

# Module 7: Creative Expression

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## Materials Needed

- Copies of the VELS
- Handouts
- Flip chart, markers, and tape
- 11 x 18 construction paper
- Paint, brushes, tissue paper and glue/gluesticks
- Assorted collage materials
- Clay or play dough and tools

## Goals and Objectives

*As a result of this module, participants will:*

*Related Northern Lights Core Knowledge Areas*

Be familiar with the VELS Learning Goal, Definitions and Examples in the domain of creative Expression, and how this domain is connected with other domains of the VELS	Teaching and Learning
Understand that creativity is an inherent characteristic of childhood, and that there are many ways children express their creativity.	Child Development Teaching and Learning
Understand the arts as an expression of creativity, culture, and tradition as well as our legacy to the future.	Teaching and Learning Family and Community
Become familiar with a variety of media, techniques, and tools of the creative arts.	Teaching and Learning
Understand that both the process and product of creative expression have value for young children, but that the process of creativity is what is most important to children.	Child Development Teaching and Learning
Develop an appreciation for the forms of creative expression, and a way of sharing that appreciation with children.	Child Development Teaching and Learning
Strengthen the appreciation and recognition of one's own creativity and unique ways of expressing it.	Teaching and Learning Professionalism and Program Organization
Understand the adult's role in supporting children's creative expression.	Teaching and Learning Professionalism and Program Organization
Understand the role of the environment in supporting children's creative expression.	Teaching and Learning
Become familiar with community and professional resources and research on creative expression.	Family and Community

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As a result of this module, participants will:

Related Northern Lights Core Knowledge Areas

Be able to describe the development of creative expression to parents, colleagues and other adults.	Family and Community Child Development
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**Note** Page references to the Creative Expression domain in the Vermont Early Learning Standards in this module are noted as: “VELS” followed by the page number. For example, VELS Pg. 20. Relevant pages for this module are 20-22, 28, and 30.

### Introductions and Opening Activity

- Make sure participants and the instructor introduce themselves including pertinent information about their work and work settings.
- Choose from among the following opening activities intended to tap into participant’s feelings about creative expression or to use their creative energy:
  - *Handout 1: Creating Something From Nothing*
  - *Handout 2: Red Light-Green Light The Arts Version*
  - *Handout 3: Start with Words*
  - *Handout 4: Group Drawing Activity*
  - Reflect and discuss with a partner: When did you get the message that you are (or aren’t) a creative person? Think back to specific memories if possible. Where were you—at home or school? When do most people identify themselves as creative or not creative? Think broadly—what are your outlets for creativity? Stretch yourself to think beyond what we normally define as creativity; in other words being creative is more than having artistic talents.
  - *Handout 5: How Do You Use Your Creative Thinking?*
- Instructors should facilitate a group discussion based on the opening activity chosen for this session.

### Review the Standard and Domain

Have participants read the Introduction and Learning Goals and Definitions for this domain ( See VELS Pgs.20-21).

If it hasn’t been used as an opening activity, have participants complete *Handout 5: How Do You Use Your Creative Thinking* and facilitate a conversation about creativity as an attitude and the balance between *making* something happen and *letting* something happen. Human beings are creative when they imagine something that doesn’t exist—including new ideas or solutions to problems. (See [For a Child, Life is a Creative Adventure: Supporting Development and Learning Through Art, music, Movement, and Dialogue.](#) Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children and Families, Head Start Bureau)

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Instructors may choose from among the following options:

- Break into groups of 3-5 and do the *Handout 6: Group Sculpture* activity. Discuss the VELS Learning Goals and Examples that were evident in this experience.

### Activity: The Best Example

1. Ask participants to select one Example from VELS Pgs. 20-21 that speaks to them, or that they feel strongly about and are committed to in their work with children.
2. Have them “pitch” this example to the group as if they were trying to persuade others that this is the most important example in the domain.
3. Make sure they include a rationale for their choice, and concrete evidence of how they incorporate this example into their curriculum.

