Developing children’s aesthetic sensibilities

Some questions to ask yourself to see if you are on track for developing children’s aesthetic sensibilities.

- Do I have images of art works, posters of dancers and architecture around the classroom?

- In my planning, do I include lessons devoted to studying a piece of music or performance, a painting, sculpture or traditional cultural art forms?

- Do I talk about art with my students – what they like, what role it plays in their life, why art is collected in museums around the world, what examples of art are there in their local environment, what making artworks means to them?

- Do I devote time to children’s reflections and discussion about their own artwork and artworks from the cultural world? Am I showing that I am really interested in their ideas? Are they developing a vocabulary and a capacity to consider artwork in terms of its maker and the time and place of its making?

- Do I create opportunities for children to explore their sensory world with games, experiences and activities?

- Do I share my own artistic pleasures? Do I talk with enthusiasm about my favourite music? Do I bring in examples of artworks that I love?

- Do I draw attention to the sensory experience by commenting on the delights of the sensory world – the tracery of branches against the sky, the way the harp makes me think of liquid silk, the sound of pan flutes that remind me of my time in Peru, the smell of the bush, the subtle texture on the surface of a child’s ceramic sculpture, the smell of the rain coming, the pleasure of sitting in spring sunshine?

- Have I established a visual stimulation table with collections of seedpods and nuts, mechanical bits, shells, interesting shaped twigs and bones, autumn leaves, pebbles of different colours and textures? Do children contribute to this?

- Do I incorporate a 10-minute drawing session into the day several times a week?

- Do all my students use an ideas journal?

- Do I take time to highlight current events, such as an arts festival or local arts exhibition, with my students?

- Have I made connections to the broader arts community and community resources in ways that have broadened my students’ experience of the world of art?
• Have I arranged for the children in my class to experience the theatre, an arts festival, a concert performance – or to have a similar experience in our school?

• Have I studied the artworks or cultural practices of several different cultures – especially those represented by the class group?

• Have I played different types of music to children to begin their day – just for the sheer pleasure of it?

• Can all of the children in my class sing a song or perform a dance or recite with confidence and gusto?

• Have I got a classroom library of art books, CDs and books of seductively beautiful photographic images?

• Are there viewing and listening aides such as magnifying glasses and headphones available for children to use?

• Have students used the computer to work with graphic and music software to create artworks? Am I confident they are gaining skills in using digital technology for creative purposes?