PROGRAM & POLICIES

MINI MASTERS at the ACADEMY
Academy Art Museum • 106 South Street • Easton, MD 21601
Phone Number: 410-822-2787
Email: minimasters@academyartmuseum.org
Online at: www.academyartmuseum.org
Mini Masters, a program of The Academy Art Museum, offers an Early Enrichment Program for children ages 2–4. Our museum-based curriculum blends exploration of art with basic principles of early learning. In addition to general monthly themes, we implement an emergent curriculum whereby topics are explored as they relate to children's interests. Our class is a mixed-age group which provides an environment for fostering community and encouraging developmental and academic milestones. Mini Masters utilizes the Healthy Beginnings Developmental Domains as well as the Maryland State Early Learning Standards as resources and guides when planning developmentally appropriate curriculum as well in assessing our students.

We introduce young children to new ideas through a thematic and inquiry-based approach to learning that emphasizes relationships and the ability to make meaningful connections. It teaches a basic life skill—how to learn. The focus is not on acquiring facts or information but rather on the process of learning through inquiry and sensory exploration of objects. It is through this process that children are empowered to make ideas their own.

The resources of the Academy Art Museum offer a wonderful venue for teaching these sensory explorations. The resources come in many forms, from artwork to museum professionals. The focus might be a single piece of art within a collection, an entire exhibition, or a visiting artist or musician. Children's literature, objects, and visual images are the key elements of almost every experience. Activities are planned to encourage discussion and increase vocabulary. The curriculum offers a wide range of possibilities and introduces, develops, and ties together individual skills in a meaningful way.

Mini Masters believes that all children and their families need to feel safe, nurtured, and supported in their day-to-day environment. We welcome children and families with varying cultural backgrounds, needs and developmental abilities as we feel this diversity enriches our program and the lives of all of our children. By initially identifying each child's unique abilities and interests, we create experiences for each child based on their needs and interests. Ongoing communication with families, as well as the use and implementation of community resources, will ensure that we are meeting the unique needs of each child to the best of our ability. Our classroom literature and projects will reflect and represent the various cultures, primary languages, and disabilities present in our classroom make-up. Books, puzzles, dolls, traditions and cultural celebrations are reflective of our varied student and family population. Each child in our program, as well as their families, should feel represented and included.

Mini Masters at the Academy offers the basics in early learning with a focus on the arts. Using a multi-sensory, child-centered and inquiry-based approach, we foster creative and independent thinking, self-expression, art appreciation, and a love of learning.
PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Program Dates: September 13, 2021 – May 19, 2022

Program Days: 2-day per week option: Mon./Wed. OR Tues./Thurs.

4-day per week option: Mon. thru Thurs.

* Two-year-olds may attend all 4 days

Program Times: Morning Session 8:45 (doors open) - 12:00

Eligibility: Children must be 2 by January 1st to attend the program. Rolling admission for children ages 2 to 4 up until January 1st. Acceptance into the program after the start of school will depend on availability and child readiness.

* Children do not have to be toilet-trained

Class Size: Eight (8) child limit with 2 teachers. Multi-age classroom setting.

REGISTRATION & INFORMATION

Call or email the Mini Masters Director at the Academy Art Museum (410) 822-2787 minimasters@academyartmuseum.org for questions or to set up a visitation day.

FOR ALL CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), we will accept children, and their families, with special needs into our program. If a child has a current IEP or ISFP, families must complete a Request for Accommodation Form and provide a copy of the child’s IEP or ISFP. Mini Masters at the Academy will then determine if reasonable accommodations can be made for the child and if our program can serve the best interest of the child and / or family with special needs.
Children at Mini Masters learn and explore through circle time, developmentally appropriate learning stations, table time free choice (puzzles, blocks, drawing/art, books, playdough), story time, snack time, directed individual or small group art projects, guest visitors, museum walks, music, and movement activities. Verbal and artistic expression, problem solving, sharing, compassion, and being able to work in a group are key concepts integrated into our daily interactions and activities with the children.