### The Development of Creative Expression

Instructors should use the following key points in framing a mini-lecture on the topic of the development of creative expression, many of which originate in an article called “Promoting Creativity for Life Using Open-Ended Materials.” by Drew, W.F & B. Rankin. *Young Children*. 59 (4): 38-45, 2004.

#### Note



- Since there are many creative media and forms of creative expression covered in this domain, instructors may wish to focus on what they have expertise and experience in when presenting this module. Or, they may want to team up so that more than one medium is covered. It is more important to stress that creativity and expression are multi-faceted and connected to all domains of early learning, than to provide an in-depth module on one creative medium.
- The title of this domain is Creative Expression rather than Creative Arts. We might think of this domain as being about the arts, but often people associate that with visual arts. We can't forget that many people express themselves through movement, music, story, drama, ideas and much more. Creative thinking is equally important to this domain as creative arts are.
  - Play is the main ingredient in creativity; a sense of playfulness is critical to one's ability to have meaningful, productive lives. Spontaneous and creative self-expression increases children's sense of competence and well being throughout their lives.
  - Through play, children also learn to appreciate their own unique approach to doing things, and the approaches of others. Working together to create something, or to solve a problem provides the environment Vygotsky talks about when he describes learning as a social activity.
  - Children extend and deepen their understandings through multiple, hands-on experiences with diverse materials. The importance of hands-on learning is a foundation of early childhood education. The tools and materials that support creative expression should go beyond what we commonly associate with creative arts (paint, paper, markers, glue, brushes) to include clay, natural objects,

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fabrics, dramatic play props, musical instruments and materials to create musical instruments, and so on.

- Creative expression makes learning in the content areas of literacy, mathematics, science, and social studies meaningful and joyful for children. Teachers provide children opportunities to explore open-ended materials intentionally and with purpose, in order to promote learning in the content areas of early childhood education.
- Teachers are nourished by experiencing children’s joy and learning, and when engaged in reflection, they are strengthened in their ability to promote children’s creative expression.
- Appreciation of the arts further enhances children’s creativity when they have opportunities to experience the art that others create. Early childhood environments should display children’s creations, and they should also be places where the works of masters are displayed. The works of composers, painters, dancers, comedians, sculptors and potters and others are appropriate for inclusion in early childhood settings, and offer many rich opportunities for children to develop a vocabulary to share their impressions and opinions, ask questions and show respect for the contributions of others.
- Children develop creative expression at their own pace, but are influenced by the adults and environments in which they live and learn. See *Handout 7: Developmental Stages*.

### What Does Creative Expression Look Like?

What does Creative Expression look like and how might teachers observe it in young children? An environment that supports creativity isn’t one that is chaotic, where anything goes. It is a thoughtful and planned environment that offers children choices, a variety of materials, and opportunities to express themselves in all areas of the setting.

#### **Activity: Creative Expression in Individual Children**

1. Have participants picture all the children in their program.
2. Participants then list the ones they think are the most creative.
3. Ask participants: “What do you see about these children that makes you say that?”
4. Next, list the children you think are the least creative.
5. Ask participants: “What do you see about these children that makes you say that?”
6. Next, have participants picture a part of their room. Ask the following questions:
  - Which children are most creative in this area?
  - What kind of creative expression happens in this area?
  - What are the possibilities for creative expression if I combine different areas of the environment, including the outdoors?

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The question, “What do you see that makes you say that?” comes from the Visual Thinking Strategies framework that engages students in observing, thinking, and communicating about visual art and leads to children becoming respectful of differences of opinion and gain conflict resolution skills. For more information, see [www.vue.org](http://www.vue.org).

### Reflecting on Creative Expression

Select a reflection activity from the options below:

- In pairs, participants share their earliest creative expression memory, positive or negative. If the memory is negative, what could have been done differently to make it a positive experience? If positive, what made it a positive experience?
- Do you consider yourself a creative person? In what ways are you creative? When and how did you get the idea that you are/aren't a creative person?
- Have each person reflect on how their concept of themselves as a creative person, or their earliest memories influences them as teachers of young children.

