

Nurturing Creativity

Parents know that creativity is often not a high priority in education today and wonder how they can best support their curious, imaginative, and unconventional children.

Creativity is our country's most valuable resource and has become scarce in many school districts. Concerned parents see the emotional, social, and intellectual consequences of a narrowing curriculum and a system that fails to integrate creative thinking and the arts for young minds.

Today, teachers struggle to integrate creativity while navigating the pressures to raise test scores and student mastery of core subjects. As a result, children often sacrifice the most unique part of themselves. Teachers need support in finding the time and resources to address the creative needs of students.

As their children's first teachers, parents play a vital role in allowing natural creative forces to have full sway in their lives. Curiosity, creative thinking, and imagination begin at home, not only in what a family provides—resources, activities, opportunities—but in the values they embrace.

Parents need to begin early and continue to support the creative growth of their children through the school years. Realizing their own gifts and following their passions sustains children from their earliest months of life through high school and beyond.

QUESTIONS PARENTS MOST OFTEN ASK

How can I support my child's creative abilities?

- Build your home environment around your family's interests and strengths.
- Provide stimulating work spaces, supplies, displays, and tools. Include arts materials as well as books, prints, recordings, instruments, and children's biographies.
- Allow your child to see you make mistakes, try a different approach, and take risks.
- Show your curiosity and joy; share your humor.
- Do projects with your children that engage their whole selves: touching, feeling, imagining, listening, sensing, composing, combining, writing, improvising, and inventing.
- Create open time in your child's day for creative exploration.
- Expose your child to as many different areas/fields as possible.
- Include the natural world as a source for exploration and learning—nature integrates all the senses.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

»Developing the creative self is an important cornerstone of a child's life.

»Despite the lack of support for creativity in many schools, parents are uniquely positioned to cherish and support the unfolding of their child's creative expression.

»Guiding, mentoring, and advocating for a child's creative gifts includes helping her: develop inner strength, trust in her ideas, and be resilient.

»Creativity pioneer E. Paul Torrance devoted his life to researching and educating others on the importance of nurturing creative potential in all individuals.

Read: Torrance's *Creativity Manifesto for Children* at www.torrancecentertulsa.org



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How can I advocate for my creative child when he encounters challenges in school—socially, emotionally, or academically?

- Keep a record of your child's creative work. Take pictures of and describe the creative behaviors you've observed. Collect examples of his paintings, drawings, inventions, and writings.
- Share this evidence of creative behavior with your child's teachers to initiate a dialog in exploring how to accommodate his different learning needs and styles. Many teachers are open to parent-teacher partnerships to help them integrate creativity into the classroom.
- Show willingness to assist—either by sharing your talents in the classroom and/or by collaborating with teachers on alternative projects and assignments.
- Explore resources in your community that could benefit your child's creative interests. Consider studios (art, dance, theater, music); art and science museums; observatories; workshops; community centers; festivals; and mentorships.

How can I teach resiliency, self-acceptance, and determination?

Lay the groundwork for your child to discover what they love and who they are by modeling qualities that support the development of creativity:

- Applaud originality, whenever and wherever your child expresses it.
- Teach your child constructive (not destructive) feedback, thereby protecting him from criticism, censure, and premature judgment.
- Impart coping skills to deal with peer judgment, perfectionism, and frustration.
- Celebrate risk-taking and bold endeavor, focusing less on the approval of others, high grades, or winning.
- Give him opportunities to correct errors, refine visions, rewrite, re-create, improve, and elaborate.
- Find venues for your child to share her best work—competitions, exhibits, festivals, and public spaces.



FOR MORE INFO

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