

# Achieving a Healthy Balanced Lifestyle:

How to Integrate Creativity and Literacy into  
Fitness and Nutrition Activities

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# The Kraft Great Kids Program



The Kraft Great Kids Program is a partnership between the Kraft Foods Foundation, the Chicago Park District, the Chicago Public Libraries, and After School Matters that brings children meaningful out-of-school experiences related to attaining a healthy lifestyle.

The program consists of organized after school and summer activities in twelve parks, and focuses on the needs of school children ages 6-12. One Program and Event Facilitator, hired by the Chicago Park District, works at each site during after school time and summer day camp to plan and implement program activities.

## **Program Goals:**

To help children attain four aspects of a healthy lifestyle:

Nutrition

Fitness

Literacy

Creativity

# Why Integrate Literacy & Creativity in a Healthy Lifestyle Program for Youth?

Because it will SAVE THE WORLD!!!!



# Literacy activities help children develop physically & socially

"Children whose neural pathways have been reinforced by a great deal of positive early experience- including a variety of language activities- will be better off when the brain's pruning process begins."

Making Connections: How Children Learn

Education.com

*By U.S. Department of Education*



"... the rule for brain structures appears to be "use it or lose it."

We know it for early childhood, but ..."The teenage years are a kind of critical time to optimize the brain."

*Jay N. Giedd, a child psychiatrist with the National Institute of Mental Health in Bethesda from an article in the Washington Post*



"Sharing books with children not only lays the groundwork for much of the language and critical thinking skills they will need later in life, it also helps prepare them for many of the emotional challenges all people eventually face.

Children who have continual, healthy interactions with nurturing caregivers become better prepared- both emotionally and biologically- to deal with and learn from the stresses and disappointments of everyday life."

Making Connections: How Children Learn  
Education.com  
By U.S. Department of Education



# Books help teach



Many educators and psychologists believe that books are one of the best ways children learn about right and wrong. ... they see how a character reacts in a given situation-how they treat their friends, ... or what they do when they want something that isn't theirs

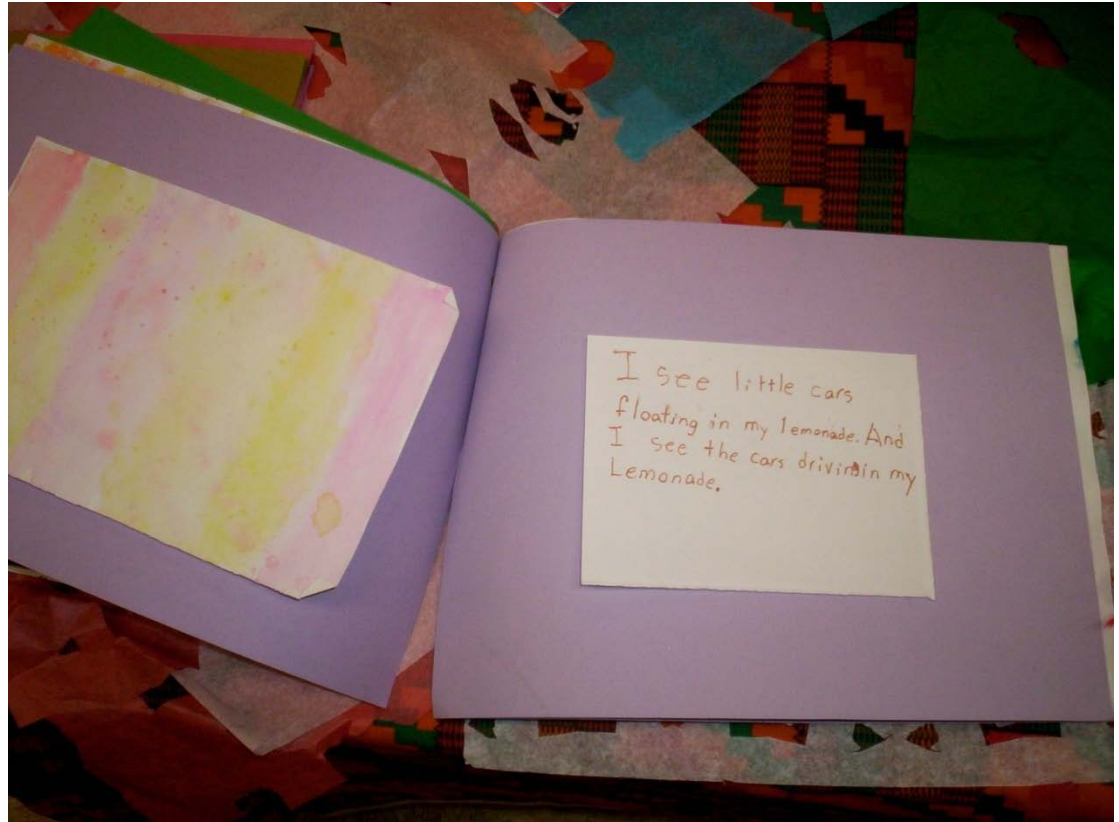
-they get a clearer picture of what's admirable behavior and what's not.

