

## On the Application and Practice of Paper-Cutting Art in Kindergarten Art Lessons

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### Abstract

Paper-cutting art carries rich cultural connotations and has its value in education. To integrate this art into local kindergarten lessons, explorations can be made in practices of combining paper-cutting with children's art design, music appreciation and collective rhythmic activities, so as to construct characteristic kindergarten-based lessons, promote folk culture among children and cultivate their sense of national identity from childhood.

**Key words:** Paper-cutting art; Art lessons; Application and practice

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Paper-cut, a treasure of Chinese art, has unique cultural accumulation and folk characteristics. As a living folk-art style, its artistic quality of liveness, emotion, aesthetics and practicality give it unique educational value. To integrate this art into local kindergarten lessons, explorations can be made in practices of combining paper-cutting with children's art design, music appreciation and

collective rhythmic activities, so as to tap the influence and inheritance of paper-cutting art, raise the local people's awareness of protecting and innovating folk resources, and construct characteristic kindergarten-based lessons for further promotion of local culture in preschool education.

### 1. CULTURAL CONNOTATIONS AND MULTI-DIMENSIONAL EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF PAPER-CUTTING ART

Paper-cutting art originated from grass-rooted folk culture. In this concrete form, people can express their longing for happiness and wellbeing through a meaningful picture that explicitly embodies beautiful wishes, things and hope with real-life significance and local characteristics. This kind of art skillfully uses homophones, metaphors and other techniques to express euphemistically. For example, it takes the images of plum, orchid, bamboo and chrysanthemum to stand for the peace of four seasons; mandarin ducks for love; peony for wealth; lotus and carp for richness; and magpies on a branch for bliss. This expressive technique of conveying feelings through the integration of emotion, things, meaning and interest is an implicit presentation with rich connotation, great oriental ideology of aesthetics and aesthetic implication. Through the paper-cutting works with goodness and profound meaning, children can feel the essential value of truth, goodness and beauty, as well as the spiritual core of excellent traditional culture and the persistent pursuit of an ideal life, e.g., the aesthetic connotations of respecting heaven and loving people, wishing for a reunion, praying for happiness and luckiness, etc.

Paper-cutting art contains rich educational connotations. The main purpose of aesthetic education is to cultivate children's ability to identify and create beauty.

With a sense of visuality, paper-cutting art embodies the beauty of symmetry, lines and composition in Chinese traditional aesthetics. By applying these related elements, the vivid and novel paper-cutting works can be felt by children's visual nerves and aesthetic senses, so that they can perceive, appreciate, experience and enjoy the beauty while immersing in the charm of paper-cutting art, thus making them love learning and yearn for beauty.

In addition, the conception and production of paper-cutting activities can greatly stimulate children's hands-on and brain-building abilities. In the process of paper-cutting, children can fully exercise and develop the finger muscles in their flexible use of scissors and careful practices. The more complex and dexterous activities of children's fingers, the more help to the development of their cranial nerves. Through the coordination of hands, eyes and brain, children's body and mind can be further developed. Besides, children will feel pleasure and happiness in the process of experiencing and creating beauty. By participating in paper-cutting activities, children can have the joy of free creation, gain independent and confident personality from the practice, and get harmonious development of body and mind.

## **2. Practical Value of Integrating Paper-cutting Art into Kindergarten Art Lessons**

The "Guidelines for Kindergarten Education" clearly points out that, "Art is the main channel to implement aesthetic education, and its function of emotional education should be given full play to promote the cultivation of children's sound personality." With continuous advancement and deepening of kindergarten curriculum reform, more and more attention has been paid to the integration of local folk art into kindergarten lessons. In this context, it is reasonable to integrate this excellent folk resource of paper-cutting into the art education of kindergarten while tapping its educational value to expand its educational efficacy.

### **2.1 Responding to the Current "Protection of Intangible Heritage" to Inherit the Spirit of Excellent Traditional Culture**

In January 2017, the Central Committee issued the "Opinions on Implementing the Inheritance and Development Project of Fine Traditional Chinese Culture", which has pointed out that all kinds of schools should act a positive role in the education and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage. With an accumulation in the history of more than 1000 years, the art of paper-cutting carries a deep national brand of Chinese culture. The values and spiritual core presented in the paper-cutting works are of great reference value to today's school education. Excellent and vivid paper-cutting works can exert a subtle influence on children and enable them to fit in, recognize and accept fine Chinese culture. By

inheriting and promoting folk culture in children, a sense of national identity can be cultivated from an early age.

### **2.2 Constructing Characteristic Art Lessons of Kindergarten to Cultivate Cultural Confidence in Children's Mind**

From the perspective of kindergarten curriculum for the inheritance of traditional culture in preschool education, all lessons play a role of imperceptibly inheriting certain culture and value. In the art field, it is suggested by the "Guide for the Learning and Development of Children Aged 3-6" that, there should be chances for children to get exposed to various art forms and works, allowing them to watch or participate in traditional folk arts and local ethnic cultural activities. As an excellent traditional culture of China, paper-cutting art embodies rich connotations of folk culture, folk customs and folklore. Paper-cutting activities should be carried out in the early childhood education stage. It is extremely important to integrate paper-cutting activities into characteristic kindergarten art lessons for cultivating children's aesthetic taste and perception of folk paper-cutting and giving them enlightenment education from an early age, so that children can inherit the fine traditional culture of the Chinese nation with a sense of cultural identity and confidence.

