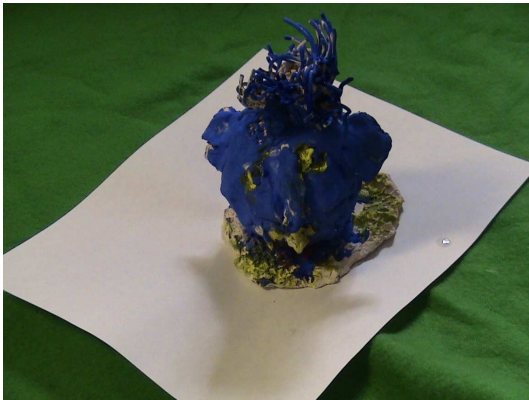


DIFFERENTIATED, ENRICHING MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES AT THE ENRICHMENT ALLIANCE OF VIRGINIA



DEFINITIONS

Materials and/or activities that are differentiated provide children opportunities to use different materials, employ different processes, or to create a different product, according to interests, abilities, needs, or learning styles.

The Enrichment Alliance of Virginia considers materials and/or activities enriching if they provide for meaningful, creative, and enjoyable exposure to science and the humanities.

A description of how we chose and use puzzles can help demonstrate how differentiated, enriching materials can be incorporated into an afterschool or summer program.

- ❖ We select puzzles that introduce children to science and the humanities in a meaningful way. For example, animals are depicted in a natural setting, are taken from works of art, or reference children's or traditional literature. We have puzzles depicting rainforests, ocean life, and mythical creatures such as unicorns and Pegasus. We do not have cartoon or movie characters, or other anthropomorphic animals that don't provide meaningful exposure to art or literature.
- ❖ We target both typically developing children and children with visual, motor planning, and cognitive challenges by varying the number and sizes of pieces in a puzzle. Whenever possible, we try to select pairs of closely related scenes. For instance, we have a large floor puzzle of the undersea world and a standard 100-piece puzzle of a coral reef.
- ❖ We support special needs children by employing any of the following strategies:
 - Looking at a picture of the puzzle and describing it together before beginning.
 - Providing only a small number of connected puzzle pieces to choose from at a time.
 - Presorting.
 - Talking about similarities and differences between shapes.
 - Asking children to run their hands around puzzle pieces.
 - Encouraging inclusive, cooperative groups.



MORE ABOUT DIFFERENTIATED MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES

We provide a wide selection of materials so that children may choose those best suited to their needs and learning styles. It is important to be flexible when approaching an activity. A child whose profound learning disabilities made drawing frustrating was given the opportunity to create comic characters out of play dough instead of drawing them like others in our group. A volunteer drew pictures of this boy's play dough characters in his sketchbook so that we could include his work with our collective project.

Games may be played with simplified rules or rules may be ignored if they clearly pose a difficulty for a child due to his or her disabilities. A bright child with weak spatial reasoning skills was unable to visualize moves in a board game. We ignored the rule that a piece touched is a piece moved and instead let him try out his moves by holding the piece over the board without touching it. Games that include instructions on a variety of levels, such as *The Way Things Work* by IPlay ® allow for differentiation. Cooperative games reduce anxiety and foster an inclusive atmosphere.

Puzzles can help a child with fine motor delays have access to visual arts. In our program, when a child with fine motor delays did not want to paint a unicorn, we gave her a unicorn puzzle to work on instead. Simple accommodations can make puzzles accessible to children who struggle with spatial relations or have vision impairments. These including reducing the number of pieces available to choose from at any one time, presorting pieces, and feeling or describing shapes.

Construction toys are often available in more than one size. K'nex ® are marketed to varying age levels. Buy for multiple levels including above and below the chronological ages of your students. Instructions for these toys are often very difficult to follow, especially for children with learning disabilities or cognitive delays. If you can, take pictures of activities in various stages of construction and use these to supplement instructions. If duplicate materials are available, model activities side-by-side, step-by-step*.

Art supplies should be easy to use and provide a variety of choices. Reduce frustration by using high quality materials such as Scotch ® brand tape and Fiskar ® scissors. Provide left and right-handed scissors. When possible, let children choose between glue, glue sticks, and tape; sensory sensitivity or motor delays might influence preferences. Have plastic exam gloves, cotton swabs, and paintbrushes available for children who cannot handle messy materials. Provide lap desks and pencil grips. Allow children to cut and paste, stamp, stencil, or trace pictures if they do not like to draw free hand. Have available books with step-by-step instructions such as Educational Insights' *I Can Draw* series and the *1-2-3 Draw* series by Peel Productions. Include some coloring books with thick lines and simple images along with more complicated selections. Be sure to include three-dimensional art as an option.



* See strategies, below.

