

## [Art at the Center](#)



### **The Home Studio – Begin with Drawing**

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The Home Studio – Begin with Drawing

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Art at the Center is inspired by the schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy. Reggio schools have an atelier, a studio that is a resource and center of learning for the teachers, students and families in that school. The classrooms each have a mini-atelier, a space in the classroom where materials from the studio are brought into the everyday life of the classroom and are available to the children to continue their explorations and work individually and in small groups. It is our goal to be a center for art and learning for the community and our hope that this will extend into the homes of our students, inspiring mini-ateliers that might take the form of a family art night or a desk in the family room dedicated to storage of art materials and display of projects.

The idea of doing art with young kids, particularly at home can seem intimidating. It is often nice to get started with the benefit of instructors, other parents and kids and the dedicated space of the studio. I like to point out to people that when they visit the studio there is not a lot of paint splattered on the walls or floors and after the first few sessions, children understand that paint is for paper, clay needs to be on the table or in the hand and materials each have certain uses and care required.

In a teaching and learning model that focuses on the process, procedures for setting up, caring for materials and cleaning up are an important part of that process. Professional artists go through these procedures each day working in their studios and we try to model that in our work. Letting kids be a part of the set up, clean up and care of their materials gives them a sense of ownership and responsibility and helps to set up a space for them to be successful.

In thinking about making art at home, places to store and use materials and if necessary covers for furniture and floors are part of the process. When buying materials, think ahead about how you will set up and clean up a work space for that material. If the material is too messy for your comfort level or you feel a need to hover over your child's work to prevent spills, the process will not be fun for either of you. The goal is to develop procedures for using materials that will minimize mess and create a setting in which your child can work with increasing independence. Open-ended materials are best; the simpler the better. For this entry, we will focus on drawing at home. I prefer to say drawing instead of coloring because it connects a child's activity to an artist's process and implies a more intentional activity. Even very young children will make meaning with their drawings; write down the stories they share about their work to help both of you remember.

Start by drawing with crayons, offering different sizes, colors and textures of paper. The quality of the crayons is important because better crayons will have more pigment and make a stronger, more satisfying line, especially for little hands. Once kids are beyond putting things in their

mouths, oil pastels are also a nice choice for a crayon; they make a strong line and colors can be layered and blended. When introducing a material try it out with your kids, notice the variety of marks made depending on the angle and pressure of the crayon. Markers are very satisfying for young children because they make a bright mark. Sit with young children to remind them to keep markers on the paper; start with the washable kind but use real markers. This teaches young children about an artists tool and its appropriate use. For young children, large paper can be placed on the floor or taped to the wall.

If children begin to have a routine of art time in their day or week, their interaction with materials will deepen and grow over time. Repeatedly using the same materials is more likely to allow children to gain a sense of mastery over that material and what it can do, leading to the joys of expressing themselves with that material. The child who draws with markers twice a week at the kitchen table is going to build confidence and begin to express ideas through his or her drawing. With the abundance of products marketed for young children's arts and crafts, it can be tempting to try glitter glue one week, puffy paint the next, experimenting with different products at each sitting. This approach becomes more about the product and less about the child. Simpler materials encourage greater creativity from children.

In families with children of different ages, drawing together at the table can be a good way to model use of materials for younger siblings. Taking time to work alongside your children encourages them to engage in their work for longer periods of time. You can see their process and be available for technical assistance.