Mixed-Age Classroom & Developmental Readiness: In addition to offering the benefits of the Museum's unique learning environment, our physical space is self-contained, and all children learn together as a "family." The children's social, developmental and academic growth are enhanced by our multi-age classroom make-up of 2, 3 and 4-year-olds. Our two-year-olds hear, observe, and learn from the interactions of our older children, and our older children practice empathy, kindness and model behaviors of sharing, talking, and playing together. Our classroom is set up so play areas and materials are accessible to all children thereby encouraging an environment of choice, play and exploration.

Materials & Planning: Activities and art projects are planned so as to offer specific learning opportunities for each child. We individualize the activities based on the child's developmental readiness and interest. For example, during our station time, a 2-year-old may be stringing beads, which helps to develop fine motor control, while a 4-year-old may be stringing beads with the goal of learning about patterning. A 2- or 3-year-old might be feeling textured letters or numbers hidden in a sensory bin, whereas a 4-year-old may be writing their letters or numbers in sand, shaving cream or on paper. For small group or individualized projects, our goal for a 2-year-old when making a paper craft might be simply using a glue stick and understanding how to glue pieces of paper on the craft, while our goal for a 3 or 4 year old for the same project would be scissor practice, name-writing, and knowing how to assemble the craft independently or with little guidance.

As we emphasize creativity and choice, we utilize a variety of materials which can be used in open-ended ways as well as plan projects which are based in the process of creating. We use materials and plan projects where children, regardless of developmental readiness, will feel successful. Giving children choices within the framework of the project, knowing what each individual child is capable of or ready for, and allowing exploration and creativity does not limit anyone.

Our Art Focus: Mini Masters is a program of the Academy Art Museum and the children are continually surrounded by art. They regularly visit the Museum’s galleries on “museum walks.” We talk about the art we see as it relates to our curriculum themes or as it relates to the process through which the art was created. The children see the diversity of people and things in their world through the artwork they view, and they enjoy discovering how aspects in each piece may relate to their own lives. Asking children what they notice about a picture, having them recreate a certain movement or stance that a subject or piece may be portraying, or engaging in a game of "I spy", are ways in which we encourage children to interact with art. The process by which children create art is equally as important as the product. The children not only enjoy experimenting with art processes, but they also feel a sense of pride and accomplishment in their artwork. In addition to viewing exhibitions and creating art in our classroom, our children often visit Museum artists at work in their studios. These artists will, in turn, visit our classroom to do a project with the children.
Mini Masters seeks to provide an early enrichment experience in the arts, an appreciation for art, and an experience in the varied processes of creating art.

**Movement & Music:** Our movement and music classes take place in our Performing Arts (PA) room, in the classroom or outside. Music and movement are a regular part of our day and include dance, parachute, scarf and ball games, listening games, and singing. Circle time also offers a daily opportunity to sing, move and play instruments. Once per month, the children may observe classical, jazz or opera professionals as they rehearse for the Museum's “Music at Noon” program. The children will also spend time outdoors playing, nature collecting, and enjoying the fresh air in the Museum’s outdoor spaces.

**Language & Numbers:** Language and the alphabet are introduced by emphasizing the phoneme or "sound" that a letter makes. In this approach, the alphabet is not taught in ABC order. Instead, we introduce easiest sounds first and work up to more complex sounds. This phonemic introduction to letters is an excellent way to ensure reading readiness. We work on number and language concepts using hands-on, sensory-rich activities, such as tracing letters in sand, singing number and alphabet songs, and counting items around the room. Every task in which a child engages has an intentional learning goal for that child’s developmental readiness.
MONTHLY THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

September: All About Me
October: Fall Changes
November: Food and Harvest
December: Wintertime Fun and Holidays
January: Animals in Winter
February: Community & Friendship
March: The Weather
April/May: Spring Is Here: Ecology & Earth Day

DAILY SCHEDULE

8:45 Arrival & Free Play - children's choice of unstructured, free play throughout the classroom
9:30 Circle Time - directed singing, read-aloud, community building
9:50 Bathroom Break & Snack
10:15 Museum Walk / Project - individual or small group directed learning opportunities specific to
the child's development readiness
11:00 Movement / Music - directed and free choice gross motor; includes outside play time
11:30 Learning Stations - developmentally appropriate focused activities; puzzles, playdough,
art/drawing, building, stories and books
11:50 Clean-up / Story / Table Time
12:00 Dismissal
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Drop-Off and Pick Up:
Upon arriving at the classroom, please sign your child in on the sign-in sheet and be certain that one of the teachers is aware that your child has arrived. Doors open at 8:45 am for drop-off. Only those individuals who are listed on your emergency form will be permitted to pick up your child. Please sign out on the sign-out sheet. Parents are required to pick up their children by 12:00 pm for morning classes. If a child is going to be absent or late, please email minimasters@academyartmuseum.org OR call the Museum at 410-822-2787 for any reason.