Craft books need to have clear instructions. If you can, you may want to supplement instructions with additional photographs. Try working side-by-side, step-by-step or otherwise modeling crafts. Encourage cooperative groups. Consider assigning jobs in cooperative groups to avoid dominance and help each child shine at what he or she does best. You may, for example, ask one child to read instructions, one to do the cutting, and one to be in charge of organizing materials.

Science activities can be selected and adapted through the same strategies described above. Also, look for materials that are uncomplicated and easy to manipulate. We like Elenco ® *Snap Circuits* because the children are able to explore circuitry without wires and tapes that tangle up or come undone to frustrate them.

Imaginative play should include costumes, props, puppets and other accessories that are easy to manipulate. We look for marionettes that are very simple, without an excess of strings and moving parts. We also include hand puppets.



Books lend themselves well to differentiation. Look for books that appeal to a wide range of interests and reading levels. Make sure there are high interest easy readers for the child who is at grade level in terms of general knowledge, reasoning, etc. but struggles with reading. You may want to read aloud to children. Allow children to take notes on their reading if it helps them focus. Consider photocopying pages for the child to highlight, underline, or otherwise mark.

Writing Materials include wide-lined paper, 3” ring binder notebooks to use as lap desks, and flexible pencil grips. Some children benefit from color-coded writing paper or writing paper with embossed lines. Some children with written language disabilities may benefit from dictating or using keyboards but others may find their ideas flow better if they write longhand. If a child is writing longhand, you can help by providing appropriate writing materials and a comfortable workspace. Later, volunteers can help with proofreading, revising, and copying work. It's okay for a volunteer to copy over the final draft. Revision is an extra daunting task for the child who has struggled all the way through the rough draft.

Music can be a powerful tool to involve children whose greatest strengths fall in the areas of movement, music, and logic. It can soothe an agitated child. Be aware that children with sensory integration dysfunction may be hypersensitive to some sounds. Due to auditory defensiveness, one child in our program was resistant to our plans to make seed rattles and in the end elected to omit the seeds.

MORE ABOUT ENRICHING MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES

In our programs, materials and activities must meet at least one, preferably more of the following criteria:

- ☐ Is inherently interesting and rewarding for children. (This one is non-negotiable!)
- ☐ Engages problem-solving skills.
- ☐ Encourages exploration and invention.
- ☐ Encourages creative play.
- ☐ Increases comfort with and enthusiasm for reading.
- ☐ Increases comfort with and enthusiasm for art.
- ☐ Increases comfort with and enthusiasm for creative and expository writing.
- ☐ Exposes children to the sciences or humanities.

Games are chosen that allow opportunities for children to think, plan, imagine, or express themselves. We rarely use games that *only* involve chance or rote recall. As an example, we use *Labyrinth Junior*®, which requires children to think ahead and plan moves carefully.

Puzzles, as previously discussed, are chosen for their meaningful references to literature, art, or science. So are **coloring books, mazes, stencils**, etc.

Construction and building toys, such as Lego's® and K'nex®, allow children to plan, design, invent and explore. They encourage problem solving and collaboration, and increase children's positive experiences with fine motor skills.

Art Supplies should include a variety of materials such as: pen, paint, markers, pencils, and crayons; stickers and stamp sets; glues and items for collages and three dimensional art such as tissue, patterned wrapping paper, foam, plastic "jewels", pasta, beans; a selection of modeling materials including play dough, self-hardening clay, and Floam®; pipe cleaners, feathers, artificial flowers, beads, yarns, and ribbons.



Craft books are selected that have easy to follow instructions and tend to use materials children have at home, so they can follow their enthusiasm when they are away from us.

Science activity sets encourage active exploration and problem solving and support cooperative learning. Elenco® *Snap Circuits* is one of our most popular items.

Imaginative play items are available for both outdoors and indoors play. For outdoors play, we have dress up clothes including non-violent Halloween costumes (purchased on sale on November 1st), old clothes, and interesting bits of clothes, veils, scarves, ribbons, etc. To supplement a unit on magical creatures, we glue gunned felt -- cut to suggest scales, wings, feathers, etc.-- onto solid colored t-shirts purchased at the Goodwill Store. For imaginative play indoors, we have puppets and marionettes that depict magical creatures. Most of these are by Folkmanis®.

Books that promote our values of meaningful engagement with the sciences and humanities are of course prevalent, but because encouraging children to read for pleasure is a priority, we sometimes select books based exclusively on their appeal and accessibility to struggling and reluctant readers. These include joke books, comic books, and suspenseful stories.

