjoy* it. Enjoying art may mean that a "design" might not always look like a specific image or even what the instructor intended for it to look like-that is ok! This is how children learn-mostly by LOVING what they do.

Here are some tips to ensure your child is getting the most from their art class (or any extra class they take):

- Your child should gain knowledge of a new concept during each session, even if they can not immediately apply it.
- Class sizes should be small enough so that individual attention can be given to your child. If at some point (at least after 5 years of age and a minimum of 6 months of group lessons) you feel that your child has a special talent or desire to pursue I highly recommend private lessons in addition to group lessons. Both are valuable: private lessons give one on one attention and focus where group lessons give your child additional skills and ideas like sharing concepts and designs, collaborative learning, communication skills, brainstorming, team work, etc.
- Be supportive of your child and their designs. Work will sometimes look like, well work and although you might not understand what the design is intended to be, praise your child for their efforts and have them walk you through how they produced their fabulous design! This will serve two purposes; one your child will get excited telling you about their design and, two you will understand the concept that was taught even if the outcome wasn't what you expected.
- Be patient. Art lessons (or any other lessons) can take weeks, months and even years before your child will be able to apply concepts in a manner that makes sense to you (or maybe they will never make sense to you, but they will make sense to themselves and then they get real famous-can anyone say Picasso again?). You will be amazed at what your child will produce as time goes on!

Loving what they do is the most important part to remember. Art is all about the learning process; it is not always the destination or final piece.