Weather and Other Closures:
Mini Masters follows the weather cancellation schedule of Talbot County Public Schools (TCPS) but will open at 10:00am for all weather-related delays. Parents, however, may use their discretion when inclement weather is a factor. Mini Masters Academy makes independent decisions regarding holiday, vacation, and Museum-related closures. A calendar with important dates such as holiday, vacation, and Museum-related closures is included in this packet and can also be found on our website. Please tune in to WCEI 96.7 FM for local closings and emergency information.

Snack:
Parents will have the opportunity to sign up each month to provide a snack for the class. Please provide a water bottle / sippy cup for your child each day. In keeping with our allergy policy, please do not send nuts or products containing nuts. Please check the ingredients list of all packaged food products before sending them in. There is an area on the emergency form to enter allergy information. Please inform the staff if there is any change to your child’s allergy status. Snacks should be nut-free, and fruit should be washed and sliced (especially grapes). Good things to think about when choosing snacks: Bite-sized (no cutting necessary), nut-free, something “dry” (e.g. goldfish crackers, pretzels, graham crackers) AND something “wet” (e.g. fruit, cheese, applesauce).

Communication:
Every other week, an email is sent to families including news, pictures of projects, events, or announcements. We feel that open communication serves the best interests of everyone, including the children. We will set up a parent-teacher conference if we think an issue needs to be addressed. Parents may also request a conference for any reason. Please never hesitate to call or email us. Also, check out our Facebook page and “like” us to see pictures of what we are doing in the classroom.
Family Involvement Opportunities:

We encourage families to sign up for visit days whereby a family member can share their profession or conduct an activity with the children. Please let us know if you would like to schedule a family sharing day.

We also encourage families to sign up to provide a snack with the class once per month. It can be for a birthday, other special occasion or simply to contribute a snack once per month. Contributing a snack helps our program and allows the children and families to feel a sense that they are contributing to the day-to-day operations of the program. Please sign up inside the classroom on our class calendar.

Families are encouraged and invited to attend several celebrations per year. We enjoy getting to know the families and spending time with them. Halloween, Winter holidays, Valentine's Day, Earth Day and Graduation are some of the special celebrations where families are invited to attend and are asked to contribute food. We will post sign-up sheets and celebrations are indicated on our calendar.

Parent/Teacher Conferences:
Conferences will be offered twice per year in Mid-October and in May. We will discuss the progress of your child and welcome your concerns and input. As always, parents may request a conference for any reason at a mutually convenient time and day. A conference sign-up sheet will be posted in the classroom.

Assessment:

Every task in which a child engages has an intentional learning goal for that child’s developmental readiness. For example, a two-year-old may be learning to string colored beads to develop fine motor skills, while a four-year-old may be stringing beads to create a color pattern. We use ongoing, informal assessment through observation and conversation to determine the progress of each child. Teachers will also use checklists and rating scales which may be used to relay information during parent-teacher conferences. A helpful resource regarding developmental milestones can be found at: [www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly).

Clothing:

Children will be using some materials that may stain clothing. Please keep this in mind when dressing your child each day for class. We ask that you provide a set of extra, season-appropriate clothing for your child, including underwear and socks, for use in case of accidents. Parents will be sent periodic reminders when extra clothes, diapers, or pull-ups may be needed.