From **Reading Aloud with School-Age Children**

by **Robert Needlman, M.D., F.A.A.P.** <http://www.drspock.com/article/0,1510,5140,00.html>

# How can you integrate FUN literacy activities?

- Tie nutrition and fitness activities (gardening, food-making, yoga, etc.) to children's books and read it together as a way of introducing the activity.
- Create journals and have the kids do a few minutes of writing at the end of each day.
- Make up crazy stories based on art projects and characters they create, or pictures from books and magazines.
- Help children act out their favorite story books. Make costumes and use fun voices.
- Read a book together! Let kids take turns choosing books and reading pages of the story to the group.



# The arts lead to higher-level thinking skills:

- Engage & Persist:

- learning to pay attention to one's own work, concentrate and stay focused, stay or get back on track, work through problems or obstacles and feel encouraged by sticking with it.

- Reflect:

- Question and Explain- learning to think and talk with others about an aspect of one's work or working process

- Evaluate- learning to judge one's own work and working process, and the work of others in relation to standards.

Studio Thinking: The Real Benefits of Visual Arts Education

*By Lois Hetland, Ellen Winner, Shirley Veenema and Kimberly M. Sheridan*





The arts teach children to make good judgments about qualitative relationships- unlike much of the curriculum in which correct answers and rules prevail, in the arts, it is judgment rather than rules that prevail

The arts celebrate multiple perspectives- One of their large lessons is that there are many ways to see and interpret the world.

The arts teach children that in complex forms of problem solving purposes are seldom fixed, but change with circumstance and opportunity- Learning in the arts requires the ability and a willingness to surrender to the unanticipated possibilities of the work as it unfolds.

*The Arts and the Creation of Mind*  
By Elliot Eisner



"By developing comfort and fluency in the creative process, children (and adults) are not just mastering a way of exceeding in arts classes, they are internalizing a framework for life-long problem-solving and social relationship."

**The Arts@Play Curriculum: Making the Case for a New Model for Arts Instruction at the Chicago Park District** by *Julia Mayer*



"Creative activity is also a source of joy and wonder, while it bids its students to touch, taste, hear, and see the world. Children are powerfully affected by storytelling, music, dance, and the visual arts. They often construct their understanding of the world around musical games, imaginative dramas and drawing."

(Hamblen, Karen A., *Theories and Research That Support Art Instruction for Instrumental Outcomes*, 1993)

# How can you help your participants have a great CREATIVE arts experience?



- Ask kids to use their imaginations; try to get away from copying something
- Stress that kids are PLAYing; help them be crazy and have fun
- Have kids work in teams to create art
- Let kids make decisions about what they want to create
- Give kids clear directions about projects
- Give kids lots of different materials to work with
- Ask open ended questions about their art work
- Remind kids that it is not a race- take your time and enjoy the process.

# What is Creative Play?

- Not overly structured by adults
- May include role-play
- Lets children experiment with materials, physical activity, personal expression
- Goes beyond standard, pre-made projects (like art "kits")
- Lets children use/stimulate their imagination and make up their own games and rules



Nutrition & Fitness + Creativity & Literacy =  
Creative Play Opportunities



"Creative play often provides exercise for children, which in turn stimulates physical growth ... Creative play also can help children grow socially."

*--Good Times Being Creative, by the Human Development and Family Studies at Colorado State University*



“Play—a dynamic, active, and constructive behavior—is an essential and integral part of all children’s healthy growth, development, and learning across all ages, domains, and cultures. Play is not trivial, simple, frivolous, unimportant and purposeless . . . it is a serious behavior that has a powerful influence on learning.”

*Association for Childhood Education  
International*



**"If children are allowed to explore the arts under fewer imposed constraints, and are allowed to enjoy the activity, they will learn more from the process and stay far more interested in it."**

*-Ideas for Creative Curriculum*