

# ideas for parents

## Easy Ways to Build Assets for and with Your Child

### FAST FACTS

#### ASSET #17: Creative Activities

Youth are more likely to grow up healthy when they spend three or more hours per week in music, theater, or other arts.

**20%**  
of youth surveyed by Search Institute have this asset in their lives.\*

#### What Are Assets?

Assets are 40 values, experiences, and qualities that help kids succeed. "Creative activities" is one of four constructive-use-of-time assets.

\* Based on Search Institute surveys of 217,277 6th- to 12th-grade youth throughout the United States during the 1999-2000 school year.

## Adding the Arts to Your Family Time

**M**ention painting, many people think of Picasso. Mention music, and Mozart, Erykah Badu, Selena, or the Rolling Stones come to mind.

Rarely do we think of ourselves—or our children—as painters or musicians.

Yet, all of us are artists in some way. We think of creative ways to surprise someone on her or his birthday. We hum a few notes along with the radio. We dance around when we're in a good mood.

These small bursts of artistic expression are important ways we communicate our uniqueness. By bringing more art and music into our homes, we can help to develop another side of our children's personalities, talents, and skills.

Some easy ways to do this:

- Become clothing critics. During a shopping trip, critique the colors, designs, and patterns you see on clothes.
- Play magnet art. Visit a museum together and walk toward the first painting that really catches your eye (draws you to it like a magnet). Let each family member explain what they like about the painting they chose.



- Incorporate the discipline of art. Have your child take music or art lessons. Have the family gather around the piano or guitar once a week and sing. Or make time daily to sing, rap, dance, do an art project, or do a humorous creative skit.
- Welcome the "noise" your child makes when practicing an instrument—treasure the moments when you can hear her or him being creative.

### talk together

Questions to discuss with your child:

- Which do you enjoy most: music, art, theater, or dance? Why?
- What activities would you like to try that you have never tried before?
- How can we incorporate the arts more into our lives?

### time together

Three ways to enhance music, art, or theatrical training with your child:

1. Set aside an arts area in your home. Keep construction paper, paint, glue, string, scissors, and other creative supplies on hand.
2. Show your child art that you've done and show her or him your interests. Doing so may inspire your child.
3. Explore the art and music of a culture that is different from yours.

**Quick Tip:**  
The arts provide fun ways to connect with your child.

## Helpful Hints

**Tips that make bringing out the artist in your child easier:**

- **Play music when your child is around.**  
Expose her or him to different sounds such as light jazz, classical, rock, hip-hop, and country.
- **Emphasize that the importance of participating in the arts is enjoyment, not necessarily becoming the greatest performer.**
- **Display your child's artwork at home or work—maybe even the local library.**
- **Bring out the writer in your child. Begin an ongoing story. Write an opening line on a piece of paper placed in a busy area of your home so others can make additions.**

## The Power of Music

**“Music should be prized as an invaluable way to boost human brain power,”** says Frances Rauscher, Ph.D., a

research psychologist. She and her colleagues at the University of California, Irvine, have found these positive effects of music:

- Children who received eight months of music lessons had a 46% improvement in reasoning skills; kids who didn't take lessons had only a 6% increase.
- Kids who listened to 10 minutes of Mozart before a test had higher scores than students who sat in silence or listened to relaxation tapes.



## The Challenge

**Of the four constructive-time-use assets, this is the one fewest young people have. Only 16% of boys and 24% of girls have this asset. Are we limiting arts involvement only to those who have the most obvious talent?**

## More Help for Parents

**Growing Up Creative: Nurturing a Lifetime of Creativity** by Teresa M. Amabile gives practical, helpful tips on how to develop your child's creativity. (Published by Creative Education Foundation.)

## FINAL WORD

**“Inside you there's an artist you don't know about.”**

**—Jalal-Uddin Rumi**

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