Positive Guidance and Behavior:

The healthy social development of each child is paramount in our program. We use a positive discipline/behavioral approach with all children. To encourage and support children’s healthy, positive social behavior, children are given choices throughout the day. Children may choose from a variety of activities that they enjoy which encourage and support their positive behavior. As a play-based, child-centered program, our children have access to a variety of activities.
We recognize and implement disciplinary actions for our children based on their developmental readiness to comprehend a situation and the effects of their actions on other children. If a child’s behavior warrants intervention, the teachers will first explain and reiterate to the child(ren) the problem behavior. We will then redirect the child to more appropriate interactions or activities. If a child is developmentally ready, we will ask the child to reiterate back to us his/her inappropriate action and to offer an apology. Removal of a child from the group to sit with a teacher for one-on-one time is necessary when potential injury to self or other children is imminent. If behavior is a continual disruption to the class, we will call home asking for the child to be picked up.

Safety & Health:

Forms: Every child is required to have his/her medical and emergency information on file at all times, including our Treatment Consent Authorization. State required medical and emergency forms are to be completed and submitted upon enrollment. (See the website links for these State forms).

Safety: The teachers are trained in CPR and First Aid and have been trained in Emergency situations. The Academy Art Museum's Emergency Plan is located in the classroom and has a full explanation and diagram of evacuation procedures including our designated "safe place" located at The Armory "Waterfowl" Building across the street. Our classroom contains medical first aid supplies as well as lists of all family and emergency contact information which is keep handy. We conduct Fire Drills once per month and Emergency Evacuation Drills one every 3 months. Please listen to WCEI 96.7fm for any local emergency information or inclement weather issues. (See our Weather Policy). Our staff, as well as any and all staff who may be present with the children such as substitute teachers or office personnel, are fully background checked and responsible for reporting any suspected child abuse. We keep the classroom door closed, the front desk to the building is manned at all times and the children are supervised at all times. We have a required sign-in and sign-out sheet for caregivers to initial at the classroom entrance. A list of people authorized to pick up a child is required in enrollment documents.

Health: We practice handwashing techniques with the children every day after bathroom time, before snack and after handling art supplies. We ask that parents please adhere to our Sick Policy. We also adhere to our food policy whereby nut products are not allowed in the classroom and food must be prepared properly to avoid choking hazards.

Sick Policy: Please do not send your child to school if he/she has exhibited the following:
- Fever in the past 24 hours
- Vomiting in the past 24 hours
- Diarrhea in the past 24 hours
- Hand-Foot-Mouth Disease or any undiagnosed rashes
- Chills and/or sore throat
- Strep Throat (must have been taking an antibiotic for at least 24 hours before returning to school)
- Bad cold (non-clear discharge from nose and/or bad cough, especially if it has kept the child awake at night)
- Head lice – until child has been treated
If your child becomes ill at the Museum and we feel your child is too sick to benefit from school or is contagious to other children, you will be called to take your child home.
Medication: If your child is taking oral medication or needs application of topical medication, you must give it or apply it to your child before he/she comes to school. If your child needs the medication while at school day, you must supply it in the original product packaging. Put the medication in a Ziplock baggie and label the bag and medication packaging with your child’s name. You must include written instructions for use of all medications including sunscreen, insect repellent, and diaper rash cream.

Screen Time:

Mini Masters does not use electronic devices for children's entertainment during the school day. There is no "screen time" during Mini Masters class time.

For All Children and Their Families:

Mini Masters will consider and review any and all applications for enrollment for all children. A child with disabilities or special health care needs will be accepted into the program provided that Mini Masters can provide the best early education experience for the child and meet the specific needs of that child. Mini Masters, therefore, requests that families submit, upon registration and enrollment, Individualized Education Programs, Individual Family Service Plans or any requests for special services for the child, if any, which will assist Mini Masters in assessing and addressing the individual needs of the child and / or providing recommendations for special services from Community agencies.

Community Resources for Families:

Mini Masters provides families with website links for Maryland's family resources as well as physical copies of brochures which include phone numbers and websites. Mini Masters updates and identifies available resources by searching local and state websites based on the requests and needs of our families and students. Please contact Mini Masters at minimasters@academyartmuseum.org or (410) 822-2787 if you need further information on resources or need access to a service. The following are some helpful websites.

www.marylandfamilynetwork.org
www.earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/families/about-child-care/specialized-child-care-services
www.earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/why-are-judy-centers-important