Observation Form: Communicating Through the Arts

Think about the ways that you use the creative arts to communicate and express yourself. Have you ever used music to express feelings or spent hours deciding on the perfect outfit? What about keeping a journal or writing poetry? These are ways we can use the arts for healthy self-expression. School-age children will also use the creative arts as a way to communicate and express themselves. Use the form below to observe school-age children in their learning environment. The list of examples on communicating through the arts is also provided for you.

Communicating Through the Arts

Visual arts
- School-age children can create images or visual representations of events or feelings. Sometimes children have a hard time discussing topics that make them uncomfortable or that are confusing. Creating a drawing, painting, or other visual representation of those feelings allows children to express themselves without always having to talk about it. Sometimes, discussing their artwork is easier than discussing what actually happened.

Literature
- Keep a personal diary or blog: School-age children can release their feelings and thoughts in a healthy way by journaling about their life. Feelings usually kept to themselves might become topics for conversation because they have worked through them on paper. It is important to remind school-age children that information kept on a blog is not private.
- Creative writing: School-age children can use their imaginations to communicate through creative writing. They could put themselves into a story or create a character that they wish they could be like. Poetry is also a way for children express themselves. Poetry is exceptionally versatile and can appeal to all children because there are so many different types of poetry.

Music
- Play a musical instrument: School-age children who play a musical instrument may use this creative outlet to communicate their feelings. Different types of music evoke different emotions, and those emotions are necessary to perform the piece well. Children may choose slower, sad sounding music if they are feeling down. If they are in good spirits, they may choose upbeat pieces.
- Music composition: Creating music is another way school-age children can express emotions and feelings. Children may write song lyrics or a talented musician may even create their own musical compositions.
• Listen to music: Listening to music is a classic outlet for school-age children. Their choice in music may depend on their mood or current situation. The music itself can speak to children; it can get them up and moving or match their somber moods. The lyrics are important as well and can be interpreted to help them through a situation.

Dance
• Interpretive dance, in which dancers move based on what the music is saying to them, provides a school-age child the opportunity to express emotion and tell a story through movement.

Drama
• Acting and storytelling: Acting and storytelling are ways children can put thought and emotion into practice. In these artistic methods, they can take an author’s words and use what is going on in their lives to fuel the dramatic expression.
• Pretend play: School-age children are not too old to engage in pretend play. They may act out scenes with figures or dolls or dress in costume and pretend to be a character. Sometimes, pretend play can be a healthy form of escape from the everyday stressors of life.

Discovery
• Inventing: Inventing is a creative outlet for the imagination to dream up the impossible. School-age children will enjoy inventing products or methods that may help them, their families or the world around them. This is a way that children might express what is bothering them or try to fix something.
• Scientific discovery and hypothesis: Making discoveries and guesses at experiments and outcomes is another form of creative expression. It allows children to think freely and communicate their thoughts and opinions.
### Communicating Through the Arts: Observation Form

Use this form to observe school-age children in the learning environment. In the first column, record the action, activity or situation you observe. In the second column, record why you think this is a form of communicating or self-expression.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Thoughts</th>
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| Child’s name and age: Callie, 11  
Observation: Today I noticed that Callie spent time in the quiet area with her journal. When her friends asked her to go to the art area, she declined. | Callie may be doing some creative writing or writing in a journal about her day. She might feel more comfortable writing down her feelings than speaking them aloud. |
| Child’s name and age: Emelia, 8  
Observation: Today I noticed Emelia’s outfit. She was wearing jeans with flowers and hearts painted on them. She also had many bracelets on her wrist and every fingernail was painted a different color. | Emelia could be trying to establish her sense of style. While she normally wears a very conservative matching outfit, today she was wearing items that were bright and fun. Her family may be letting her pick out her own outfits now. |
| Child’s name & age:  
Observation: | |
| Child’s name & age:  
Observation: | |
| Child’s name & age:  
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