



## Appreciating the Early Learner

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Often adults are caught off guard as to how to respond to children's accomplishments. Saying the first thing that comes to mind may not always be the best choice, sometimes leading to feelings of shame or leading to an unwillingness to try again. For example.....

Arthur says: "Look what I did!"  
Dad says: "What is it?"

Tiffany says : "Look at my apple picture!"  
Mom says: "Why did you color it purple?"

A rule to remember is to address the behavior or actions instead of the product. In early childhood, children create many things during the process of learning and experimenting. Learning is more about the PROCESS than the end product. Remember this if you find a child's cubbie empty at the end of the day and inquire about the learning activities with less concern over brining more construction paper foldings and unidentifiable paintings home.

Commenting on the child's actions helps build an inner sense of accomplishment and the child learns to be self-driven; not always turning to you for their accolades.

If a child cleaned his or her room, rather than saying, "I am so proud of you," instead try saying, " Great job picking up! You should be proud of yourself. Doesn't it feel good?"

When a child completes a work of art that is only recognizable in the child's eyes, adults can respond by saying, "Look at all of those colors" or "You sure did work hard on that!"

Sometimes when your child brings home art work, you may find yourself thinking, "Good grief! What is this?" But don't say it. A good beginning is, "Tell me about this." Art work is an expression of language. Many times a child won't be able to tell you what it is that he/she has painted or shaped. Many children will paint one color over another. This is the child's way of exploring with paint. Some will start out with a specific idea in mind, and then gradually cover every figure on his/her paper. In other words, some of these painting have a completely different painting underneath.

Please enjoy your child's art as his/her own self-expression. Give him/her a place to display this work, preferably at his/her eye level. Help you child develop an appreciation simply completing a task and note the unique quality of his/her own work.

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