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## **3. APPLICATION AND PRACTICE OF INTEGRATING PAPER-CUTTING ART INTO KINDERGARTEN ART LESSONS**

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### **3.1 Creating An Artistic Environment of Kindergarten With Folk Characteristics**

A good environment of kindergarten can be compared to a colorful, attractive and silent 3D textbook. Being integrated into the environment of kindergarten class, paper-cutting art can be regarded as characteristic invisible lessons when colorful paper-cutting works can be seen everywhere in the environment of kindergarten's exterior walls and corridors. These creative works can be hung in places of classrooms, passageways, window display boards and so on for children to enjoy, and they may be classified according to different themes, such as animals, plants, folk stories and folk blessings. Paper-cutting works of animals and plants allow children to develop their imagination and understand the characteristics of different animals and plants; the folk-blessing category can help children understand the connotation and meaning of paper-cutting in folk festivals through teachers' explanations and story-telling, allowing them to experience the beautiful expectation for future life; and those featured by folk stories can be adopted by teachers in their lessons to tell folk dramas through the characters, plots and cute cartoon images in paper-cutting, so as to help children

understand the traditional culture and folk legends. Paper-cutting works make every wall speak, and children's visual sense of beauty will be strengthened in an art-filled environment. This kind of imperceptible education can stimulate children's interest in paper-cutting art and make them thrive in the interaction with the environment.

Regular paper-cutting activities, themed as festival celebration, animal and plant, creative ideas, etc., can be carried out in corners of classes with divisions of exhibition area, practice area and interaction area. By establishing a characteristic paper-cutting corner where one can actively learn and practice with interaction, children can freely make combinations and creations with the provided paper of different textures and colors (cardboard, colored paper, rubber paper, etc.), as well as some waste boxes, paper cups, bottles, CDs available around them. In this way, children can not only appreciate all kinds of exquisite paper-cutting works prepared by teachers, but also participate in some paper-cutting activities by folding, cutting and sticking something in the practice area. In educational practice, most children could cut various shapes (paper-cutting for window decoration) at will, but it seems a little difficult for them to cut with a purpose. Especially for those whose muscles have not particularly developed yet, they will fail to cut something delicate. Therefore, in the corner of paper-cutting activities, there should be different materials for children with different abilities. Teachers can give the simplest paper-cutting materials of round or square shapes to children with poor ability, and slightly complicated ones to medium-level children. For children with strong ability, they are encouraged to cut with their imagination or willingness.

### **3.2 Integrating Paper-Cutting Art Into Art Lessons**

Paper-cutting activities accord with children's psychological and physiological characteristics, as well as their interest needs. Based on curriculum construction, paper-cutting lessons can be integrated into educational activities in various fields, with a combination of paper-cutting elements with children's music appreciation and collective rhythmic activities, so as to fully tap the diversity of folk-art lessons of paper-cutting. Paper-cutting activities in early childhood can be regarded as a kind of enlightening education that focuses on the principles of participation, pleasure and collaboration.

#### **3.2.1 Combination of Paper-Cutting Art With Activities of Music Appreciation**

All art categories including music, fine arts and drama are closely related to each other, and every piece of paper-cutting work requires a wholehearted devotion to creation. Teachers can combine paper-cutting activities with the activities of music appreciation by displaying paper-cutting works while giving some classic Chinese musical pieces with soothing rhythms, such as guqin

music, guzheng music and pipa music. Accompanied by the music with typical Chinese style, children can feel the charm of paper-cutting art by a combination of hearing and vision, which can stimulate children's experience in understanding the Chinese flavor of paper-cutting works. In paper-cutting practices, Guqin music can be applied to make children relax and quiet down in the integration of musical melodies into children's manual paper-cutting activities, thus adding color to the monotonous picture of life. Music is an adjustment to children's emotions, making them better understand the charm of paper-cutting as Chinese folk art.

#### **3.2.2 Combination of Paper-Cutting Art With Collective Rhythmic Activities**

The dance "Paper-cutting Girl" in the Spring Festival Evening of 2016 was inspired by the traditional folk art of paper-cutting. It activates the paper-cutting images through dance movements, and people love such expression of the lifelike paper-cutting art through shapes and motion. This idea can be borrowed in the combination of traditional folk paper-cutting art with children's dance-music activities, and it is a creative way of integrating paper-cutting elements into the dance rhythm to enhance the understanding of children. In collective rhythmic activities of kindergarten, the cultural elements of paper-cutting can be integrated into dance choreography and rehearsal. It will bring the paper-cutting elements into full play from conception to expression with various innovations, e.g., taking all kinds of paper-cutting works as props for dance performances, showing a group of lively and lovely paper-cutting dolls according to the theme, displaying paper-cutting artworks by children in the way of catwalk performances, and choosing props with paper-cutting style for children's morning exercises in collective rhythmic activities of kindergarten. Through various forms of integration, the creativity of paper-cutting elements can be combined with children's rhythmic activities. All children participating in the performance will better understand China's fine traditional folk culture through a variety of comprehensive arts including paper-cutting art, dance and music.

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## **CONCLUSION**

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Paper-cutting art, as an excellent resource of traditional folk culture, can be integrated into the construction of kindergarten curriculum from multiple dimensions and angles with an exploration of the localization and diversification of paper-cutting lessons. As a kind of enlightening education, it will cultivate children's aesthetic taste and perception of folk paper-cutting art, make them inheritors of the fine traditional culture of the Chinese nation, and enhance their sense of national identity from an early age.

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