Writing materials should balance structure and freedom. Some children need nothing more than a blank page to set their imaginations off, but others benefit from pictures, story starters, outlines, and models. Creative activities before writing can inspire the reluctant writer and challenge the gifted one. Encourage your students to write about their artistic creations or turn their imaginative play into written stories or plays. Conversely, let them write *towards* art and imaginative play activities, creating art works inspired by their stories or writing out scripts for plays and puppet shows. Some like to have a product in mind. Including book publishing materials, which can be as simple as cardboard, a long arm stapler, and a roll of contact paper, helps build enthusiasm for writing.



Music Materials can be used to introduce music and music appreciation and serve as an entry to other cultures. Besides common instruments such as tambourines, triangles, and bells, we have shaker eggs, rain sticks, and calabash rattles. Children can make their own instruments. Look for CD's from around the world to provide a focus or background music. Also, look for or create CD's that target children but feature kid friendly adult music. Some adult tunes with kid appeal include many Beatles tunes, Dizzy Gillespie's "Salt Peanuts", and Gustav Holtz "The Planets." Many contemporary recording artists, including Michelle Shocked and Jack Johnson have recorded high quality children's tunes.

Please see the last page of this handout for a list of materials and sources used by The Enrichment Alliance of Virginia.

GENERAL STRATEGIES

Side-by-side, step-by-step. A helper sits beside the child and models each step of a multi-step activity, one step at a time. For example, when a child in our program was unable to organize herself to draw a picture, her mentor sat beside her with a sketchpad. They decided to draw a whale. The assistant drew a head, the child drew a head; the assistant drew eyes, the child drew eyes and so on until the whale was complete and surrounded by waves.

Taking Turns. If an activity is too much for a child to do alone, you can take turns. Always make sure the child is the one who completes the activity. Let him or her take the last snip, draw the last eye, write down the last sentence, so that the child can have a sense of completion when the task is done.

Collaborative and cooperative grouping. Children work in mixed ability groupings, often with specific roles and tasks. There are formal models for these types of activities, which we do use, but we have found that groups often form naturally, with adults monitoring to make sure all children have equal opportunities to participate.



Sorting. With activities that have many pieces, such as construction kits and puzzles, we sometimes assist by sorting pieces or helping children sort them. Puzzle pieces can be sorted by an assisting adult as a child works, or they can be sorted in advance and stored in baggies.

Reducing selections. Related to sorting is reducing the number of pieces available. For example, if a child is trying to follow the directions in a Lego kit, a helper might put away most or all of the Lego's not needed in the step s/he is currently completing.

MATERIALS AND SOURCES USED BY THE ENRICHMENT ALLIANCE

Activity Kits

Elenco, Snap Circuits, Jr.

Art Activity and Craft Books:

Dover Publications, *Pictorial Archives Series* (a series of coloring books and other activity books based on authentic cultural artifacts)

Peel Productions, Inc. *1-2-3 Draw* (A series of drawing books on subjects such as cars, ocean animals, etc).

Search Press, *Step-by-Step* (A series of step-by-step instructions for three dimensional art such as clay modeling, paper folding, etc)

The Best Paper Airplanes You'll Ever Fly, Klutz

Walter Foster®, *I Can Draw* (A series of drawing books based on subjects, such as dinosaurs, cartoons, etc).

Williamson Publishing, *Little Hands Books*.

Art Supplies

Space will not allow us to include a comprehensive list of materials we use in our programs. This short list names items especially selected to help special needs children have positive experiences with art.

All Night Media Stamp Sets and other stamp sets, available at The Craft House and other locations.

Cotton balls and cotton tipped swabs

Fiskars® Scissors, including at left-handed scissors

Floam® (modeling media with beads).

Scotch Tape®

Construction Toys

K'nex, K'nex Industries, Inc. (This is a series from very simple toys to complex, robotic construction toys suitable for teens).

LEGO Inventions, Klutz.

Magz-X. (magnet balls and plastic rods)

Games

Falco, Marsha J. *SET*.

International Playthings, Inc. *David Macauley's Way Things Work*.
Ravensburger, Junior Labyrinth,

Russ, Larry. (1995). *The Complete Mancala Games Book*. New York, Marlowe and Co.

Marionettes and Puppets

Baleduc

Folkmanis

Outdoor Play

Classic Outdoor Games, Klutz.

Dress-up Clothes

Hula Hoops

Oversized Balls

Silk scarves and streamers (These are far more affordable through Southpaw Enterprises than most catalogues and retail stores).

Puzzles

Galt

Melissa and Doug

Ravensburger

Writing Supplies

Contact paper and cardboard for book binding

Calligraphy pens

Wide-ruled paper and paper with color coded lines

3 inch ring-binder notebooks and mouse pads for lap desks

SOURCES:

Amazon.com. **Please enter through our store at www.enrichmentalliance.org and support our program through your purchase.**

Shenanigans. Charlottesville, Virginia.

Southpaw Enterprises. www.southpawenterprises.com/

The Studio Art Store and The Craft House, Charlottesville, Virginia.