

Domain 4: Creative Expression

Standard: Children demonstrate the ability to convey ideas and emotions through creative expression.

Creative expression refers to how children use music, movement, building, and play to express themselves. From a very early age, children demonstrate an interest in sounds, colors, objects, and textures. In infancy, children engage in sensory exploration; they mouth different objects to learn about them, and use their hands to feel and move them.

During this period, children are aware of different sounds and are often heard cooing and babbling. Near one year of age, children are able to clap their hands and move their bodies to music and rhythm. Children also engage in interactive play such as peek-a-boo, and can imitate simple finger plays. They may also finger paint and play with different sensory materials such as water, sand, or play dough.

During their second year, children creatively express their thoughts and feelings through symbolic play, also known as pretend play. Children will imitate a familiar role, such as pretending to be the mommy by feeding and rocking a baby doll. Children engage in movement activities that incorporate whole body movements to express emotion. For example, children will roll around on the floor if they are being playful, or squeeze caregivers when excited. Increased hand-eye coordination and attention help them engage in art activities such as scribbling and brush painting for longer periods of time.

Children also take an eager interest in building things. Younger children will simply stack a few objects; as they near 36 months of age, children will have been building increasingly complex structures, and these activities are often intertwined with pretend play.

Birth to 9 months

7 months to 18 months

16 months to 24 months

Real World Story

Melissa is 36 months old and is sitting with her peers during circle time. Joy, their childcare provider, is reading them a story they are familiar with, "We're Going on a Bear Hunt." Melissa is moving her hands to match the movements of the children in the book. Each time Joy stands up to act out a part of the book, all the children scramble to their feet to copy the actions. Melissa squeals with excitement and moves her body to represent crawling through grass, wading through a river, stomping in mud, and crawling through a cave.

Once Joy gets to the part of the story that encounters the bear, Melissa and the children automatically move from a crawling position to a full stand, and begin to run in place as fast as they can. Melissa makes the pretend movement of running up the stairs, and then flops herself to the ground to act out the part where the children crawl under their bedcovers. As Melissa lies on the floor, giggling, one of her peers has tripped over another child. Melissa stops laughing and observes Joy comfort the child.

Joy then returns to her spot and places the book behind her and says, "Okay, boys and girls, show me how you can stand on your feet." Melissa and the older children stand up; some children are still giggling and moving around. Melissa is standing quietly, waiting for Joy. Joy says, "It is time to whisper and walk quietly over to the table; we don't want to wake the sleeping bear." The children then follow Joy as she tiptoes and keeps one finger over her lips. Melissa follows along, whispering "hush," and works hard to keep her balance as she tiptoes.

Discover how this Real World Story is related to:

- Developmental Domain 1: Social & Emotional Development
[Relationship with Peers \(https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/relationship-peers/\)](https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/relationship-peers/)
- Developmental Domain 1: Social & Emotional Development
[Empathy \(https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/empathy/\)](https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/empathy/)
- Developmental Domain 2: Physical Development & Health
[Gross Motor \(https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/gross-motor/\)](https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/gross-motor/)
- Developmental Domain 2: Physical Development & Health
[Perceptual \(https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/perceptual/\)](https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/perceptual/)
- Developmental Domain 3: Language Development, Communication, & Literacy
[Receptive Communication \(https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/receptive/\)](https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/receptive/)
- Developmental Domain 3: Language Development, Communication, & Literacy
[Early Literacy \(https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/earlylit/\)](https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/earlylit/)

- Approaches to Learning
[Creativity, Inventiveness, & Imagination](https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/creativity/)
(<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/creativity/>)

THIS EXAMPLE HIGHLIGHTS how language, cognitive, and physical development can all come together in one activity. Melissa is working on her receptive language and early literacy development as she follows the story and completes the accompanying movements. She is learning to express feelings and actions with her body, thereby developing creative expression. Melissa is also working on her spatial-awareness, gross-motor, and perceptual development as she moves her body in different ways, while having to remain aware of others around her. Melissa also demonstrates behaviors that indicate the awareness of feelings in others, as she stops laughing to observe a peer who has gotten hurt.

Discover how Creative Expression is related to:

- Self-Regulation: Foundation of Development
[Attention Regulation](https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/attention/) (<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/attention/>)
- Developmental Domain 1: Social & Emotional Development
[Emotional Expression](https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/emotional-exp/) (<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/emotional-exp/>)
- Developmental Domain 3: Language Development, Communication, & Literacy
[Expressive Communication](https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/expressive/) (<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/expressive/>)
- Approaches to Learning
[Creativity, Inventiveness, & Imagination](https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/creativity/)
(<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/creativity/>)

Related Resources

Early Learning Moments Videos
(<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/resources/videos/ielg-moments/>)

Illinois Early Learning Guidelines: Standards
(<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/ielg-resources/ielg-standards/>)

Guidelines Videos
(<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/resources/videos/videos-guidelines/>)

Guidelines
Brochure
(<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/resources/guidelines-brochure/>)

Guidelines Poster
(<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/resources/guidelines-poster/>)

Illinois Early Learning Guidelines: A Guide for
Parents
(<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/ielg-resources/guidelines-parents/>)

Interactive Guidelines Flip Book
(<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/ielg-resources/guidelines-flipbook/>)

Illinois Early Learning Guidelines: Crosswalks
and Alignments
(<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/ielg-resources/ielg-crosswalks/>)

Illinois Prevention Initiative: Implementation
Manual 2013
(<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/ielg-resources/ipi-manual/>)

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