

Creative Adventures with Literature (CAL)

Introduction

Creative Adventures with Literature (CAL), a supplemental curriculum for children from three through five, has been developed and revised through contracts with the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education. The last revision began in 2017 through a sub-contract with the University of the Ozarks in Clarksville with Dot Brown and Beverly C. Wright making the revisions. Shelli Henehan, Ed.D., Associate Professor/Coordinator of Assessment, UAFS School of Education/College of STEM, supervises the project. The current revisions reflect the *Arkansas Child Development and Early Learning Standards: Birth through 60 Months (AR CDELS)* adopted by the Arkansas Early Childhood Commission in April 2016. Dot Brown, Beverly C. Wright and Shelli Henehan served on the committee that developed the Standards.

CAL is a collection of curriculum guides that integrate two of the nine **Domains** in the Standards: **Emergent Literacy** and **Creativity and Aesthetics** with other **Domains** included where appropriate. The guides introduce children to the works of well-known artists, to recognized illustrators of children’s books, and to the techniques used by illustrators of some of the children’s books that are included. Currently, fourteen guides can be found on the Better Beginnings website. Additional guides may be added.

The developers of CAL suggest that you “*Energize, enhance and supplement your curriculum with **Creative Adventures with Literature (CAL)**.*”

The following introduces the **Domain: Creativity and Aesthetics** in the *Arkansas Child Development and Early Learning Standards: Birth through 60 Months*.

Creativity and Aesthetics

Young children love to express themselves through music, movement, visual arts, and drama. With the proper learning environment, engaging in artistic expression can foster a child’s creativity and support other areas of development and learning. Creativity and creative thinking are critical 21st century skills, important drivers of innovation in society, and key elements for success and happiness in school and adulthood.¹ At the same time, music, visual arts, and drama are serious fields of study much like mathematics and science. Sophisticated artistic expression requires an understanding of the specific concepts and processes of these art forms that begins in early childhood. Music, for example, requires an understanding of tempo, dynamics [loud and soft], and pitch. Visual art requires an understanding of shape, color, and texture. Arkansas’s early childhood professionals can help young children learn these concepts and provide a foundation for more advanced artistic expression.

The domain of *Creativity and Aesthetics* intersects with all other areas of development and learning. Through music, movement, visual arts, and drama, children can improve their fine and gross motor skills, language and vocabulary, and social skills. Children can also learn mathematical and science concepts through different forms of artistic expression [e.g., fractions and sound waves], as well as about different cultures through songs, dance, and art. It is important that Arkansas’s early childhood professionals encourage exploration of different forms of artistic expression and provide developmentally appropriate opportunities to draw, sing, and engage in dramatic play activities.

Areas of creativity and aesthetics in the standards

The *Arkansas Child Development and Early Learning Standards* focus on three areas of creativity and aesthetics:

- **Music and movement** focuses on a child's growing ability to explore and move to music, understand music concepts, and appreciate music.
- **Visual arts** charts a child's progression in exploring and appreciating art, understanding art concepts, and expressing themselves through art.
- **Drama** outlines a child's growing ability to explore drama, understand drama concepts, and appreciate and express themselves through drama.

Creativity and Aesthetics: Key Takeaways

- Creativity and creative thinking are critical 21st century skills, important drivers of innovation in society, and key elements for success and happiness in school and adulthood.
- Music, visual arts, and drama are serious fields of study much like mathematics and science. Sophisticated artistic expression requires an understanding of the specific concepts and processes of these art forms that begins in early childhood.
- Through music, movement, visual arts, and drama, children can improve development and learning in other areas. It is important that Arkansas's early childhood professionals encourage exploration of different forms of artistic expression and provide opportunities to paint, sing and engage in dramatic play activities.

¹Partnership for 21st Century Skills [2007]. *The Intellectual and Policy Foundations of the 21st Century Skills Framework*

The above information is part of the introduction to the Creativity and Aesthetics Domain (p. 80) of the Arkansas Department of Human Services, 2016. *Arkansas Child Development and Early Learning Standards: Birth through 60 Months*. Little Rock, AR: Arkansas Department of Human Service, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education.