



Foothills Preschool

Process Art – “It’s the process not the product”

“Supporting the Development of Creativity”

By: Laurel Bongiorno

A three year old sits at the kitchen table extremely focused on his art. He’s gathered white paper, a glue bottle, scissors, small bits of colored paper, tissue paper, and finger paint from his own special art box. He chooses which paper to cut and which to tear. He intently glues each small item to the white paper, creating a collage. He then paints bright red all around his gluing, creating a framed-effect. With delight, he shows his sister his creation, and begins to make another piece of art.

A four-year-old waits for instructions while her mother gathers materials for her to create a flower basket. Her mom places a piece of large white paper, a glue bottle, a pair of scissors and small pieces of tissue paper on the table and says, “Okay, you can make this however you want --- BUT the basket is the base and I cut that for you, and then the tissue papers pieces are the flowers. Let me show you how to tear the tissue paper.” The four-year-old pastes the basket in place and glues the flowers, creating the basket of flowers as planned. She shows her mother what she’s made and says, “Is this right?”

These examples show two very different types of art experiences. In the first, a process art experience, the child has many opportunities to explore the materials, think, express himself, and create. The second is a product focused art experience where the child follows directions given to her to make a predetermined end product.

These two types of art experiences don’t support children’s development in the same ways. It’s important to know the difference in order to offer children art experiences that support their creativity, enjoyment of art, thinking skills, and healthy development.

Process Art Supports Children’s Development

Physical Development: Your child’s small motor skills develop as he glues, draws, paints, and plays with clay or homemade dough.

Language & Literacy Development: Children’s vocabulary expands when they name new art materials, tools, and concepts such as scissors, collage, purple, wide, sticky, and smooth and when they tell you about their art!

Social and Emotional Development: There is joy in self-expression. Art supports the development of self-regulation and self-control as your child focuses, makes choices, and feels successful.

Science and Math: Cause and effect, mixing colors, textures, molding dough, understanding quantities, exploring the natural world, observation, pouring, filling and more are all pre-math and science skills that your child will naturally learn while involved in process art.

Clues to Identifying Product and Process Art

Process Art:

- There's no sample, pattern, or model.
- Children explore lots of interesting materials.
- Adults have no idea what children will create.
- There's no right or wrong way to do the art.
- Children are relaxed and focused.
- The art is truly an "original" every time"

Product Art:

- Your child follows a sample, pattern, or model and follows instructions.
- Adults know in advance what the artwork will look like.
- There's a right way and a wrong way.