### The Adult's Role in Supporting this Domain

Review the list of ideas on VELS Pg. 22 on ways adults can support children's creative expression. Ask if anyone has different ideas or disagrees with anything on this list.

Do *Handout 8: Rainbow Placemats* activity or create your own scenario for participants to experience supportive or discouraging adult attitudes related to a simple art activity.

### The Role of the Environment in Supporting this Domain

Review the list on VELS Pg. 23 of ways the environment supports children's creative expression. Ask if anyone wants to add or disagree with anything on the list.

Have participants complete the checklist in *Handout 9: Does Your Classroom Encourage Creativity* from [For a Child, Life is a Creative Adventure: Supporting Development and Learning Through Art, Music, Movement, and Dialogue](#).

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#### **Activity: Materials that Promote Creative Expression**

1. In small groups, assign a creative expression medium such as Visual Arts, Creative Dramatics, Music, or Movement.
2. Have participants make a list on flip chart paper of the tools and materials they have in the classroom that promotes creative expression for their respective media.
3. Post the lists on the wall and have people walk around and add to them.

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### Reflecting on the Role of the Adult and the Environment

Reflect and respond to the following quote from Robert Henri from *The Art Spirit*, 1984, Westview Press:

“When the artist is alive in any person, whatever his kind of work may be, he becomes an inventive, searching, daring, self-expressive creature. He becomes interesting to other people. He disturbs, upsets, enlightens, and opens ways for better understanding. Where those who are not artists are trying to close the book, he opens it and shows there are still more pages possible.”

How does Henri’s quote apply to creative expression in young children, the adults who teach and care for them, and the environments in which they live and learn?

### Putting It All Together

As instructors prepare to complete this module, they should be thinking about how to bring together the main points and objectives covered during the training. The following activities and scenarios are intended to involve participants in synthesizing their learning:

- Make a plan of action based on the conversations and activities in this module. Develop a concrete plan that addresses how creative expression is a part of their curriculum. Use *Handout 10: Creating an Action Plan*.
- Discuss *Handout 11, Scenario #1: Assistant teacher*.
- Discuss *Handout 11, Scenario #2: Arts Council grant*.

### Conclusion

Instructor and participants review key points and identify the most important new learning that occurred. Be sure to include:

- The reason it’s called Creative Expression
- The creative process is emphasized more than the creative product, when working with young children
- Adults play a significant role in promoting children’s creativity; likewise they can also extinguish a child’s creativity and alter his or her self-concept with long-lasting effects.
- Appreciating creative expression in others is an important component in this domain. Children should have the opportunity to be exposed to a wide variety of creative expressions, including the masters as well as the work of other children.

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### Handout 1: Creating Something from Nothing

#### Materials

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Boxes or bags of odd materials. Each collection should contain materials with a deliberate omission of an important item, (e.g., one collection could contain berry baskets, paper, ribbon, beads but no scissors or tape. Another could contain pot lids, glass jars, sticks, but no spoons, lids or beans

#### Room Arrangement

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Groups of 3-5 seated comfortably at tables.

#### Time

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15-20 minutes, depends on your group

#### Goals

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- To have participants work in small groups to experience both the creative process and the creation of a product.
- To have participants experience creative expression in a collaborative fashion.

#### Leader

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1. Pass out a set of materials to each group.
2. Groups can only use what they are given to complete the creative task. They can not borrow from other groups or use materials outside of what they are given, including materials they may have brought with them.
3. The limits for the activity are:
  - This must be a group project
  - Use only the materials that you were given
  - Stick to designated time limit
4. Possible follow-up questions might include:
  - How did it feel to be required to produce a product?
  - How did it feel working as a group?
  - How did it feel having a limited supply and variety of materials?
  - When you were told to create a product, what did you first think of? A song, poem, picture, sculpture...? Tangible or intangible?
  - How did you respond to the materials given to you?
  - Did you follow the rules?
  - Were you missing a tool/materials that you really wanted? How did this feel?