

## Community Outreach

# Contributing to School Readiness, Through Art



Head Start preschoolers are a rapidly growing group of SMOA fans thanks to an ongoing partnership between the Museum and Miami Valley Child Development Centers in Clark County.

The young children from Head Start are awed when they enter the galleries at the Museum. The soaring ceilings, skylights, spotlights, and artwork give them a clear sense they're encountering something new and exciting. The children view the art and seek shapes or colors or a story and are creating a lasting impression of the Museum as a welcoming place with new, fun experiences.

This fall three MVCDC classes came to SMOA three times each as part of a pilot project to give children a deeper experience with the Museum. Visits included time in the gallery with Museum Educator Amy Korpieski guiding the group in a focused observation of one or two art works which then inspired a hands-on art experience in

the studio. Wendy Shaw, MVCDC Operation Manager, approved the series of field trips and has seen that "having our Head Start preschoolers attend the Museum has opened many avenues for our children in developing perceptual abilities and an awareness of colors, shapes, forms, lines, and textures." In the course of the museum visit series, Laura Patterson, a MVCDC Head Teacher, noted similarities between the Museum educational field trip and MVCDC curriculum: "We were at the Museum in the morning and in the afternoon I had my 'Growing Readers' training and the things we learned as part of that curriculum were exactly like the things we'd been doing at the Museum!" Valerie Khalili, another Head Teacher involved in the pilot, remarked that "appreciation of art is a part of our curriculum at Head Start and this has given us a wonderful chance to extend our classroom outward."

During the visits gallery time focused on close observation and inference and included new vocabulary, like: sculpture, painting, photograph, gallery, and museum. Studio activities emphasized exploring art materials

as well as school readiness skills: fine motor skills, social skills like co-operation and listening, and auditory comprehension. Shaw noted the school readiness skills she sees in Museum trips, "Working in the studio has given children the opportunity to make choices and solve problems. They also practice other skills, for example, working with their fine motor skills using the pipette. The child is the creator and they can be successful and they are learning new vocabulary words." Patterson shared an observation about one student, "After our first visit Parker has been drawing with chalk every day. He is our drawer in the room, but after we were at the Museum and used chalk he said 'Now I am going to draw with chalk.'

**"...this has given us a wonderful chance to extend our classroom outward."**

at school." The studio exploration time has been essential to the students, as Khalili says, "children gain art appreciation through hands on experience in the studio as well as time in the galleries."

The experience didn't stop when the children left the Museum, it followed them to school. Student art from the studio is displayed in the classroom and hall, photographs of the students at the Museum are nearby, and images of art works at the Museum are being used during circle time to get ready for the next visit. This is getting the attention of the children's families, some of whom also chaperoned the Museum visits. Shaw says, "follow up and discussions in the classroom have been an engaging experience for teachers as well as parents!" ■

